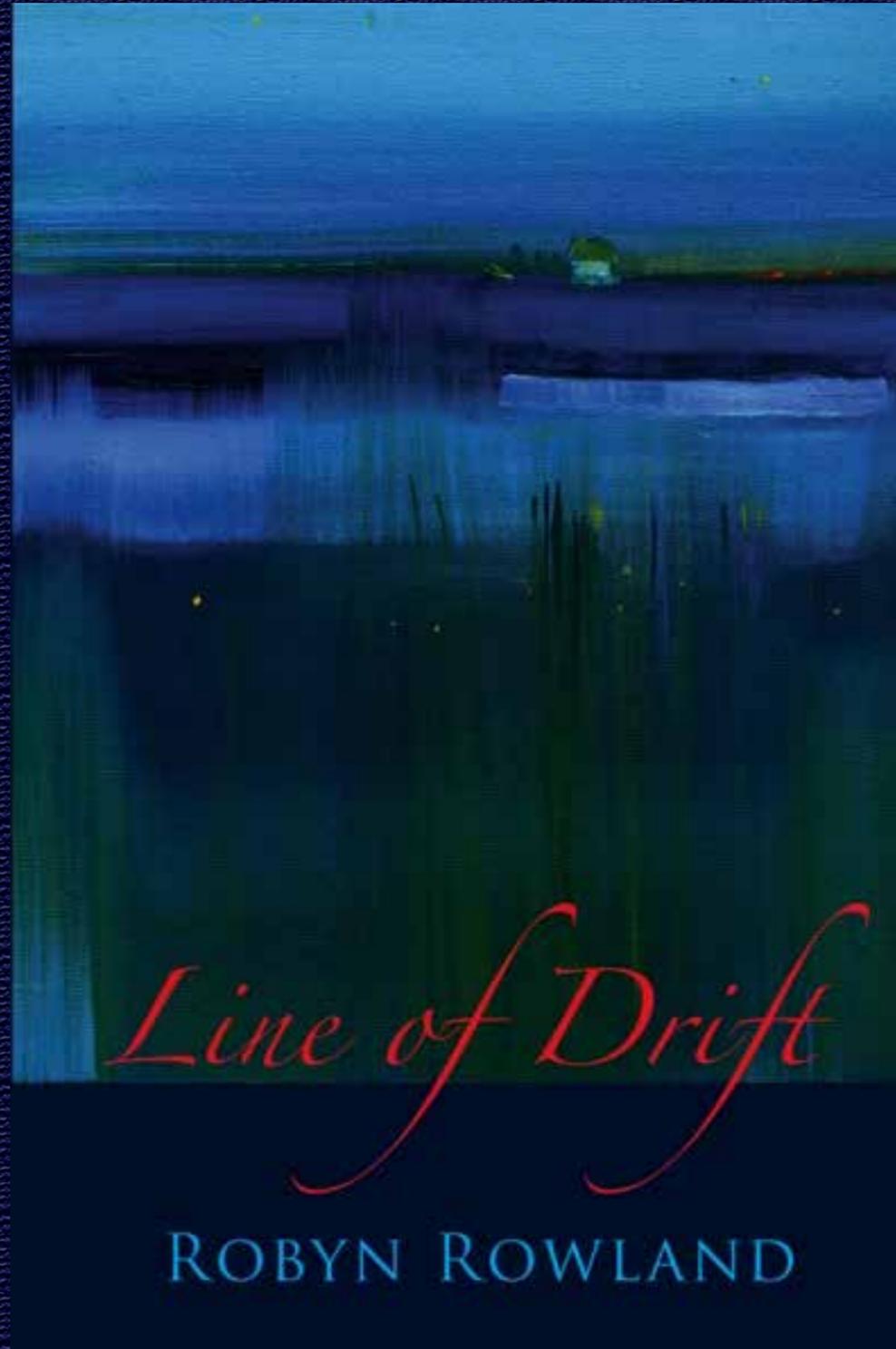




Dr Robyn Rowland AO is an Irish-Australian citizen living in Australia and Ireland. Her poetry appears in national and international journals and in over 40 anthologies, including seven *Best Australian Poems*. Of her 9 books, two were published in 2015: *Line of Drift*, Doire Press, Galway, Ireland, and her bilingual *This Intimate War Gallipoli/Çanakkale 1915 – İçli Dışlı Bir Savaş: Gelibolu/Çanakkale 1915*, Turkish translations by Mehmet Ali Çelikel, Five Islands Press - <http://fiveislandspress.com/catalogue/this-intimate-war> and Bilge Kultur Sanat, Turkey.



