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instead Clifton retains his well-adjusted elegance and poise as the poem concludes:

One last glance, before we break away  
Into past and future .... Drizzle, dark before dawn,  
The lights kept low, in deference to the wishes  
Of the damned ...

For your company, much thanks,  
In the underworld. *Slán*, and don't look back.

(‘THE EARLY HOUSES’)

Clifton is not a poet to glorify bohemian debauch, nor is he a poet who needlessly namedrops or exploits his friendships with other writers and artists in order to present himself as a member of the cognoscenti. The latter point can be assumed and Clifton prefers to work in an excavatory mode, unearthing lost voices and unheralded names notably Benjamin Fondane in *Secular Eden*, but also in this volume, Polish writer and journalist Ryszard Kapuściński (‘In Memory of Ryszard Kapuściński’) and a whole vista of reflections on South American culture in ‘Letter from Buenos Aires’. Even if not all readers will catch all of Clifton’s cultural references, we can admire the intellectual integrity and plenitude in the construction of these poems.

There is, in this collection, as with its predecessor, a ‘moral pressure’ (‘A Swallow’) and seriousness. While some of the poems posit a condition ‘beyond history’ or ‘South of history’ (‘Mercator’), more often in these poems, present and past appear governed by “Traumatized, de-centred” revenants (‘Sweat-House’), symptoms of ‘our bitterness, our confusion’ (‘The Winter Sleep of Captain Lemass’) which spill over into the present and the everyday. These poems do not bypass history; they wrestle with and work through the past in a wholly measured and compelling way. This is another magisterial collection.

*World Without Maps* is the first collection from Mayo-based author Geraldine Mitchell. As the title suggests, it is partly a meditation on place, but not necessarily in the sense of a defined locality, even though many of the poems are grounded in the poet’s Mayo environment. Rather, these poems are psychogeographies which navigate psychological as well as physical and cartographical space. As Mitchell has suggested at interview, a loved environment provides also a psychological spaciousness: ‘It’s the nature of place that makes living in days easier ... It’s that you can more easily make your days your own, decide to enter the world at the edge of the possible.’

The journey without maps which these poems undertake is partly that of mapping the possible, the feasible, the necessary. Some of the

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poems chart moments of disorientation, a 'lostness', while others identify a new path or new insight by way of resolution. So, the poem 'Left Luggage' suggests that the eponymous 'luggage' – the solution, the desire, the wish for something – can be found if only we look hard enough. But in the meantime, 'we are all at sea, our time well spent / diving, back and back, to unpick locks, find home'. Even as the poet aspires towards some kind of equipoise ('my sinuous path to peace' – 'Green Road') it is evident that Mitchell possesses a restless and at times troubled, intellect which leads her to go on looking, to find the 'wonder' or 'still centre' of things ('Seeing').

The disorientations of self and the search for a more anchored sense of being are also felt in the anger Mitchell injects into her political poems. If consolations can be found on an individual plane, globally we are left with the 'simmering shame' ('Dragon's Teeth') of military conflict, natural disaster, climate change and refugee crises. But Mitchell's muse finds its most compelling subject matter in the simple struggle to stay alive and be 'hauled to dry land' ('The Weight of Water') from the impending flood, be it global or psychological.

Andrew Jamison's debut collection *Happy Hour* has some good things in it, but its lugubrious wisdom will not please everyone. If we take the poem 'Eating Alone in an Empty Diner' as a kind of exemplary poem from the collection, one detects a kind of ironised, postmodern *tristesse* amid the detritus of a New York diner 'somewhere near the end of happy hour' in which one isn't sure if the poem is supposed to be sad, funny, ironic or romantic. Perhaps in trying to be all of these or an ironised version of these, it fails to communicate any real emotion other than a kind of objectivist rejoicing in the flotsam and jetsam of modern urban 'civilisation'. The same could be said for a number of other poems such as 'The Bus to Belfast' or 'Thinking of You on an Evening Walk in January'. Jamison doesn't shy away from the big themes: loneliness, loss, love, time, travel but he ends up sounding like a fusion of Philip Larkin and Paul Muldoon exhibiting the depressive irony of the former and the high jinks and modishness of the latter. The collection as a whole, by musing on the significance of trash-can modernity, ends up being complicit in the emptiness it hopes to escape. In making the unpoetic into poetry in a self-conscious, self-reflexive way, many of these poems seek for a significance which the materials and images used render into insignificance, even as the poet asserts his wished-for epiphany in some strong closing lines. Thus some successful, meditative conclusions appear well-earned, while others seem slight and unconvincing. Perhaps a tone less directed towards the weighty conclusion – something sarcastic, flippant, light-headed – might give these urban scenarios a more vibrant, less mordant wisdom.