Hurtling between hedges now, I see
Green desolation stretch on either hand
While sunlight blesses all magnanimously.

The gods and heroes are gone for good and
Men evacuate each Munster valley
And midland plain, gravelly Connaught land
And Leinster town. Who, I wonder, fully
Understands the imminent predicament,
Sprung from rooted suffering and folly?

Broken castles tower, lost order's monument,
Splendour crumbling in sun and rain,
Witnesses to all we've squandered and spent,
But no Phoenix rises from that ruin
Although the wild furze in yellow pride
Explodes in bloom above each weed and stone,
Promise ablaze on every mountainside
After the centuries' game of pitch-and-toss
Separates what must live from what has died.

A church whips past, proclaiming heavy loss
Amounting to some forty thousand pounds;
A marble Christ unpaid for on His Cross
Accepts the Limerick train's irreverent sound,
Relinquishes great power to little men -
A river flowing still, but underground.

Wheels clip the quiet counties. Now and then
I see a field where, like an effigy
In rushy earth, there stands a man alone
Lifting his hand in salutation. He
Disappears almost as soon as he is seen,
Drowned in distant anonymity.

We have travelled far, the journey has been
Costly, tormented odyssey through night;
And now, noting the unmistakable green,
The pools and trees that spring into the sight,
The sheep that scatter madly, wheel and run,
Quickly transformed to terrified leaping white,
I think of what the land has undergone
And find the luminous events of history
Intolerable as staring at the sun.

Only twenty miles to go and I'll be
Home. Seeing two crows low over the land,
I recognize the land's uncertainty,
The unsensational surrender and
Genuflection to the busy stranger
Whose power in pocket brings him power in hand.
Realizing now how dead is anger
Such as sustained us at the very start
With possibility in time of danger,
I know why we have turned away, apart
(I'm moving still but so much time has sped)
From the dark realities of the heart.

From my window now, I try to look ahead
And know, remembering what's been done and said
That we must always cherish, and reject, the dead.