

# EXILED MEMORY 157

BY JIM KEMMY

Life-line dwindling to  
That lone option,  
The inescapable move  
For survival and self-respect . . .  
Forced out to a 'pagan' world  
By hopeless unemployment.  
Numbed, confused family parting.  
Unreal train journey to Dublin.  
Uninvited visit from young  
Legion of Mary girl  
Asking well-rehearsed questions.  
Last bitter look from Dun Laoghaire.  
Sickening loneliness and disillusionment  
Of huddled boat-crossing.  
Long, restless haul from Holyhead.  
Bleak 6.45 a.m. arrival at Euston . . .  
Tired, dirty, nervous.  
First, startling sight of black workers.  
Awkwardness on Underground escalator.  
Smells and noises of station.  
Emotional shock at sexy posters.  
Blurred, strange names flashing past  
Fogged windows of subway train.  
Fighting down a galloping panic and  
Desire to catch the next train home.  
Solitary search for a room and job in  
Bewildering places among self-absorbed people.  
Relentless feelings of inadequacy  
Crowding and clouding the mind.  
Yearning for the stability of the familiar.  
Straining for a homely voice  
Or a helping hand.  
Choked with homesickness.  
Hoping for the best.  
Fearing the worst.  
Holding on . . .

# MAKING A COMEBACK: 1960

A jolt from sleep to consciousness,  
As the train slows at the  
Yellow-washed Killonara station-house,  
The glimpse of St John's spire  
Through the thick, green foliage,  
Noon arrival at Limerick station,  
Filled with pain of departures,  
Home to Garryowen, without glory.

Family greetings and accounts of London,  
Surge of forgotten Limerick accents,  
Change of pace and faces,  
Unreal feeling, frozen in time,  
Long, restless Saturday afternoon,  
Driving urge to go downtown,  
Through the gateway of John's Square,  
To explore the incessant city.

O'Mahony's Bookshop, first stop,  
To buy 'The Collegians',  
Poor, lonely Gerald Griffin -  
You deserved better from life and death -  
The sumptuous Savoy . . . memories of the  
Sunday night picture and a box of Black Magic,  
Cafe Capri, haunt of young romantics with  
High hopes on a Coca Cola and cake!

William Street encounter with Paddy Flynn,  
Long-time chairman of the Masons' Union,  
Wounded response in Bryan Greene's bar,  
'I will not crawl for a job . . .'  
'Take it easy, now . . . Stay at home . . .'  
Things have improved a lot here . . .  
To sleep in your own bed  
Is worth a lot in life!

Mind filled with words and confusion,  
'Take it easy . . . Stay here . . .'  
Home for tea and Radio Luxembourg,  
Switch to Radio Eireann and  
Back to a 1950s time-warpy,  
'The Balladmakers' Saturday Night',  
And later, after 'Ceili House',  
To sleep in my own bed.