

GRANDMA FLYNN

by Donal O'Flynn

She shoved a small bottle under her aprons
*and came towards me, darkening the passageway
from "Ancestor" by Thomas Kinsella*

The night I heard the Banshee
she passed away.
In my screaming fear
dada and mama woke.

We'd seen her in the convalescence
home a few days earlier.
I was confused because of the cot
A big peoples' cot with bars and lots of pillows

Her eyes were open but she didn't answer to
any of us the whole time staring.
Mama told me grandma was very sick and
I should pray she'd get better.

I'd slept with grandma on the hard bed
by the warm Aga wall for ages before she got sick.
She was soft, cuddly and smelt of snuff, mints and must.
Every night we said the rosary.
Her big black beads passing in the dark when it came time for me
to "Hail Mary....."

No sleep until we had blessed all the family, scattered relations,
friends and enemies.
It felt like there were hundreds then.

She used to tell me all the time - "follow in your fathers'
footsteps"

Sometimes following him shooting or fishing
I'd fall behind lepping on muddy ground from big
footstep to big footstep
I was grown a man before understanding what she meant

