

# TROUBLING IRELAND

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**Discover Ireland**

Dave Lordan

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...and sometimes the line is moving so fast  
that  
the head-of-line guy with the electric stunner doesn't have the time  
to stun  
the cow properly  
and the cow shunts on down the line  
dazed but alive  
to the second man,  
an Estonian, aged 54, (sending money home  
to see after the grandchildren).  
His task- to slit the cow's throat  
as soon as the cow's been stunned unconscious  
by the first man (from just outside Tirana)  
but an unstunned cow will throw a bovine tantrum for its life  
against the second man,  
kicking and bucking and butting against the eighteen-inch blade,  
even as the blood is being drawn  
and sometimes the struggle is so rough and prolonged  
that the middle-aged man from Estonia is forced to withdraw the blade  
in order to steady or defend himself  
and once or twice the bloody blade  
has fallen and slopped into the blood-and-offal river  
on the factory floor  
where the man, like all the men,  
must seep the leather of his boots all day.

Despite the beast strength  
and mindless courage of the cow  
the second man, this man with precarious  
grandchildren,  
always manages, eventually,  
and even without halting the line  
-which would lead to penalties  
for everyone -  
to open the throat from ear to ear.

Out floods the thick red life of a cow.

Always the new dead cow is advanced  
to the third man, 21, from northern Brazil...

At the end of each weekday the second man-  
the ever-victorious-  
is covered head to toe in hoof-shaped bruises,  
black-and-blue patches  
reminiscent of cowhide.