



The Winter Sleep of Captain Lemass

Harry Clifton

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At once a reckoning with a lost political legacy, a meditation on love, marriage and middle age, and a reaching back into foreign ancestry, *The Winter Sleep of Captain Lemass* is Harry Clifton's fullest and most ambitious attempt so far to bring together, in a single book, the discordant elements of an evolving Ireland, as it discovers itself, through public and private destinies, in the 21st century. Harry Clifton is one of the finest and most widely travelled poets of his generation. He returned to Ireland in 2004, after sixteen years abroad, and began writing and publishing the poems that culminate, after seven years, in this timely new collection, which was shortlisted for the Irish Times / Poetry Now Award. He now lives in Dublin and was Ireland Professor of Poetry in 2010-13. 'The poems begin with something seen, remembered, or suddenly known, or a melancholy feeling about time passing, or complex emotions about love, and then they take a longer view, or hold their breath while a new tone, filled with sonorous risk and odd wisdom slowly seeps into an end-line of a stanza or a new section of a poem... There are moments when you hold your breath... and you sit up in pure delight... there are a number of poems in this book that will be read as long as any poems are read anywhere... The last poem, "Oweniny, Upper Reaches", filled with soft, haunting cadences and strange, ambiguous musings on solitude, memory and the meaning of things, is a masterpiece. It displays Clifton's reticence and technical skill against the need to let the poem soar into a truth that emerges from the gap between the words, and then it allows the words themselves to glide up and out in all their hushed and controlled beauty.' - Colm Tóibín, Irish Times on *The Winter Sleep of Captain Lemass*.

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