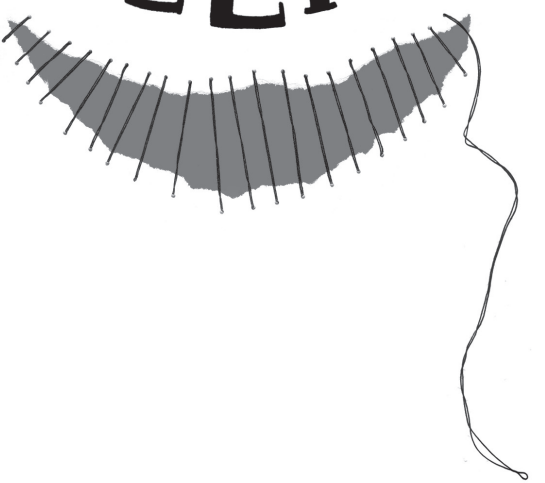
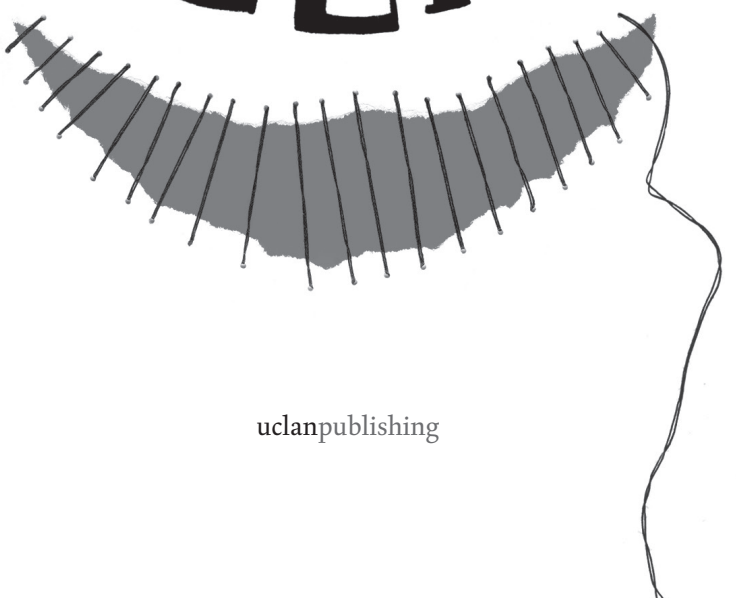
GUT FEELINGS



