

# Trompe l'œil in Paul Muldoon's poetry: from ekphrasis to catharsis

ALEXANDRA TAUVRY

*Trinity College Dublin*

The Northern Irish poet Paul Muldoon is well known for creating poetic puzzles of baffling erudition and bewitching complexity. His mischievousness – or whimsicality – mesmerizes the reader, especially when he crossdresses the lyrical ‘I’ with a wide range of artistic attires. In the last twenty years, Muldoon has consistently juggled his poetry with other forms of art such as painting and drawing (*Cloth: A Visual and Verbal Collaboration* with Rita Duffy in 2007, *Wayside Shrines* with Keith Wilson in 2009), and music (librettos in the 1990s with Daron Hagen). A wide range of visual/textual collaborations anchors his most recent poetic works in an exciting interdisciplinary framework, offering the reader a dazzling plethora of perspectives. To use an image from the poem ‘Snow’ by Louis MacNeice, whom Paul Muldoon has acknowledged as a major influence on his work, I would contend that his writing is ‘incorrigibly plural’ and that it is this ‘drunkenness of [artistic] things being various’ that creates his poetic virtuosity.

Muldoon’s latest collection of poetry, *Plan B*, results from a collaboration with the Scottish photographer Norman McBeath and the poet’s engagement with photography brings a new dimension to his work. We may thus wonder if the title *Plan B* suggests an alternative to a former ‘Plan A’. Has Paul Muldoon decided to direct his poetry towards more visual horizons? And, is his poetry to be read or *seen*? This paper attempts to show that the interaction that takes place between Muldoon’s poems and the visual arts, whether *in absentia* or *in praesentia*, not only gives a more visual dimension to his work, but engenders a cathartic effect.

Firstly, I will argue that many of his poems can be deemed *ekphrastic* as they describe visual works of art, and that the simultaneous and multiple readings of the poetic text tend to create an *effet trompe l'oeil*, an optical illusion. Indeed, Muldoon’s verbal mischief and encyclopaedic knowledge blur the thin line separating text and image. Secondly, I will concentrate on Muldoon’s artistic interaction with the Belfast-born painter, Dermot Seymour, and demonstrate that the oblique and symbolic imagery of the artist, combined with the ubiquitous sectarian backdrop of his work, are mirrored in the poet’s skilful use of language. Finally, I will underline the fact that the ekphrastic quality of some of Muldoon’s poems goes

far beyond the mere interaction between text and image; it becomes a way of expressing past trauma.

The interaction between text and image in Muldoon's work is anchored in a textual/visual tradition that is particularly important in Northern Ireland. Liam Kelly, in his book on the Northern Irish artists entitled *Thinking Long* (1996), explains that we live in a 'text-related epoch':

Irish art has been both praised and criticised for having a literary bias. And it is true that there is an easy relationship between poet and painter in Ireland. The word 'Rosc', chosen for the former international exhibition held in Dublin, means 'poetry of vision' in Gaelic, and testifies to the literary thinking of the original organizers. (Kelly, 1996, p.21)

In some of Muldoon's works the visual counterpart to the text is indeed *in praesentia*. In some instances, when the visual and verbal aesthetics are close, a transposition, whether iconic or textual, takes place. There is thus, occasionally, a substitution or interchangeability of the two media. The elegy 'Incantata' was first published by the Graphic Studio Dublin in 1994 and offers a wonderful collaboration between Muldoon and several visual artists.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the book entitled *Cloth: A Visual and Verbal Collaboration – Interrogating Contested Spaces in Post-Conflict Society* was the final product of a collaboration between Muldoon and Rita Duffy and was published by the Millennium Court Arts Centre in Portadown in 2007. *When The Pie Was Opened*, was published by the American University of Paris and Sylph Editions in 2008. It was illustrated by the Italian artist Lanfranco Quadrio. Muldoon also wrote four illustrated books for children: *The O-O's Party* (1981), *The Last Thesaurus* (1995a), *The Noctuary of Narcissus Batt* (1997) and *Reverse Flannery* (2003).

Whilst the analysis of how the image and the poem interact in the aforementioned works is worthwhile and has been conducted in parts before, the ekphrastic quality of many of Muldoon's poems seems to me far more interesting when visual representations of the text are *in absentia*, as the pictorial dimension of poetry is then in full bloom. Some poems, such as 'Paul Klee: *They're Biting*' are clearly ekphrastic, as Muldoon gives the reader the reference of the painting and the name of the painter in the title of his poem. Some ekphrastic poems, however, are less obvious and more challenging for the reader.

