

John FitzGerald

**LONG
DISTANCE**



Gallery Books

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for Róisín

Lost Chorus

You'll never make it to there now,
even at the trees' thickest — the centre
extending outwards always to admit
new voices juggling, whooping, spilling,
the blackbird's surge, chaffinch's glissando,
and the alarm calls, love calls,
stay-off-my-patch calls — earnest,
fulsome, nothing just for the sake of it,
the undiminished mash-up needing no
appraisal as you forge onwards, inwards,
towards the earsplitting point of it all —
but fail, your need for climax appeased
by these rooks unhooding the canopy,
warm air's ease, stream's silvery trickle.

Long Distance

Standing on the front steps,
the sky still too bright for all the stars to shine,

I send one loud shout off into the valley
and in their own time, Clearagh, Mount Music,
Ardaneneen, all reply —

but then a pause,
a silence waiting for one last place

to answer. I must believe
this is the Universe
letting me know

that my call has been received
and logged and will
be dealt with in due course.

Strobus

Your adoption day, planting a tree
in the Shedfield ditch to succeed
the large declining sycamore,

my spade strikes metal and I pull
from a tangle of briar and ivy
the frame of your first bike, rubber grips
split and faded, pedals still turning —

and then up comes a toy phone
that you or someone else discarded,
its keypad legible still,
the convex screen expectant.

I raise it, caked with earth, to my cheek
wanting to leave you a voicemail
that explains where all the years have gone.

Artisan

Autumn plumps
every fruit and seed,

glosses each
with a fingertip —

and none more so
than these:

the lacquered nipples
of the rose hip.