

Two Poems by Mary O'Donoghue

**Thanksgiving in Florida**

The giant roadside orange  
might be full of children  
packed vesicle-tight together  
cheek to small fat cheek.

At a bar reclaimed from the water  
a dead ringer for Oliver Reed  
blears his details, wipes them clear:  
His girlfriend.  
Is coming.  
From Gatwick.

We skim over swamp in a boat  
made of tin. Routed birds scarper,  
filling the air with a blitz of black paper.  
We chunter close to alligators  
who test-click their teeth  
like just-fitted dentures,  
and eyeball the day  
like it's bothering them.

We visit the place where you  
were the neighbourhood rascal,  
shrugging off the door locks  
of your mother's great terror,  
running down the way down,  
galloping right the way down,  
stopping short at the drop  
to the Indian River.

## **Manatee**

The manatee I never get to see.  
Instead you tell its strange  
cobble-shop shape to me:

big as a cow in the brackish water  
thick-skinned and finned like a seal  
with the nose of a golden retriever.

And I can see it, maybe like Dürer  
drew his rhinoceros from hearsay,  
riveted together those bits of rumour.

Your manatee, so pug-lovely,  
and it just never knew  
what it wanted to be.