

# The New Criterion

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## On Derry city walls, 1992

by Rory Waterman

I was ten. I might still take Dad's arm  
now and then. Where the Bogside sprawls to green hills  
he'd nod at what half-blindness meant he'd not see,  
say: *The border runs right between us and those farms.*

Then he'd point down at Free Derry Corner, the Inn,  
the murals of gasmasks and thirteen men dead.  
His outrage was weighted. I washed in it, like love.  
Then at his house at night, before bed,

we'd crank up the "Irish songs": "Boolavogue,"  
"Dirty Old Town," "Skibbereen," "Spancil Hill."  
I'm full of them still. They were solder between  
us Mum couldn't use, that sustained me back home.

But, like "Dirty Old Town" evokes Salford, in Lancs,  
my voice was pure Lincoln. Homogenous Lincoln  
was not where I came from, I knew, as I prayed  
for my best friend's dad, still in the Gulf, in a tank.

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**Rory Waterman's** first collection of poetry, *Tonight the Summer's Over*, is forthcoming from Carcanet.

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