

By Thomas P. Lynch

He'll have been the last of his kind here then.
The flagstones, dry-stone walls, the slumping thatch,
out-offices and cow cabins, the patch
of haggard he sowed spuds and onions in—
all of it a century out of fashion—
all giving way to the quiet rising damp
of hush and vacancy once he is gone.
Those long contemplations at the fire, cats
curling at the door, the dog's lame waltzing,
the kettle, the candle and the lamp—
all still, all quenched, all darkened—
the votives and rosaries and novenas,
the pope and Kennedy and Sacred Heart,
the bucket, the basket, the latch and lock,
the tractor that took him into town and back
for the pension cheque and messages and pub,
the chair, the bedstead and the chamber pot,
everything will amount to nothing much.
Everything will slowly disappear.
And some grandniece, a sister's daughter's daughter,
one blue August in ten or fifteen years
will marry well and will inherit it:
the cottage ruins, the brown abandoned land.
They'll come to see it in a hired car.
The kindly Liverpoolian she's wed,
in concert with a local auctioneer,
will post a sign to offer *Site for Sale*.
The acres that he labored in will merge
with a neighbor's growing pasturage
and all the decades of him will begin to blur,
easing, as the far fields of his holding did,
up the hill, over the cliff, into the sea.

Thomas Lynch, "Himself" from *Walking Papers: 1999-2009*. Copyright © 2010 by Thomas Lynch.
Reprinted by permission of W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Source: *Walking Papers: 1999-2009* (W. W. Norton and Company Inc., 2010)