Indeed, in some instances, the page can stand for the canvas and the form of the poem imitates the visual representations it deals with. In 'Hopewell Haiku', the sequence of ninety haikus could represent Japanese ink paintings as the white of the page, surrounding each haiku, could embody the frame of the painting. Additionally, the simplicity of the terms matches the visual economy of the paintings that are specific to the beginning of the

Muromachi style in Japan (from approximately the 14<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> century). The latter is indeed characterised by quick brush strokes and an expurgated style, combining text and image. Jefferson Holdridge suggests that in the first haiku ‘the shape of the poem mimics the shape of the image, with the aural rhyme echoing the visual one (red=red)’ (Holdridge, 2008, p.147):

I

The door of the shed  
open-shuts with the clangor  
of red against red.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, other poems almost *embody* the visual representation they deal with. The poems ‘The Plot’ and ‘A Half Door Near Cluny’ are very much similar to calligrammes.<sup>3</sup> In fact, in ‘A Half Door Near Cluny’ the French word ‘blé’ meaning ‘wheat’ appears at the centre of what seems to resemble a verbal enclosure formed by the letters ‘s-t-a-b-l-e’. In ‘The Plot’, the word ‘plot’ could mean a ‘sketch’ or ‘synopsis’, but it most likely refers to a plot of land in this context. Indeed, the term ‘alfa’, far from a misspelling, can refer to a type of North African grass used in the manufacture of paper.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, in the middle of this calligramme we can read the first letter of the Greek alphabet ‘alpha’ which is also the first letter of both the Hebrew and Phoenician alphabets. It was derived from the Phoenician letter Aleph meaning ‘ox’ or ‘leader’, and was originally formed from the hieroglyph of an ox’s head. It graphically represents the head of an ox when rotated one hundred and eighty degrees. Thus the letter and the image match each other as the ox is in the enclosed plot of land, just like the letter/word is in the centre of the poem/sheet of paper. Alcobia-Murphy argues that these two poems could thus be compared with an ‘alphabet soup’ (Alcobia-Murphy, 2006, p.14) as here letters are more important than words. Yet, I would suggest that this ‘alphabetical broth’ is methodically arranged, just like the alphabetical lists that Muldoon offers in some of his works, e.g. *The Noctuary of Narcissus Batt* (Alcobia-Murphy, 2006, p.14). Muldoon can also be humorous about this device and the sentence ‘He looks as if he’s swallowed a dictionary’ in *The Last Thesaurus* could almost apply to him as his poetry is a concentrate of knowledge, a bottomless pit of erudition.<sup>5</sup>

In other instances, the pictorial dimension of words is exploited to the extent that words are substituted for colours and images. The poem ‘Promises, Promises’ is visually pregnant as the term ‘braid’ in ‘As one fair braid, /The blue in an Indian girl’s dead eye’ (*PM* p.86) could either mean a ‘plait’, or it could be a 17<sup>th</sup>-century variation of the term ‘brede’:

[It] has been used poetically in the sense of ‘plait’ and modern writers also use *braid* in the transferred and vague senses, mentioned under ‘brede’: applied by the poets to things that

show or suggest interweaving of colours, or embroidery, esp. to the prismatic colouring of the rainbow. But used by some modern writers in sense of 'colouring, dye', apparently from misunderstanding their predecessors. (*O.E.D.*)

As 'braid', could then be replaced with 'dye', it would then rhyme with 'dead eye' (my emphasis). We can thus *hear* and almost *see* the word 'dye' formed by the final consonant 'd' and the following word 'eye'. 'Dye' is thus encrypted by the poet echoing what Hermogenes of Tarsus stated regarding ekphrasis, that the verbal representation should target the eyes as much as the ears.<sup>6</sup>

Although the previous examples illustrate the ekphrastic quality of some of Muldoon's poems, others go far beyond the mere interaction between text and image as their ekphrastic quality develops into a cathartic effect, thus expressing past trauma. The notion of catharsis used by Aristotle means 'to purge' in Greek and could easily apply to Muldoon's poetry in some instances. In order to develop this argument I would like to focus on Muldoon's intimate collaboration with the Belfast-born painter, Dermot Seymour.<sup>7</sup> Susan McCay astutely pointed out that:

