

John FitzGerald

MUD ANGELS



Gallery Books

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for Alexander, Elena, Nicholas and James

October

Your speckled woods
and marsh fritillaries
all gone

now a first hard frost
has scorched
the scutchy lawn.

From Audley Place

See, here is how a city's meant to be. Perfect
in first light, the streets still quiet, redbrick
fronts mirrored in a somnambulant river,
the air expectant *and* replete, another day ahead
of work and sex and death, a confidence
of commerce and prosperity. He paused, his dog
attentive to departure, change in gait or tone.
But soon he would resume: There, that spire,
St Mary's, and beyond, the woods of Sunday's Well
no painter could do justice to. He paused again,
and then the sunlit hills around us seemed
to rise like golden loaves, and the whole scene,
this cradled city, its rooves and labyrinth of streets
and gilded waterways, by now a miracle.

Felicity

At the centre of the word
is ambivalence,

or choice, or indecision.
Pick one, or none, or all of them,

and you're still no wiser
though closer to the truth.

Move on, farther, more,
and then look back.

And there you have it:
the word made fresh,

and not the only way
to know it.

Spacious Days

The way a bowl slow
to settle on its shelf
will pirouette for ages.
Or the stray tea leaf evades
the hunting spoon to plunge
and spin on the swirl.
This is how I spend
my days now, trying
everything to stretch them
to the last, not for industry
alone, but to stay
in the dreamzone of thought
and fantasy and reading,
an acquired idleness I first saw
in Florence, a villa near
Fiesole, invited there
by an American girl to play
tennis among the beautiful
rich, the hostess taking
my arm as a sister would,
to show me around,
not out of interest,
but to make me feel welcome,
and looked me in the eye
as if knowing the affliction,
and smiling and saying,
you can make this a new
port of call now, raising
her arm as if waving,
which made the waiters turn
and look, then turn away again.