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"[T]he umpteenth city of confusion" – Representations of Dublin in Contemporary Irish Poetry

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The capital of Ireland plays a more than emblematic role in the poetry discussing Irish experience. The only metropolitan centre of the republic has about one quarter of the population of the country and is therefore a city of its own category in the hierarchy of settlements. Capitals always function as major political, administrative, economic and cultural centres and Dublin is no exception to this rule either. As a significant port it is easily accessible, as the leading population concentration it provides a diverse enough work force for various economic activities, which has considerably altered the image of the city in the last couple of decades. The one time backward colonial seat has become a bustling metropolis with all the implied changes of the process. The economic growth of the second part of the 20th century, however, has proved to be something far from exclusively positive. The demands for housing of an increasing population have led to reconstruction projects in the city – the spectacular springing up of housing estates is one certain sign of economic growth and the spread of suburbs proves the concurrent improvement of living standards in the process, at least for a certain segment of the population; such alterations necessarily lead to cultural consequences as well. Dublin has turned into a typical modern city, with all the ingredients of modern city life, involving not only the glamour of this but the less desirable elements as well – ample illustration of this is found in all fields of literary activity in the country, especially in such recent novels as those of Roddy Doyle.

Naturally Dublin has carved out a place for itself in the recent poetry of Ireland – though interestingly enough, the city is only addressed by those who count as inhabitants of it, as if visitors were forbidden, or at least reluctant, to access the experience of the modern city. The city definitely demands a reaction from those living in it, springing from the daily necessity of confrontation with and survival in it. As cities are human constructs, they tend to take on human faces and human attributes, often with the aim of charming and captivating people – and as such, they tend to escape human

control, living a life of their own, leaving the poet with the task of penetrating the immediately visible face of the city for an understanding of its underlying essence. Dublin fosters such creative energies in the poets, though perhaps paradoxically or ironically, for scorning it rather than embracing the city. This is indicative of the critical spirit towards those processes and energies which have turned the city into what it is: the criticism of the city is at once the criticism of ideologies and of the historical processes initiated by the ideologies.

Thomas Kinsella is *the* Dublin poet – by birth and upbringing, by residence and, most important of all, by imaginatively locating himself in the city and of the city in a number of poems. Kinsella's earlier occupation as a civil servant offers him an insight into the dynamism of the transformation of the country and its capital city, therefore his poems provide an excellent guide to Dublin as it appears from the inside for a person with a grasp of what is actually happening to it. As a resident in the city his attachment is strong, yet this does not equal an uncritical stance, especially with his involvement in the economic resurgence of his place. With the passing of time the fallibility of the agents of change becomes manifest, leaving behind much bitterness and even more deprivation, yet Kinsella's confession that Dublin is his place (cf. CP 283) marks his unchangeable rootedness in the city.

Kinsella's most comprehensive treatment of Dublin is contained in "Nightwalker", a poem composed in the 1960s, the decade of the opening of the Republic towards the global economy. The poem is the account of a late night walk in Dublin, offering a rather sinister view of the city as it is transfigured by moonlight yet remaining essentially the same place: the modernising metropolis of a country desperate to attract foreign investment for growth, and thus slowly but surely growing alien to its inhabitants. The shadows of daylight items may grow threateningly bizarre at this time of the day but these shadows are still unable to make the speaker, a civil servant employed in the Department of Finance, forget about the administrative and economic function of the city. Interestingly enough what is depicted is not Dublin as a residence, a city translated into a web of streets with houses, but rather the city as an economic and a political unit: the abstract dimension dominates and the occasional cataloguing of detail comprises only familiar and typical items. Still, the many faces of the capital city are perhaps most vividly caught in this of all Kinsella's poems, with a strong element of criticism directed against contemporary politics as well, which is partly self-reflexive if Kinsella's status as a civil servant is considered and thus offers a perspective on *his* participation in the process of modernisation too.

The unnumbered opening lines prepare the reader for an excursion into a rather awkward world. An emphasis is placed on the speaker's awareness of the elements shaping human vision, the will groping for structure, the combat between "madness" and "reason", the alternation of moments of insight with moments of blindness – the speaker thus comments on the poem that follows and this passage serves as partly an explanation and partly perhaps an excuse for the structural logic governing the process of composition, a logic which is rather unusual in the poetic tradition in which the poet is generally located. The first sentence of the first numbered section, "I only know things seem and are not good" (CP 76) takes this self-reflexive introductory passage one step further into a world where traditional ideas of order are not only suspended but replaced by a more distressing set of assumptions about the world. The beginning of the walk thus unfolds in a darkness that is not purely literal. Windows hiding "pale entities" (ibid) and people working in the underground laboratory are associated with "Near Necropolis" (CP 77), rendering the sleeping people even more passive and attributing the personnel in the laboratory magic powers, as they are "Embalmers" (ibid), preparing their clients for the Otherworld – yet the word "near" immediately introduces the tentativeness of these intentions.

The persona is reminded of his ties to the citizens and indicates the temporariness of his walk. The daily routine of middle-class city-dwellers is arrested through the least attractive details: the early morning scratching while going downstairs for tea, leaving the house, waiting at the station, all performed with the sole purpose of doing useful work for "our businesses and government" (ibid). The brief summing up of the economic principles of the Republic culminates in the image of the Dublin statue of liberty – "Robed in spattered iron she stands / At the harbour mouth, Productive Investment" (ibid), then memories of the civil servant follow, "Spirit shapes" (CP 78) with a real dimension behind them – officials, ministers, people of power, most of them with a past, a role in turning Ireland into an independent country, now engaged in the labour of turning her into a prosperous one or perhaps in reflecting on their own images, of what they have become. The allegorical story of the "Wedding Group" of "The Groom, the Best Man, the Fox" (ibid) concludes this section – apart from the actual references (cf. TWM 46, footnote 2) the story functions perfectly as a general tale of betrayal of friends for power.