Muldoon shares Seymour's zaniness and has a Seymour painting (of a blindfolded man on a precipice) on the cover of one of his books. He has recently dedicated a poem to Seymour. (cited in Seymour, 1995, p.9)

The poem McCay is hinting at is 'Cows'. It was published in *The Annals of Chile* in 1994 and brings together many aspects of Seymour's visual art. It was published six years after Seymour completed his painting entitled *An Ostrich appeared to a Gallowglass near the town of Aughnacloy* (1986). It is thus very likely that this painting – which is emblematic of Seymour's art – inspired Muldoon. In line three, Muldoon mentions the existence of a trough, which seems to be at a distance and outside the gaze of the speaker: 'a distant tingle of water into a trough' (*PM*, p.344). In the painting, the trough does not appear either but is strongly suggested as a cow bends its head out of a broken wall. Seymour confirmed this in an interview: '[near the town of Aughnacloy] there was a cow-shed a couple hundred yards long, with all these holes where the cattle had their heads sticking out to eat out of troughs' (Seymour, 1995, p.8). The painting and the poem are thus harmonious given that this element is omitted by both the visual and verbal representations.

Muldoon then displays his knowledge of Irish to further exemplify the link between his poetry and Seymour's art. Indeed, when the artist paints a 'cow-shed', the poet refers to it via a skilful interweaving of languages. The poet explains the etymology of the word 'boreen' in brackets:

(a diminutive form of the Gaelic *bóthar*, 'a road',

from *bó*, ‘a cow’, and *thar*  
meaning, in that case, something like ‘athwart’,

‘boreen’ has entered English ‘through the air’  
despite the protestations of the O.E.D.) (*PM*, p.345)<sup>8</sup>

‘Cow-shed’ and ‘boreen’ are linked as they have the term ‘cow’ in common. Thus, instead of directly mentioning the cow-shed Muldoon plays on the intertextual richness of language.

Moreover, when language cannot transcribe the visual experience, Muldoon resorts to neologisms. The following stanza – separated from the previous one by a dash – could indicate that this is another type of ekphrasis that may relate to another painting:

That smoker’s cough again: it triggers off from drumlin  
to drumlin an emphysemantiphon  
of cows. (*PM*, p.345)

The sound of the word ‘drumlin’ connotes the Orangeman’s drum. However, the primary meaning of the word is geographical and relates to a ‘ridge or “rigg”, a long narrow hill’ (*O.E.D.*). It is a glacial feature that is very common in the North of Ireland. This almost hallucinatory precipitation of cows described with the invented word ‘emphysemantiphon’ – endowed with medical overtones – brings the reader to another world. The painting *During September the swallows usually leave for Africa* (1988) seems to be the one that Muldoon is depicting here. Indeed, when referring to this painting, Seymour explained in an interview that:

Once again you have the cows, and the drumlin land which gives a sense of vertigo. This poor swallow usually migrates to Africa in September, and just because somebody in a military surveillance tower – for whatever reason, whether it be psychotic fit, an accident, or boredom – lets off a rifle shot... It could be someone coming home from a Gaelic match or whatever. It’s a metaphor for being in the wrong place at the wrong time, getting shot. I suppose that’s the motivation for that kind of turmoil and confusion, but it’s the loss again, whether it be of his senses, or the victim at the end. Once again the use of vertigo is to cause that confusion. (Seymour, 1995, pp.17-20)

All these elements are more or less made explicit by Muldoon in ‘Cows’. In the first lines of the poem: ‘Even as we speak, there’s a smoker’s cough/from behind the whitethorn hedge: we stop *dead* in our tracks’ (*PM*, p.344),<sup>9</sup> the ‘Smoker’s cough’ refers to a cough caused by excessive smoking, but the *O.E.D.* also states that the term ‘cough’ means ‘the sound of a bullet or shell being fired or bursting’. The latter analysis is reinforced by the word ‘dead’ in ‘we stop *dead* in our tracks’ as death is clearly hinted at. Muldoon and Seymour both chose this fleeting and indivisible moment, which is that of the gunshot in this case and which is typical of the pictorial *punctum temporis* or *kairos*.<sup>10</sup>

To finish with, Muldoon almost transforms his poem into a *catalogue raisonné*<sup>11</sup> as it covers a wide range of Seymour's paintings. Indeed, the last lines of the poem undoubtedly refer to Seymour's surreal and ethereal world:

Now let us talk of slaughter and the slain,  
the helicopter gun-ship, the mighty Kalashnikov:  
let's rest for a while in a place where a cow has lain. (*PM*, p.346)

These lines could indeed refer to *A Lysander over Ballymacpherson, County (L)Derry* (1984), or *The Omnipotent Lieut Zhdanov is outside cutting the Corn* (1985) as in these two paintings a female figure is lying on the grass as a helicopter hovers above her.

