

# Song of the Snake Mother

By Janice Jones

And away goes St Pat clinging to the wooden prow  
As he sails out on the white-tipped sea  
And we all cheer, waving goodbye,  
To the crook and gown, and all his glitzy finery  
He steals all the snakes from Ireland  
And although it seems dull now he has gone  
We turn back to our trade and tilling  
And life goes on...

At first when the invaders came  
We charged over fields with staves and scythes  
Or smashed their walls with fists of gun and bomb  
It was all good fun and the land ran red  
There were heroes and songs, and we honoured our dead.

But now we stand red-faced before a clerk  
Who states how much our land is worth  
And the engineer with measuring rod  
Subdivides and marks the land,  
So our marshes are drained for new estates  
And our mountains levelled for shopping strands

Ah where are my children now, the green-scaled and gold-eyed protectors of our land?  
A whisper comes from under the reeds,  
From rough mountain and mossy rock  
'We are hidden mama...  
Curled in salt marsh and fiddle head bracken,  
eggs buried deep secret from sight  
under invaders' pounding feet'.

And pedestrian precincts crush the eggs  
Hidden under moss and turf,  
And giant turbines throng the hills  
Their windsong deafening the cattle below  
And chemical compounds devour the bracken  
Which was probably carcinogenic you know,  
And we map our land with a foreign tongue,  
Tasting the sour milk of forgetfulness.

When St Patrick left with his wooden staff  
Stealing away across the sea  
He left the singers with stones in their mouths  
And my children's silence was left to me