

*iv - The quivering Rattle Snake.*

When changing tides allow  
the yawning mile of Dublin Bay  
lays bare the troubled brow  
of the quivering Rattle Snake.

There are those in Dublin town  
who greet her story with a frown  
but many are proud of the way,  
in which she rudely brought awake  
the self-contented scene:

*When the day is cold  
at the water's edge  
and the air is clean  
beneath the blue still sky,  
I come in restive mood  
to this unlikely hermitage  
and watch my thoughts unfold  
and, in that sweet pride of solitude,  
I hear a distant fearful cry  
floating on the winter sea.*

*The simple beauty of that sound –  
cuts through the tidy ground  
of Dublin's narcissistic mile  
with the untouched ancient guile  
of wounded memory.*

Rattle Snake disappeared that day.  
The news went about in a furtive way  
calling for funeral rites to begin  
and many anonymous feet joined in  
from Cavendish Row to Merrion Square,  
talking of why she had gone and where.

In the afternoon breeze  
the doorknobs, the trees  
and a doubtful sky  
saluted the mourners passing by  
and from the shadows of the crowd  
a voice came, clear and loud:

*Among the whispered calls  
of cobblestones and warehouse walls  
I saw her in the cold street light  
and her quivering tail was a pitiful sight  
and, when I gently called her name,  
no answer came.*

*My hands found nothing but her grin  
and her dried out ink marked skin  
and I was alone in the threadbare street  
where bottles and bags and reptiles meet.*