

CONCOURS ATLAS JUNIOR 2016– ANGLAIS

Extrait de *The Ballroom*, Anna Hope (Grande-Bretagne, Doubleday, 2016)

Anna Hope est une jeune auteur anglaise, *The Ballroom* est son deuxième roman.

The Ballroom se déroule en 1911, dans un asile psychiatrique du Yorkshire. John, un Irlandais exilé en Angleterre, y a été interné parce qu'il est mélancolique, et Ella, jeune ouvrière, y a été enfermée pour avoir brisé une fenêtre de la filature où elle travaillait. Dans l'asile, hommes et femmes vivent séparés, à l'exception du vendredi, où ils se réunissent le soir dans la salle de bal pour danser. Entre les deux protagonistes naît une histoire d'amour, qui se verra entravée par le personnel de l'asile, dont Charles, l'un des médecins : adepte de l'eugénisme, il prône la ségrégation des pauvres et des aliénés, voire leur stérilisation.

L'extrait à traduire se situe au milieu du roman. John, en trouvant une plume d'hirondelle, se remémore son enfance irlandaise auprès de son père, puis leur séparation : la pauvreté pousse de nombreux hommes à émigrer. Les mots irlandais qui figurent dans le texte (en italique) sont l'évocation d'une langue que l'Empire britannique a tenté d'étouffer.

One late afternoon, when the sun was slanting sideways over the field, John uncovered a feather in amongst the hay, deep blue and white.

He knew which bird it came from, a *fáinleog*, a swallow. And he knew what it meant all right ; it meant his father, and a broken promise, and everything that came after.

He thought of his father now, of the closeness he had felt to him as a boy, when he would sit with him at the front of the cart, on trips to the coast to collect seaweed and sand for their fields. Crossing the blue rush of rivers on to the sea. Scouring the shore by his side, pulling at the knotty wrack and moss and slimy weed. His father singing while they worked, Irish songs, full of words that were forbidden at school, where speaking in Irish got you beaten. Sleeping on the shore beside the mules and the sound of the waves.

Then, one evening in spring, when the fields of the farm had been harrowed and raked and spread with the green weed, his father calling him over, telling him he was leaving.

« To England. And you'll be glad that I do. And if the weather is too good there and the hay does not thrive, I'll be back. But you won't want that, because there'll be nothing for

the shop and nothing for your mother or your sisters, and nothing for the pigs, and you'll end up on the roads, or I will. So pray for showers and rain, and then there will be work and plenty of it. »

His father took him outside and pointed to the sky, which was full of birds, small ones with forked tails.

« D'ye see them ? The *fáinleog* ? They fly a long way. And they come back. Every year they come back. And that's what I'll do. But you must look after the farm while I'm gone. »

John stared round at the low, thatched farmhouse, the uneven yard, the outhouses, the land stretching away to the bog where the turf was cut.

« Say it. » His father gripped him. « Say you promise. I want to hear you say it. »

« I promise. »

« In Irish. Say it in Irish, lad. »

« *Gellaim duit.* »