C. G. MOORE

GUT FEELINGS



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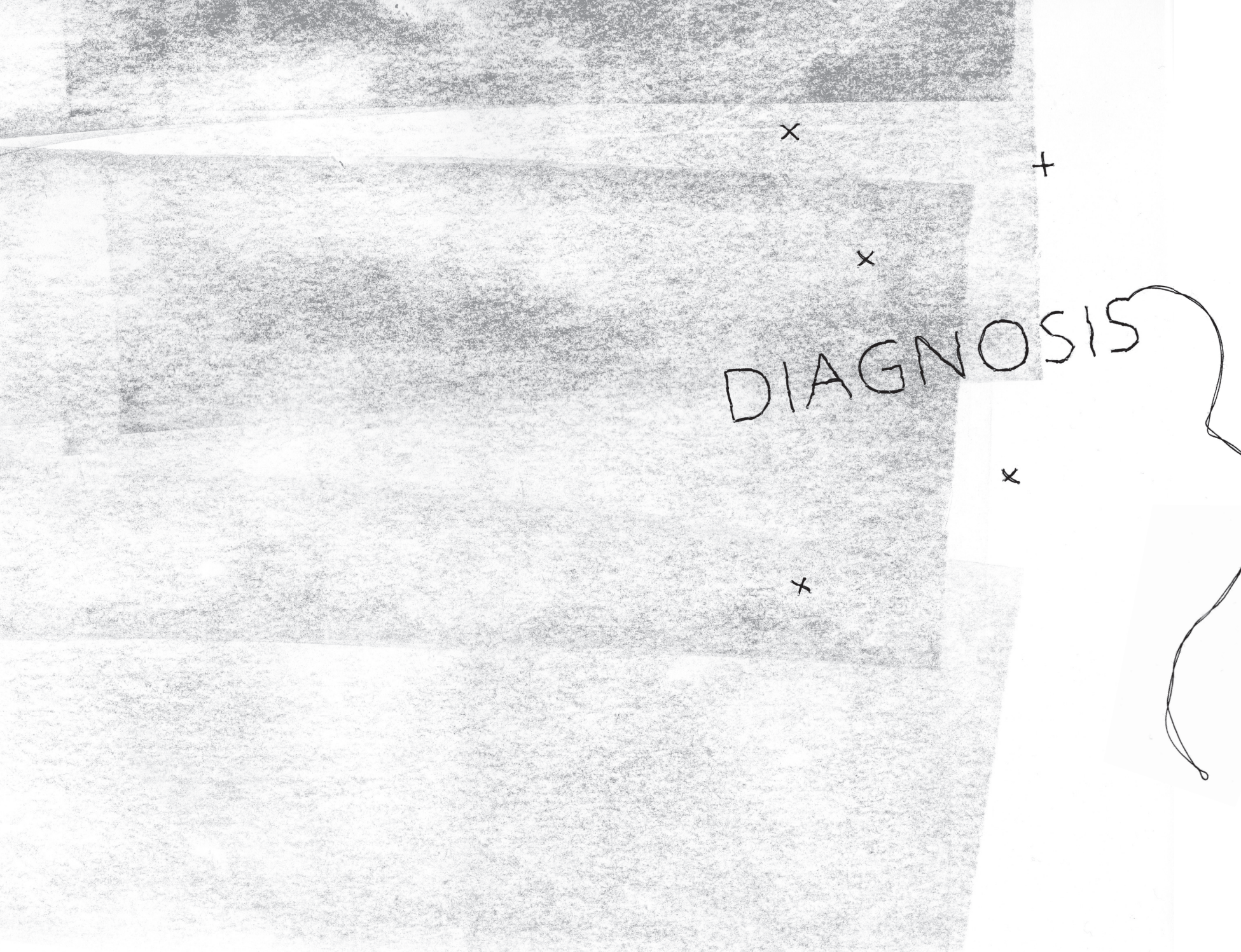
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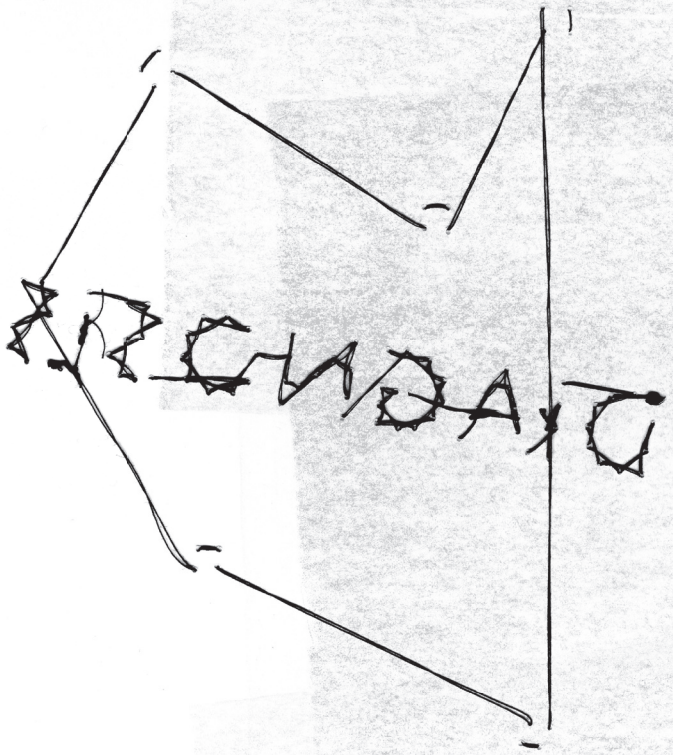
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Light stronger than the Sun,
More pearlescent than the Moon,
More beautiful than a shooting star.

To Mam,
Words will never be able to capture
what you mean to me.


DIAGNOSIS



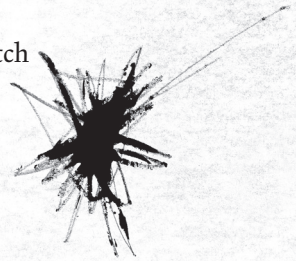
ELEVEN-NESS

Eleven should be care-free youth
Bubbling in veins,
Pitching balls into baskets
And crafting muskets
From tinfoil and
Imagination.

