

## **Philomena's Children**

**By Simon Jenner**

My Dutch uncle-in-law pressed the  
monogrammed cream bag at my parents: *Here.*

*They won't be needing these at KLM.*

Ex-resistance, he'd seen too many  
wrenched exodi. Too many crushed bones.

*Here. For the flight.* My parents sat  
open-eared to his litany of nuns'  
tales, trade red-braided with a rosary  
factor of profit, a lost decade clacked  
into a diaspora of playpens, a  
flourish of small gifts to eyes losing  
their blue as they westered altitude.

*Here*, to click back beads – wood, bone, fruit-stone –  
across an ocean spells spillage, whelmed  
loss shot back with steely innocence,  
fabled surprise, ash-cross reunions over graves,  
keening, keening the tang of a foreign tonguing.

Was there infant Irish  
in the first raspberry I'd blow whistling through  
bone: this now yellowed plastic nipple,  
brittled with its sere period design  
for living, svelte as a Sputnik answer?

Or did my accent speak of travel already  
winged east with the wise men opposite to these  
told-off bundles of migration? A silvered  
Vickers Viscount, not the espresso-tint Boeing  
and all its café-au-lait leather offered

*baby kits. I've stopped it, exporting babies  
with coffee from Dublin to the States. Here.*

*Here, have one. For the flight.* Here's my cheat,  
an Irish penny whistle, so far from the seed-  
dropping nightingales along Frankfurt Flats:  
well-to-do, who'd answer them shrill, white  
and concave in our crescent drive, lost in  
the June dry rasp of sycamores  
my snug and star-eastern opportunities.  
I'd blow my cheat now, my flaked escape,  
but for the tang whetting tales to master me:  
*Suck our bones dry, child, we'll start to whistle.*