Hyacinth Loving

Errislannan

*and what did you want?
To call myself beloved, to feel myself
beloved on this earth.
– Raymond Carver*

God or flesh, Persian poets wooed their 'beloved' as if there were no greater gift than to be both namer and the named. Absent, your brown furred body lives in my skin's memory, laughter recalled is my *uisce beatha*, water of life, your care, the charge of a sun. Every morning, alone here but for the thought of you, excitement tingles in fingertips that tuck in the stray flips of earth tipped from indigo pots at my door, as hyacinths, rising from their dark birth-shrouds, go ruffling for light. Brown onion caps, almost discarded, balance in comedic joy, a small wonder as they protrude into the ice-blue chill above ground. Heads loaded with bubbles of scented flower, they make the sky ache for their pink and blue sweetness. In the cleft of their companions' leaves thrust toward sunshine, clear rainwater is caught, meniscus bulging as if curved crystal. First night back, a pregnant crescent moon slung low, carried before her the shadow-shape of herself to come. Connemara's sky was star-crowded and cold – deep airborne cold – and pure beyond diamond. Spring is an act of trust – the sky will warm, buds rise and open, and the great moon sail into her own fullness as a matter of time. Waiting is the necessity for growth. All this readies for you, *Beloved*, and when you come your soft kiss will give me again the first spring-time of opening.

from *This Intimate War Gallipoli/Çanakkale 1915 – İçli Dışlı Bir Savaş: Gelibolu/Çanakkale 1915*,
Turkish translations Mehmet Ali Çelikel

Green Road

This is the way that we went
to get here – past lochs in early dawn,
reeds so still they were painted in,
green shamrocks we'd sewn
into our jacket sleeves
never to match those shimmering Connaught fields
clotted white with sheep –
but travelling with us anyway. And out of Dublin's
grey light we came, out of the poor, the cold,
always hungry and now to be fed by our work.
And out of Trinity, the future of a new nation.
They would know us then –
our imperial overseers –
know our worth in battle,
pay the value in our freedom after.
That is honour. That is why we came.

The Fife band of the Irish Fusiliers played
The Wearing of the Green
as we sailed out to war from Devonport,
those of us coast-born, knowing the fear
of a rough sea and the want of swimming in it.
We had thought to save poor wee Belgium.
We knew it wasn't France when they
shaved our heads for the heat, lads
running anyways to avoid it.
We'd heard from the Irish gone before,
Gallipoli was hell, but when they landed us
under sheer cliffs, and no artillery, it didn't make sense.

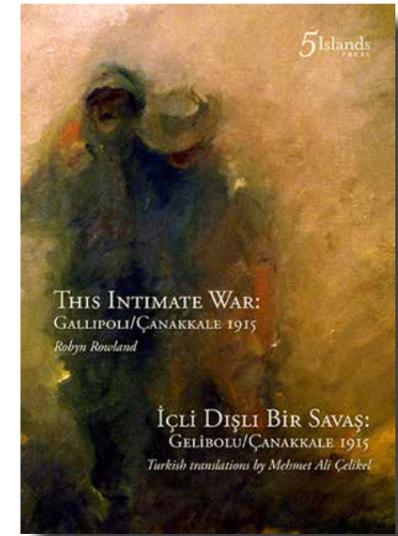
We waited. We waited too long.
In heat I've never known. Shears your skin off,
peeling it back, sunburn red-raw.
Water now, I knew about water, and rain.
I lived on land that was watery earth,
it never went dry. But I never knew
how precious it really is, how alive
it brings you, how strong it makes you, and
what it can do to you – going without –
slit lips, mouth full of pebbles for the wet,

stumbling about so mad for it,
you don't care if anyone can shoot you.
Honest men made thieves, liars,
some gone so crazy they might kill for it.
Wild flowering plants over those hills,
there must have been clear springs somewhere –
if anyone in charge had a map.

