

Aggie's

The couple only lasted a month,
didn't even claim a refund.

It stands just where the road
cuts up to Ardpatrick and the Greenwood Bar.

The woman loved it. Refettled throughout,
its rooms had two doors each to herd the sunlight.

Aggie was a woman of drawn cheeks
and midnight whispers. She made the unquietest death.

The man went a bundle on the patio,
pictured barbecues, nooks for unfocussed tatting.

In darkness Aggie would become the streams
that stitched Laurencetown to the footings of Kilfinane.

They bought a bed whose width
would do comely justice to that re-distressed floor.

Aggie got proper busy after hours. Boots
were placed in swing-bins, towels plumped round beams.

They told themselves it was their absent-mindedness,
having nothing else to fall back on. They weren't drinkers.

Till one night she appeared where a teasmade should be –
a confection of shroud-lace and soiled bombazine.

Disbelieving every word, the agent was all apology.
The couple said nothing. The man turned the key one last time,

then they walked to where their over-luggaged car
sat low to the ground. Within, a curtain fluttered

and Aggie watched the agent watch them watching
for traffic from the right. He tapped his head,

strolled off down the gravel. She gave a laugh
that was all the triumph of the world in one huge silence.

The house has long teemed with emptiness,
though the agent might have found another mark –

an anchorite-type from upcountry, looking for peace
in which to finish a book on thin places,

those margins of the earth where holy prayer
soaks lovingly through joist, arch, beaten stone.

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