

## Melting Pot

That melting pot, it got my grandma.  
Skinny girl from County Limerick,  
taunted in the schoolyard -  
    *“cat lick-er, mackerel snapper”* -  
stories of the Pope’s forbidden orgies  
in his palace back in Rome.

Her older brother threw some rocks,  
not against Kathleen’s tormentors  
but in a riot where he hit black children  
with their parents rushing them to safety  
as a mostly Irish mob  
burned the ghetto to the ground.

Tabloid writers wrung their hands,  
deplored the senseless violence,  
called it a great shame.

Then came the changes -  
Irish cops, then Irish pols,  
big city mayors, at last a President.  
We had become quite white enough,  
Celtic myth, soda bread and brogue  
pressed out between the pages  
of a heavy history book.

Some days I watch me just pretend  
that I’m a crouton in the salad bowl,  
garnish for tomorrow’s California mix.  
Other mornings I wake up with gritty eyes  
and know I dreamed of grandma and those rocks,  
feel their tonnage pin me to the bed.

Bygones aren’t bygones until we make them be gone,  
wake up from the dead dreams and the live denials,  
the manufactured memories on the late late show.  
I’ll pile those dreams on grandma’s grave,  
go through my changes eyes wide open.

Mickey Ellinger  
St. Patrick’s Day, 1998