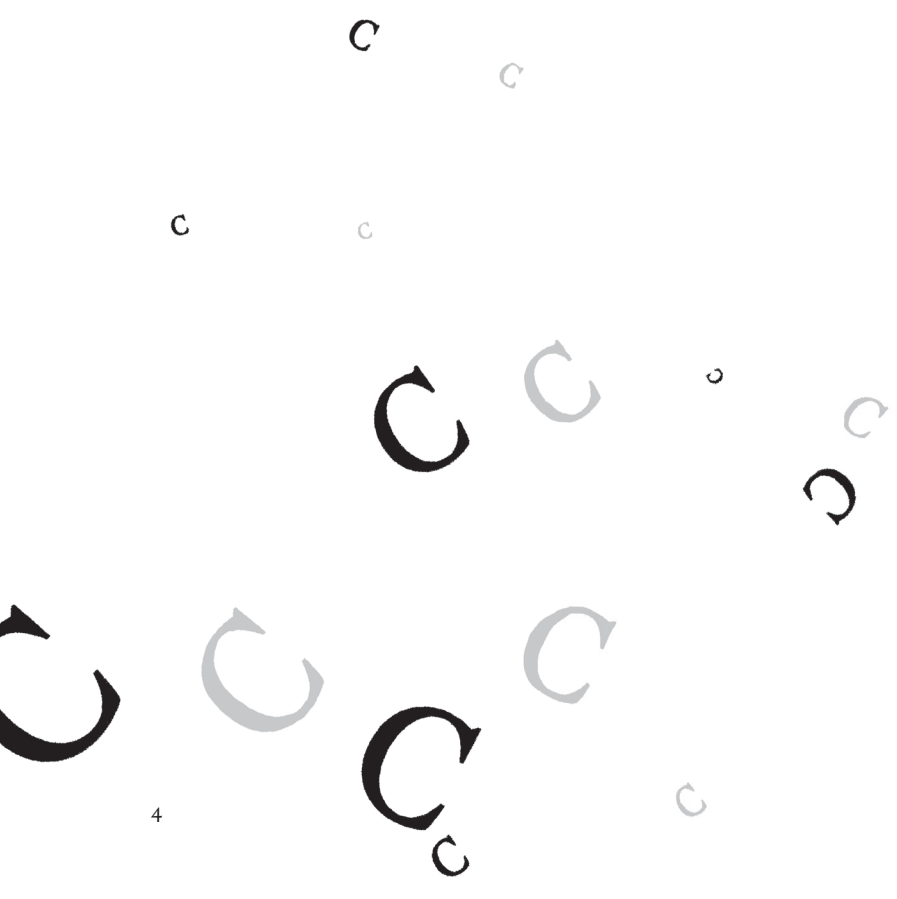
Eleven should be about
Making memories
Wishing wishes and
Living life without a care;
Playing, laughing, smiling, thinking,
Jumping, running, cycling, singing.

Eleven should be everything
And anything
It's wanted to be,

But for me
It's different;
A spectre,
An itch



Burrowing deep under my skin;
A dark mark staining my blood,
Branding my heart.
Even though it hasn't been confirmed,
I feel it swirling beneath my skin.

