**The Usurper's Habit**

*for David Lilburn*

As we go walkabout

in the ordinary grey light,

a prism behind the eye

refracts it in splinters of history.

Our postmodern footsteps

are dogged by gentlemen and bishops

whose mistresses are drowned in placenames.

Our everyday frenzy sings

in the same opera as a king's

madness. Pleasantries we exchang

over the wrapping of purchases

obscure the knowledge of causes:

no butcher without butchery.

Catch a thread of your jumper

on a railing spike as you wander

through this city always under siege

and, like a monarch robed in countries,

you begin to unrig.

Return along the trail

of your unravelled wool,

through seeming-solid streets

that rest on sliding plates,

to where the river-gusts incant

a printmaker's incisive rant:

that grey pullover's warp and weft

was naught but property and theft.

Your journey ends behind the eye,

where Lilburn's etchings hang to dry.

**Ciaran O'Diriscoll**

Ciaran O'Driscoll has published four collections of poetry;

*Gog and Magog* (Salmon, 1987),

*The poet and his shadow* (Dedalus, 1990), *Listening to different drummers* (Dedalus, 1993),

and *The old women of Mogione* (Dedalus, 1997).

He is living in Limerick and lectures at the Limerick School of Art and Design,

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