I would like to focus now on the hybridity and aggressiveness of the ubiquitous sectarian backdrop in Muldoon's imagery which evokes past trauma and seems to haunt the poet. Muldoon at times re-creates the Troubles on the American soil, interweaving Ireland and America, and creating a spatial *image double*. The surrealist painter, Salvador Dali, conceived the theory of the double image. Similar to the *trompe l'oeil*, it is an optical trick which gives an illusion of reality and which results from an obsession or paranoia (Descharnes, 2006, p.176). For instance, in '7, Middagh Street', the last speaker 'Louis' is assailed with goldfinches while living in the famous 'February House' in New York. The poet-speaker is harassed by Unionist slogans so as to reinforce the sense of not being in America but in Northern Ireland. Muldoon transforms the American space into a potential setting for a re-staging of the Troubles.

Indeed, the poem 'Wire' could be a perfect example of this Western vectorialism as the action seems to take place in America and yet the events depicted are reminiscent of the Troubles. Writing about this poem, Clair Wills underlines that 'the poet "roves out" into the familiar North American suburban landscape, only to find himself trapped inside a nightmarish "rerun" of events in Northern Ireland' (Wills, 1998, pp.201-202). It is as if recent events of Irish history were 'grafted' upon the American landscape. On a deeper level, if we contrast 'Wire' and 'Cauliflowers' published in *Madoc*, this actual rerun of events is possibly based in Belfast as is the earlier poem. These two sestinas bear the same background of sectarian violence and focus on explosions. The song 'The Men Behind the Wire' (*PM*, p.449) mentioned in 'Wire' is an Irish Republican song and was written, and composed, in the aftermath of the imposition of internment without trial. The lyrics deal with British soldiers marauding 'through the little streets of Belfast'. The places referred to in 'Wire' all bear a connection with Belfast: 'Smithfield' (*ibid.*) refers to the bus station in Belfast which was the scene of a series of explosions on July 21<sup>st</sup>, 1972 – what became known as 'Bloody Friday',

while 'La Mon' (*ibid.*) refers to an incendiary bomb which exploded at the La Mon Hotel just outside Belfast on February 17th, 1978. These events mirror the blast occurring in 'Cauliflowers'. The 'jail break' (*ibid.*) may refer to the Crumlin Road Prison Escape (also in Belfast) which happened on June 10<sup>th</sup>, 1981. This poem is particularly ridden with references to the conflict. Furthermore, even in the most mundane poems the sectarian divide of Northern Ireland is present.

In fact, in 'The Mudroom', a poem about Muldoon's house in New Jersey, the focus is on a 'blue-green line' which is also referred to as 'a blue-green membrane' (*PM*, p.398). Clair Wills suggests that this blue-green line may be a symbol of his reaching middle life, but John Kerrigan sees it more in terms of sectarian backdrop: he suggests that the blue colour is reminiscent of the colour of the Royal Ulster Constabulary, while the green colour refers to the nationalist faction (cited in Kendall, 2004, p.133). This would illustrate Muldoon's oblique handling of the sectarian Irish conflict, the transposition of the Irish Border to where he lives in New Jersey, as well as the importance of the use of colours in his work. Although the blue and green colours are particularly evocative of the sectarian conflict in the North, others loom large in the poetry of Muldoon.

The red colour is indeed omnipresent in Muldoon's depiction of the sectarian backdrop and could thus exteriorize some sort of a trauma, as the red colour can be associated with the Red Hand of Ulster and thus with the sectarian imagery. It could be referred to as an *obsession idéative* (Bertagne, 2004, p.70)<sup>12</sup> which occurs when a visual representation besieges one's mind. The visual potential of the word 'red' is indeed emphasized in 'Yarrow': 'I saw red, red, red, red, red' (*PM*, p.384). This hammering effect is as much visual as sonorous. The colour is both imprinted mentally and on our retina. This brings to mind the example of the haiku mentioned previously. It is clear that the poet even invites us to *read* the colour. This is made obvious in the following extracts of the elegy to his mother, in which the yarrow plant has the same function as Proust's *madeleine*, bringing back memories and past trauma:

all I remember was the sudden rush  
of blood from his nose, a rush of blood and snatters ('Yarrow', *PM*, p.358).

