That's what's left
of all the magic
was our Duffy's Circus:
et child playing his tiny
trombone, stomping barefoot
on the fair green alone.
But to that staccato lyric note
and the golden shiny heart was able,
now departed too far elsewhere,
dance brightly coloured clowns could
swing trapeze artists, balance tightrope walkers...

I recall those magic days ago
when school gave us the afternoon free
and we penurious headed children marched
up one side and down the other street to the Circus
and the workers, and mad women too,
from our local lunatic asylum,
were marched up the main ride
with their gray abandoned faces, lost eyes.

And there we crouched in the Big Top - we
the children on one side, the lunatics
on their facing other, laughing and hugging out;
grasping for terror of a fall, wide eyes, open mouths
at the highwire walkers - pursued as flies.

I remember best that patient of anonymous clowns
blowing his wailing lament on his trumpet while,
swollen by him, his big toe balloons larger
and larger the more heartedly he blows his lyric cry.
And then the balloons balloon of his toe exploded: Bang!
to the delighted shrieks of children and lunatics alike.

Desmond Lane
Limerick, 1983