

Less abstract because more closely tied to sense experience is the space that is conditioned by the fact of my being in it, the space of which I am the centre, the space that answers my moods and intentions.”

*Space & Place: A Humanistic Perspective* Yi-Fu Tuan

### **the snug**

Hiding in plain sight, the object of men’s affection.

Production lines – filling up bottles with creamy liquid to be guzzled by the second generation to take up residence within her.

Hidden behind the swinging door of a snug. Leaking and sipping.  
No room for themselves, inside or out.

### **Home makers in public houses.**

Goffman defines ‘total institutions’ as those with encompassing tendencies greater than other institution-like environments.

The two as incompatible, the family and total institutions which  
“create and sustain a particular kind of tension between the home world and the institutional world and use this persistent tension as strategic.”

*Asylums* Erving Goffman

Across the years of jokingly singing she carved out an operatic curve to her voice. Carving all the time. Even when the ends of songs fell on sleeping children’s ears or stupified men’s. Carving all the time.

Hollowing out her songbirds core with humour and liquor and only ever in company that lacked sentience. The smushed lipstick on her singing mouth watched by bloodshot, slow-blinking eyes.

Belonging to the kind of men who religiously went to the bookies. Men who bought the paper at the same time every day and went for one or two to read it. Men who had several phrases for going for one or two but one meaning.

Engrained in a routine so base it was infantile. Their maturity only physical and brutish, sweating out pints of Guinness. Creatures of insipid habit that would turn if probed.

There is something fundamentally attractive about this woman now.

In her eighties, walking the length of her bed to its head. Reaching around, supple, to scratch the middle of her back in a fresh white vest.

Something independent, equally self-minding and absent minded.

With this mindless self-care she pulls back the blue paper curtain that surrounds her hospital bed and reaches for her Clarins moisturiser. Blobbing dots of it onto the face of the body she tells her psychiatrist is not hers, is merely a mortal coil to be shed. She makes me think of Yeats in old age, sailing to Byzantium when she says that – fastened to a dying animal. Moisturising it.

Domesticity poured into institution her whole life. She is unusually at home there now.