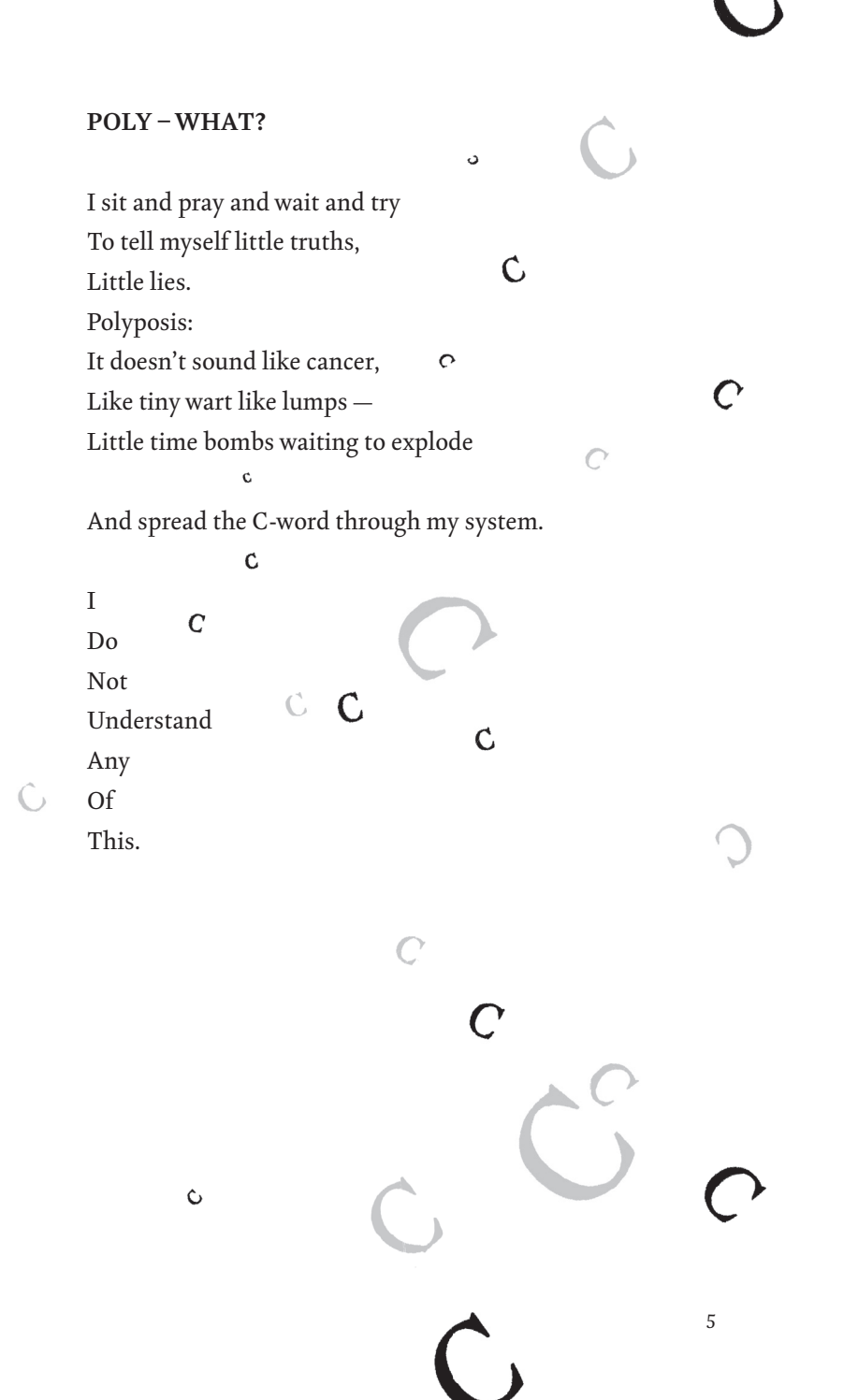


POLY – WHAT?

I sit and pray and wait and try
To tell myself little truths,
Little lies.
Polyposis:
It doesn't sound like cancer,
Like tiny wart like lumps —
Little time bombs waiting to explode

And spread the C-word through my system.

I
Do
Not
Understand
Any
Of
This.