The only Saracen I know's a Saracen tank  
With a lion rampant on its hood:

From Aghalane to Artigarvan to Articlave  
The Erne and the Foyle and the Bann must run red (*PM*, p.368)

Another example of the ubiquity of the red colour is to be found in examples such as 'Elizabloodybeth' (*PM*, p.360) in 'Yarrow', or in the following verses: 'of how you called a Red

Admiral a Red/*Admirable*, of how you were never in the red' (*PM*, p.339) in 'Incantata'. 'Red' is both used as a final rhyme as well as an internal rhyme. The assonance in 'r' and 'd' frames the word 'red'. The enjambment brings closer the term 'Red' and the first syllable of '*Admirable*' which produces the following optical trick or *trompe l'œil*: 'red-ad'. We are thus encouraged to *read* the red colour. We could mention the poetic and rhetorical Greek notion of the *enargeia* (or *evidentia* in Latin) as the poet produces before our eyes – *ante oculos* – the image that he tries to produce verbally. This is thus very close to the notion of *hypotyposis* which, according to the *O.E.D.*, signifies the 'vivid description of a scene, event, or situation, bringing it, as it were, before the eyes of the hearer or reader'.

This colour is also enhanced by editorial choices such as those found in the poem 'Glad Rags' (*Cloth*) where only the words 'Arterial blood' are printed in red. On the page facing this extract is Rita Duffy's painting, *Mantle*, which represents the full mantle of a priest as if it were soaked in blood — or in this 'arterial blood'.<sup>13</sup>

This brings me to my final point: the ekphrastic poem as a means for Muldoon to purge his emotions and past trauma. Muldoon's elegy entitled 'Incantata' is an example of how catharsis is used when he tries to cope with the loss of a friend. This elegy was written for his friend and former lover, the visual artist Mary Earle Powers. We could find in this elegy the template for this purgative process as the poem is suffused with cathartic memories. The following extract is particularly poignant:

You must have known already, as we moved from the 'Hurly Burly'  
to McDaid's or Riley's,  
that something was amiss: I think you even mentioned a homeopath  
as you showed off the great new acid-bath  
in the Graphic Studio, and again undid your portfolio  
to lay out your latest works; I try to imagine the strain  
you must have been under, pretending to be as right as rain  
while hearing the bells of a church from some long-flooded valley. (*PM*, pp.334-335)

Poetry is endowed with curative powers and can relieve poets and eventually heal past trauma. However, Muldoon seems to give up on this idea as he struggles to overcome his grief, '[he] can no more read between the lines' (*PM*, p.392). Yet, the fact that Muldoon first published 'Incantata' with the Graphic Studio in Dublin – the exact place where Powers had shown him her latest works – may indicate that he was trying to build a bridge between past and present, between the visual and the verbal in order to mourn and eventually accept the death of his friend. Eventually, Muldoon succeeds in overcoming his loss when the ink of the pen merges with that of the painter's brush:

[...] this *Incantata*  
might have you look up from your plate of copper or zinc  
on which you've etched the row upon row  
of army-worms, than that you might reach out, arrah,  
and take in your ink-stained hands my own hands stained  
with ink. (*PM*, p.341)

In order to come to terms with his loss, the poet may need to subvert language by exceeding its inadequacy and limitations. Indeed, Muldoon revels in interdisciplinary collaborations in order to endow his writing with more expressive forms of art such as painting. The polysemy and visual pregnancy of words provide the writer with a more eloquent and vivid palette. The kaleidoscopic and colourful writing of Muldoon not only enables him to enhance the visual vibrancy of words, it also serves a wider purpose, that of transcribing his past memories onto the page.

