

Diane Murrell August 31, 2000

Margaret Menary

Granny Menary was driven from her farm at Drumarg. She left behind the richest of my memories. The Irish Republican Army was crawling from surrounding council houses into her barn, stockpiling illegal ammunition. The government paid some paltry compensation as fear and daughters hustled Granny to a city flat.

We visited. I was startled by her aging, marked by brown stains left in teacups her fingers could no longer clean. I took the car keys, my sister, my thoughts, and I took the kitchen scissors. We drove out from Armagh (city) and found the roads and turnings to Drumarg. Wild brambles of roses always sprayed around the kitchen window.

‘To cut some stem of home, some stem of love, and carry it back.’

I parked at the foot, not the top of the long pock-puddled loose stoned lane. Hilary sat. I walked. I cut sinewy thorny stalks and age old blooms; when turning, I saw a crew of boys, young men, striding up the hill with sticks, stones, bottles, stares, as if I were the trespasser, not they. As their stride lengthened, I pivoted and cast my voice like a quick snaking fishing line beneath the growth of hedge. “Get in the car. Start the car.” Not seeing through the hedge, no awareness penetrating, somehow all sister questioning and opposition flew aside and she obeyed. The key turned. I ran, panic traveling faster than I. The rocks, the feeling of prey, followed.

I gave my Granny roses from Drumarg: their thorns burred in my naivety.

