

FATHERLAND

'Fine day fer it, grab yer jaicket but we need to be quick,'
Flurries of arms and buttons, words eddyng
And tumbling under the spark of faither's eye
As we leave the sisters sitting in their seats -
Just him and I.

A shaft of sunlight piercing our concrete, close-hidden lives
Rolling green bin bags mark our moor-steeped horizon
Words and passion flickering through his mind,
A Heathcliff of the street.
Me? His roiling cloak behind.

Telling tales forged in Irish farms, he taps our advance
Dropping wars and famines into my eager hands
But below
Others' songs treacherously tapped my feet,
The sunshine drumming our summer into their insistent beat.

'Hurry up or we'll not make it before ...'
His tenor and tenure hushed by the marching tunes
Tattooing louder, faster and closer
They dragged me to a halt
My shoes couldn't escape their emerald-tinged roots
Heartland and homeland softening my vowels
Whilst tuning others' flutes.

Early words rendered in green, and golden glories
History stitched through slip jigs, songs and stories.

'Right, take your coat off, stand still, don't move.'
Our journey tied to the kerb and the past, by sashes being bared.
The green of my coat shouting to be heard.
Sleeves slipping, hands fumbling to hide its unwitting colour code,
Until Faither grabbed it,
Folded it,
rustling the white lining to the sky,
Surrendering,
as the orange music marched on by.