

COFFEE SHOP

Paddy Hughes

In Sheen
close by the spike
that annually prods us
with sombre reminders
of the dead and their deeds
there is a warm place.

It is a continental coffee place
rich with piquant meats and pies
and slices of doily-ed desserts.

It is a comfortable, friendly place,
a pavement oasis for slaking a thirst,
a first for informal business baguettes,
a natter-chit-chattering base
for artists and writers,
dust encrusted plasterers,
musty pensioners
and gangs of Mums
with prams.

It has a shop front window
lensed on the local world
and projects
a non-stop, wide screen film
of the passing cavalcade,
a criss-cross parade
of message-sided lorries,
shopping-laden ladies
and cars parking illegally.

It also had another set of windows
suspended on one side,
sun coloured vistas
of a cherished world ago,
sky blues, wheat creams,
sail whites, sea greens,
Balkan indigo,
orchards bursting with oranges,
grey men's squares with fountains,

| a n | t h o | l o | g y |

fishing ports and mountains,
secret holiday haunts
before the civil war,
all frozen now
on the wall
in oils.

Dare
anyone
buy one
and steal
a vital part
of a prisoner's view.

And prisoners they are –
Madame and her charming family
serving at Montana –
prisoners of memory
and the terror
of Mostar.

But somehow,
a piece of the world away, they soldier on
and smile.