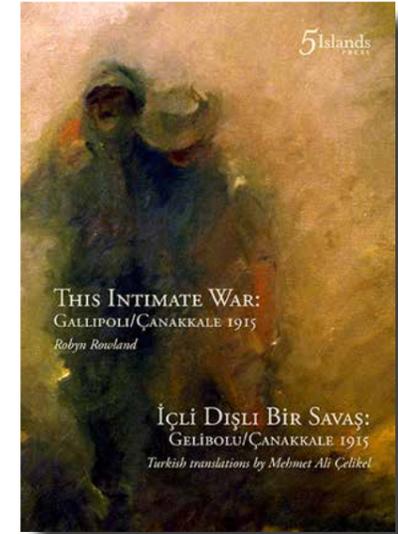
This is the way we went and nothing more to know.
Jumping from lighters and drowning,
the chuck of bayonet up the guts,
or hailed into with lead, 'riddled' such a true word.
Say it fast many times – *riddled riddled riddled* – that's it.
General Sir Bryan Mahon, a Galway man,
had a tantrum when he didn't get promoted, resigned and
headed off to an island, leaving his men under fire,
and no-one game to pull us back without command.
The Fife Band was swallowed by Suvla. One great bite.
Most of us were dead in the many ways of war.
Most of us wearing the green, never got back.

This is the way we left, in early dawn,
past the broken wire, small heaps of charred khaki –
wounded burned to death by gorse fires –
bodies heaped so you couldn't tell
what country they were from, scattered about,
half-buried, the smell of crushed thyme
never to leave the company of blood, of cinders.
We sailed over the ones that never made it to land,
never fired a gun, or saw the carnage,
drowning out of the *River Clyde*.
They were from my home-place and I left them there
in those razor ravines, too far from Irish earth.

I shake out of rage now as I did then, frustrated,
throwing stones when grenades were gone.
All I want to do is drink water, drink and drink,
drown in it, drink anything.
Will they pay that honour-price now,
do you think? Will I have my own country
when I get back to it? The Turks have theirs.



from *This Intimate War Gallipoli/Çanakkale 1915 – İçli Dışlı Bir Savaş: Gelibolu/Çanakkale 1915*,
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Nightingale

*Now more than ever seems it rich to die,
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad
In such an ecstasy!*

– John Keats, *Ode to a Nightingale*

Sweet bird, rejoicing in clean salted air over Gelibolu,
silent ridges full of food, pine forests,
nests among filigreed branches under a
star-crushed heaven above a cobalt sea.
Here you do not need the rose, nor adoration,
where you are free and the joy of it rings.

Sweet bird with liquid-throated song a richer nectar
than thyme-honey that bees busy themselves with
in hives for the village below.
Night vibrates with trill, whistle, gurgle,
melody of the single male in hope;
'but how will she find you,' he thinks,
the boy sitting with his mother's letter open
April 17, before the sky was ash.
He thinks the song in this day's light a special gift
that opened the beauty of place to him, and her letter.

Sweet bird thrilling inside the ear, along the spine,
bringing all nature's loveliness to his soldier's eye,
the stream laughing, grasses waving,
his back against the tree's rough bark,
drinking goat's milk hot from the teat,
the last for years to come, if he lives.

Sweet boy, Hasan Ethem, writes to his mother –
'beauty here speaks to me of God
and the love in your letter is a blessing.
Amazing, mother, that a nightingale sits on a pine branch
singing, everywhere green nature thrives
and I must fight for my country, repel invaders,
take this song into my ears, trying to
drown the fear of what I will hear in combat –
a clamour of dying, a crying out; to block the torture of
what I must do – to kill, anything, anyone, so foreign to me.'

Sweet bird – Hasan listened and sat,
watched your feathered throat rise and fall with lyric
as it muscled its way to the sky. He knelt and prayed,
'God, you gave this treasury to the Turkish Nation.
Grant it to the Turkish Nation still',
picked up his gun,
led his men out to meet wasteful death.

Hasan Ethem, Turkish teacher, early twenties, died of wounds April, 2015.