

Georgia Hilton

**Betting Men**

The greyhound track holds  
a kind of fascination.  
So ugly it is, and monumental,  
cancelling the horizon like some  
Stalinist obsession.

And you wonder what kind  
of men go there to watch  
greyhounds chasing  
mechanical hares and placing  
bets upon the outcome?

You have never seen anyone  
go in, or come out of there,  
but you imagine they must  
wear hats and speak  
low and fast. This is serious

business after all, you wouldn't  
want to disturb them. No,  
you've never seen anyone  
at the Greyhound track,  
but there it stands, a breeze  
block Roman Circus.

Georgia Hilton  
**When We Were Young**

We ate the road,  
devouring  
miles and miles of it  
like licorice string  
unspooling  
into nights made liquid  
by cats' eyes  
and brake lights.

Never did I believe  
the stars could be  
outshone  
until that one night,  
when an eighty kilometre  
sign outside Athlone  
met us like the moon  
at high tide – radiant,  
impassive –

reflecting  
not the sun's light  
but our own headlamps,  
making us  
the agents of waking,  
as we tumbled  
urgent, thoughtless.

We must have startled  
badgers in the ditches  
when overnight we scratched  
the spine of half  
the country, how it  
twitched and shuddered  
beneath our wheels,  
impatient.

Georgia Hilton  
**Shannon**

It's reassuring now somehow to spot you,  
still smiling from the pages  
of the Limerick Post's *Out And About* section,  
as if no time at all has passed –  
it is still the Millennium Eve  
in the Brazen Head, O'Connell Street,  
we are all poised on the cusp of something –  
you are still *Limerick's premier socialite*,

provincial it-girl.

At twelve you looked fifteen,  
at fifteen you were passing for twenty,  
dating middle-aged men.  
Women didn't like you much –  
child moonlighting as a *Femme Fatale* –  
expensively dressed,  
with an obscene chest  
bursting from your blouse  
like an accusation.

Georgia Hilton  
**Soundings**

We are studying Austin Clarke  
for the Leaving Certificate.  
Stephen tells me  
his English teacher asked them:  
'Boys, now where would you find  
a Planter's Daughter?'

To which Stephen replied  
'Villiers, Sir!'  
provoking muffled laughter.  
I wonder when he reads the line  
*And few in the candlelight*  
*thought her too proud*, does he  
think of me, or Carla?

I like *The Planter's Daughter*  
well enough  
but I think I preferred  
the one about the blackbird.

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Georgia Hilton is a poet and fiction writer, originally from Ireland, now resident in Winchester, England. Georgia has a pamphlet, *I went up the lane quite cheerful* (2018), and a collection, *Swing* (2020), both published by Dempsey and Windle. Georgia's short fiction has appeared in *Lunate Fiction* and *Fictive Dream*, and she holds an MA in Creative and Critical Writing from the University of Winchester.

Favourite poem: *When You Are Old*, W.B. Yeats