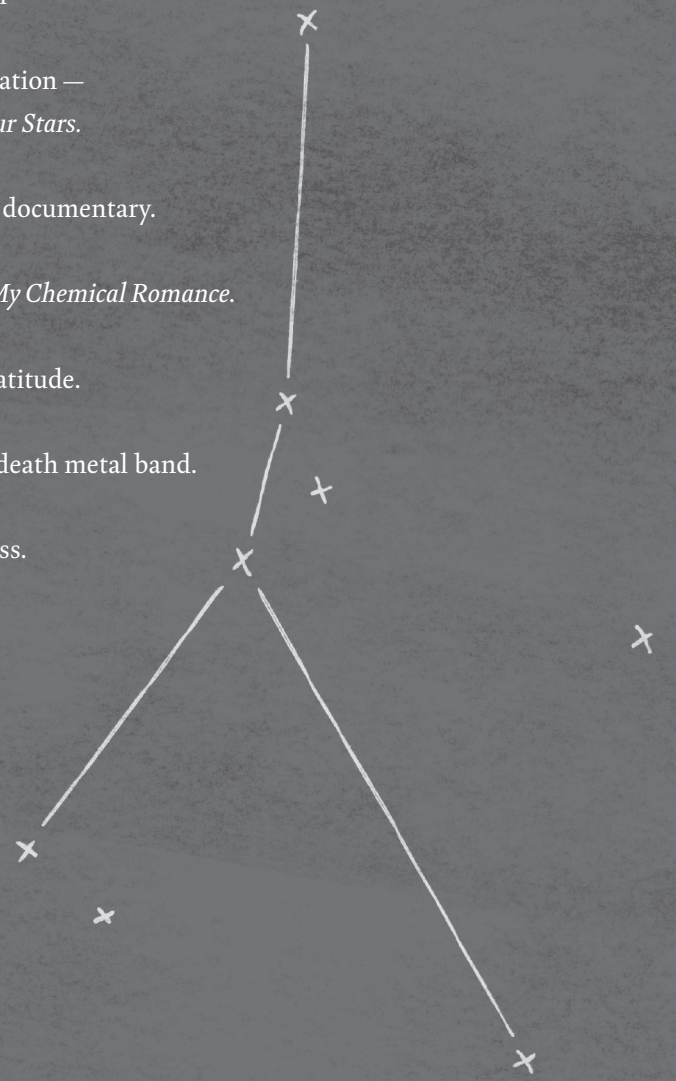
BLOOD TEST

Blood flows through the tube;
Funny how it can tell so much,
Know so much of who we are,
Hold secrets that our brains cannot fathom.

My blood will be sent off.
We will see if I have the gene.
All that runs through my mind is
Cancer. Cancer. Cancer. Cancer.

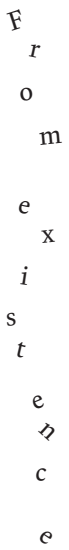
CANCER

A star sign —
The crab.
A constellation —
Fault in Our Stars.
A film —
American documentary.
A song —
Sung by *My Chemical Romance*.
Tropic —
Circle of latitude.
Music —
A British death metal band.
Cancer —
Death's kiss.



DIAGNOSIS

Dad pats me roughly on the back
As if this will scrape up the sands of time
With bitten, bloodied nails,
Erasing the bad news from
memory,



His lips move
But I cannot hear;
I taste salt on my tongue,
Feel tears flow in tributaries
That hands fail to wipe away.

SUNDAYS

Every Sunday
Dad takes me to the park
To watch the boys
Play football.

My eyes follow the boys —
Not the ball
As it pinballs

Up

and

down

The pitch.

The whistle blows;
I chase dad,
Taking the five euro note
That flutters
Into my hands.

In clouds of cigarette smoke
And boyish bravado,
I laugh
With the boys,
Never once looking
At the girls.

Time flies by and
Dad places a firm hand
On my shoulder,
Holding onto me
As he wobbles home.

Have fun? he asks.
I nod,
Holding my nose
Against b e e r
b r e a t h.

TOGETHER WE CRY

Dad drives the car,
His eyes welling as he turns
Into unfamiliar territory.

Beside me, mam pats my back,
Like this will take away the darkness
Growing inside me.

Emotion silences us.
Futures frighten us.
Silence smothers us.

MONEY MEANS NOTHING

I take the €100 note
From dad's callused hands,
Thanking him with a forced smile.
Money cannot buy us minutes
Though we spend hours
Chasing coins,
While bleeding limited life
Spent with family.

GRANDAD

Grandad died
Seven years ago.
It doesn't stop my mind
Conjuring memories:

Dancing in springtime cherry blossoms,
Ice cream by the beach in summer,
Crunching autumnal leaves,
Wrapped up warm in winter.

He had FAP,
Just like mam,
Just like me —
I struggle onwards
Without him.

I miss him
More than words
Can ever say.

FAP IS . . .

fa*mil*ial / ad*e*no*mat*us / pol*yp*o*sis

Definition of familial adenomatous polyposis:

A rare condition
Affecting colon and rectum.
Cause: a faulty gene.
An invisible illness,
Inherited condition,
Chronic disease –
A silent killer
If left untreated.

DR BOURKE

Dr Bourke is
An ordinary man
Just like any other;
Greying hair,
Stubbled,
Weathered hands
Wielding scalpels.

Not one of
The handsome doctors
From the TV.

I watch his lips move,
Mam nods.

Have you any questions?

All I have are questions:
Why me?
What does this mean?
When will I be better?

Dr Bourke speaks
In medical terms
My twelve-year-old brain
Cannot comprehend.

FIRST DAY

I enter the classroom,
Take a seat
In the middle;
Far away
To avoid questions,
Far away
From teachers' gazes.

Boys
I do not know
Kick the legs
Of my chair.

What is it they want
This time?

The bell rings.
I push back
From the desk
In time to hear
Them hiss:



SCIENCE

How we are,
Why we are,
How we work
Fascinates me;
Demands my attention
In a way
Nothing else can.

From Darwin to Newton,
I thirst to know more:
About who we are —

Who
I
Am,
How
I
Should
Be.