



# The River

*Jane Clarke*

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## **The River** Jane Clarke

The textured language, vivid imagery and musical rhythms of Jane Clarke's debut collection convey a distinctive voice and vision. With lyrical grace these poems contemplate shadow and sorrow as well as creativity and connection. The threat of loss is never far away but neither is delight in the natural world and what it offers. Rooted in rural life, this poet of poignant observation achieves restraint and containment while communicating intense emotions. The rivers that flow through the collection evoke the inevitability of change and our need to find again and again how to go on. 'These are subtle, tender poems of love, loss and growing up on a farm in rural Ireland. Jane Clarke writes with a fine eye for remembered detail in language marked by good farm words like "slane and sickle", "clout and stud nails". The river Suck, and the river of life, run through the book and the farmland where the poet was brought up. Every poem leaves something in the mind: the beauty and cruelty of farming, the life of land and animals, of parents remembered in their strength, and in their ageing. A quiet, powerful collection' – Gillian Clarke. 'These poems burn with the ferocity of their intent in supple and profound music. Many of them are rooted in family life and the seasonal farm work Jane Clarke depicts with such respect and compassion. Others treat of adult relationships in the face of a beautiful, if brutal world. The river music is sometimes the real river music of the Suck and other rivers with their riparian birds and hunger for the sea. Her philosophical bent finds the river in us, in the emotional fluxes, whether in the rapids or the calm shallows. This is not pastoral poetry though there's plenty of pasture in it, and hens and hay and alders and willows and heifers. 'There's a visionary at work here, a shaper and shifter, moving us in language that is plain, exact, and true. She invokes Heraclitus' famous river that can't be stepped in twice; she could as justly invoke Hopkins' Heraclitean fire. And the comfort of the Resurrection – for nature to Clarke is a site of renewal and integration. There is both heartbreak and heart's ease in this auspicious debut from an accomplished craftswoman' – Paula Meehan. 'Clear, direct, lovely: Jane Clarke's voice slips into the Irish tradition with such ease, it is as though she had always been at the heart of it' – Anne Enright.

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