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Notebook

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The interior of a heron's egg: Michael Donaghy, 1954-2004

by [Joshua Mehigan](#)

On the death and legacy of the poet Michael Donaghy.

Once I heard a well-known poet grumble when faced with the prospect of following Michael Donaghy onstage. The poet didn't offer an explanation and didn't have to. Those in earshot simply understood that Donaghy abundantly possessed a skill lost to most of us: he was entertaining.

I had the pleasure of watching Donaghy perform his poems multiple times, and from what I can gather these performances were representative. Right away he distinguished himself by reciting his poems, rather than reading them from the page. Ignoring the podium, he would step unassumingly to the front of the stage and begin talking. Those familiar with his work know that he relished a chance to blur the boundary between fact and invention. Thus, at the beginning of a reading it might dawn on a listener, after some impossible statement, that the wryly decorous tone coming from the stage wasn't introductory patter but a monologue.

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