

## Poems by Michael Longley

### *Puff-Ball*

When we picked mushrooms at midnight  
Among intersecting fairy rings,  
You said moonlight had ripened them.

Later I found the moon's image –  
The full moon's – a giant puff-ball  
Taking shape as in a low cloud.

### *Notebook*

Why did I never keep a notebook  
That filled up with reed buntings  
And blackcaps and chiffchaffs, their  
Songs a subsong between the lines?

Early April. I am seventeen.  
Under an overhanging whin bush  
I have spotted linnets building.  
A robin has laid her first egg.

## *Firewood*

Out of the darkness and  
Up the spiral staircase  
I am carrying logs,  
An armful every day,  
Firewood for winter when  
I shall not be here – wild  
Fig perhaps – white sap  
For curing warts, scrotum-  
Concealing leaves – blackthorn,  
Chestnut – for all I know –  
From the skinny waterfall,  
Antique olive branches,  
Sycamore, mulberry –  
At the back of the wood pile  
Underneath the *casa*  
Logs that will never burn  
Disintegrating year  
By year, forgetfulness,  
Woodlouse, scorpion.

## *Tongue Orchid*

I pass the first dilapidated  
Chestnut that holds in its leaves  
The waterfall's hurlygush,  
When you call me back  
Through tangles of paradise  
Lily, bastard balm,  
Nightshade, vetch to our very  
First wasp-seducing  
Tongue orchid, brownish red  
Napkins neatly folded  
As for a love-feast:  
Why can't we find a name  
For purple candelabra  
And dusk-stars like signals  
To amorous fireflies, yet  
So white in their thicket  
They mark the path ending  
And things coming to an end?

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*Michael Longley, a Foreign Honorary Member of the American Academy since 2009, is one of Ireland's most prominent contemporary poets. His recent poetry collections include "The Weather in Japan" (2000), "Snow Water" (2004), and "Collected Poems" (2007). His newest collection, "A Hundred Doors," was published by Jonathan Cape in 2011. "Puff-Ball," "Notebook," "Firewood," and "Tongue Orchid," © 2011 by Michael Longley.*

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