Muldoon keeps entangling memories of Northern Ireland and of the Troubles, thus creating a hybrid memory. This memory is, however, at times unreliable; memory lapses create a certain tension between the authentic and chimerical, the collective and personal memories. These memories are thus articulated in their most fragmented dimension. Muldoon keeps manipulating memory for his own purposes even if it means 'troubling' his reader who is invited to decode this tortuous and enigmatic writing, at once unpredictable and mischievous.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY:

ALCOBIA-MURPHY, S., 2006. *Sympathetic ink: intertextual relations in Northern Irish poetry*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press

BERTAGNE, P. & PÉDINIELLI, J.-L., 2004. *Les Névroses*. Paris: A. Colin

DESCHARNES, R. & NERET, G., 2006. *Dalí: L'œuvre peint*. Köln: Taschen

HOLDRIDGE, J., 2008. *The Poetry of Paul Muldoon*. Dublin: The Liffey Press

KELLY, L., 1996. *Thinking Long: Contemporary Art in the North of Ireland*. Cork: Gandon Editions

KERRIGAN, J., 'Paul Muldoon's Transits: Muddling Through after Madoc'. In: KENDALL, T. & MCDONALD, P. (eds.), 2004. *Paul Muldoon: Critical Essays*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, pp.125-149

MONTIER, J.-P. (ed.), 2007. *A L'œil: des interférences textes/images en littérature*. Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes

MULDOON, P., 2009a. *Wayside Shrines*. Oldcastle: Gallery Books

MULDOON, P. & MCBEATH, N., 2009b. *Plan B*. London: Enitharmon Press

- MULDOON, P., 2008. *When The Pie Was Opened, The Cahiers Series*. Vol. VIII. The American University of Paris and Sylph Editions
- MULDOON, P. & DUFFY, R., 2007. *Cloth: A Visual and Verbal Collaboration – Interrogating Contested Spaces in Post-Conflict Society*. Portadown: Millenium Court Arts Centre
- , 2003. *Reverse Flannery*. London: Random House
- , 2001a. *Poems 1968-1998*. London: Faber
- , 2001b. *Vera of Las Vegas*. Oldcastle: Gallery Books
- , 1999. *The Birds: translated from Aristophanes*. Translated with Richard Martin. Oldcastle: Gallery Books
- , 1997. *The Noctuary of Narcissus Batt*. London: Faber
- , 1995a. *The Last Thesaurus*. London: Faber
- , 1995b. *Six Honest Serving Men*. Oldcastle: Gallery Books
- , 1994. *Incantata*. Dublin: Graphic Studio Dublin
- , 1981. *The O-O's Party*. Oldcastle: Gallery Press
- SEYMOUR, D., 1995. *Works 18: Dermot Seymour*. Cork: Gandon Editions
- WILLS, C., 1998. *Reading Paul Muldoon*. Newcastle Upon Tyne: Bloodaxe Books

#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Chris Reid, *Summer Shower, Dublin*; Patrick Hickey, *Three Pears*; Patrick Pye, *Matters of Air*; Carmel Benson, *Leap*; Maria Simmonds-Gooding, *Ritual Place*. There are only seventy-five copies of this collection; one of them is in the Early Printed Books Library of Trinity College Dublin.

<sup>22</sup> Paul Muldoon, *Poems 1968-1998*, London, Faber, 2001a. Hereafter abbreviated in the text to *PM*.

<sup>3</sup> A poem whose shape echoes its thematic preoccupations.

<sup>4</sup> 'North African name of species of Esparto grass [...] used in the manufacture of paper, etc.' (*O.E.D.*)

<sup>5</sup> It is thus not surprising that one of Muldoon's first books was the *The Junior World Encyclopaedia*.

<sup>6</sup> 'Il faut que l'expression sollicite les yeux en s'adressant aux oreilles' (cited in Montier, 2007, 111).

<sup>7</sup> The cover of the book illustrated by Seymour and which represents a blindfolded man is *Six Honest Serving Men* (1995b), *The Birds* (1999) and *Vera of Las Vegas* (2001b) were illustrated by paintings of birds made by Seymour.

<sup>8</sup> The word actually comes from the Irish *bóithrín*, simply meaning 'small road' – 'in' at the end meaning 'little'. Although it connotes 'bó' (meaning 'cow') because it sounds the same, it may have nothing to do with cows.

<sup>9</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>10</sup> Or *pregnant moment*. See for instance Liliane Louvel, 'Le tiers pictural: l'événement entre-deux', 229, in Montier, 2007. The 'punctum temporis' means an instant of time that cannot be divided. 'Kairos' refers to 'Fullness of time; the propitious moment for the performance of an action or the coming into being of a new state'. (*O.E.D.*)

<sup>11</sup> Monograph which covers every known work of an individual artist.

<sup>12</sup> They refer to obsessive ideas.

<sup>13</sup> It was exhibited in the Irish Cultural Centre or *Collège des Irlandais* in Paris in March and April 2008.