

**TOM McFADDEN**

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## THE RAG TREE

Wrapped in ancient allusion,  
I stare feelings through a rear window  
toward the strange, arboreal beckoning  
of what seems my Celtic tree.

While I stare through the back of modernity  
toward that looming structure,  
alive yet atavistic,  
remembrance evokes a rag tree  
of ancient Ireland,  
where, upon the boughs availing  
of that singular, special tree,  
strips of colored cloth were draped  
by those worry-weighted  
in fragile supplication  
for relief from moments fortune-fallen.

When next an ominous overcast  
usurps and fills my modern sky,  
I may travel through the back door of modernity,  
unseen and unexplaining,  
traveling backward to the site  
where rises the dramatic oak,  
and with a hand  
that may be trembling, worry-weighted  
... drape a colored rag across the strongest branch.

## THE RENDERING

A day it was to be of old adherences  
as I entered my love's house for the very first time,  
resolved to venerate ways of the past  
by asking a tough man for his daughter's hand.  
And soon, indeed, sat we, paired alone—  
he, stiffening, as he listened to the surname  
of this stranger in his home—  
while across the vast dining table of all decision,  
as well as I could, I sent my wishing.

Long he glared at the Irishness across my face,  
seeing, without specific cognizance,  
the remoteness of Donegal,  
where bilingual road signs yield solely to signs in Irish;  
where open hearths burn not logs, but turf from the bogside;  
and where wind-echoes still seem  
to host battle-cries in Gaelic  
against those who coveted such emerald green land,  
and viewed us as wild savages.  
Long he glared at the Irishness across my face,  
then, as I held out my wishing for love of his bloodline,  
rendered his deepest conclusion:  
"You's was the niggers of my day."