The second section of the poem opens with casual images of lamp, light and shadow, and thus returns speaker and reader to the point of departure, the walk at night as an actual exercise. A page of the day's paper is glimpsed in the gutter, with the picture of a "new young minister" in "his hunting suit" (CP 79). The obvious metaphoric evocation of the perishable nature of

things is not yet played out by the speaker as he continues his walk and presents other details observed on his way – Victorian houses and "the tower" (CP 80). The mysterious dark realm beyond the reach of the lamplight, however, is not lifeless – darkness, at least in that domain, does not equal the absence of life.

"Watcher in the tower, / Be with me now" (ibid) is the invocation to the spirit of the place and the ghost of Joyce now becomes a real and active participant of the poem. So far it has been implied by the method Kinsella takes in composing his poem, now there is an explicit calling upon Joyce to assist the poet in his attempt to grasp his vision. The subsequent details would not look out of place in "Circe" either as the mysterious creatures are evoked by the persona's consciousness; the hauntingly Joycean description of a phantom horseman is followed by the excited exclamation of the speaker, "Father of Authors!" (ibid), to fully realise a dense pastiche-like paragraph with a cunning self-referential comment inserted towards the end of the passage: "Subjects will find the going hard but rewarding" (CP 81). The phantom vision recedes as "The soiled paper settles back in the gutter" (ibid), with its heading, "The New Ireland", more than ironically suggestive. The thoughts of the speaker centre on the minister in his hunting suit, declaring him no worse than the former old ones in the position. The picture comes alive in the mind of the persona, the hunt begins, and the metaphoric transfer of the scene onto the level of politics offers a link with the first part of the poem.

The foot of the tower is seen as a special place "where the darkness / Is complete" (CP 81). The peaceful harbour allows the speaker to become conscious of his physical state and the smell of his body plunges him into a memory of school years – Brother Burke and his harping on about the usual anguish of the Irish, the consequences of being subjected to a strong colonising power. The speaker cannot share the nationalist zeal of his former instructor as it is shown by his comparison of the statue of the Blessed Virgin to "young Victoria" (CP 82) and by the ironic comment on the sole achievement of the school, the abundance of civil servants for the country. The evocation of the legendary figure of Amargin provides a more elevated dimension yet this involves a more profound sense of loss as well: the persona's quiet remark, "A dying language / Echoes across a century's silence" (CP 83), achieves more sympathy than the bombast rhetoric of the recalled Brother Burke. The quotidian, however, intrudes again as the speaker contemplates shadows of domestic life thrown against curtains in the Dublin night.

Finding the night-time Dublin short of further inspiration, the speaker fixes his gaze upon the Moon in the fourth section. The second stanza of this

section offers a recollection with near-epic overtones (with an eye on Kinsella's later poetry it foreshadows the technique of later sequences – his frequent reliance on early Irish myths and stories can be arrested in allusions and quotations of such narrative material) – the picture, though, is general enough to lead to a somewhat out-of-place didacticism in the third stanza. There is a teleological vision of history shining through these lines:

> There are times it is all part of a meaningful drama
> Beginning in the grey mists of antiquity
> And reaching through the years to unknown goals
> In the consciousness of man, which makes it less gloomy. (ibid)

The picture once again dissolves into images of the night scene but the items are no longer man-made ones – natural elements existing independently of humans (with the exception of the "odour of lamplight" (ibid), heavily dependent on human ingenuity) are registered, but it is still the Moon which is the principal agent of creativity: there is even an apostrophe and an invocation addressed to it.

The transformation of the speaker seems complete in the last section; the short tercets of the passage support what the persona asserts in a figure: "I am an arrow / Piercing the void" (CP 84). The journey ends in an embarrassing recognition, not significantly different from the conclusion of Joyce in his Dublin short stories and this section also echoes T. S. Eliot's postwar doom. Modernisation brings about similar conditions of sterility as conflict does, and the rise of living standards and comforts do not automatically produce a culturally vibrant world. The last stanza of the poem forges a picture the ambiguous nature of which shows the feeling of the persona's being totally lost – the casually naïve "I think" introduces a metaphor which in turn is explained in a language compressing conversational and a kind of discursive style, crowning the night-walk in the proper fashion:

> I think this is the Sea of Disappointment.
> If I stoop down, and touch the edge, it has
> A human taste, of massed human wills. (ibid)

Kinsella's night time Dublin is strangely devoid of people apart from the mysterious laboratory personnel and the recollected characters of daily civil life. The city thus comes into its own, waking to a "life" beyond life, with occasionally bizarre details – of which the most bizarre is perhaps the lack of life itself. Kinsella's persona basically becomes an alternative to

Joyce's wished-for reader as he is an ideal walker with an ideal insomnia, and the partially conditioned eyesight of a day-time civil servant is modified by the effects of fatigue in the wake of his sleeplessness. The city is regarded with suspicion, the persona does not subscribe to a belief in the benevolent direction of the growth of the place; rather, he (and Kinsella principally) assumes an antagonistic position to the official ideology of economic growth yielding a better life.

'Phoenix Park" deals with the story of moving from one place to another, and its fourth section provides a short assessment of the city of Dublin similar to that of "Nightwalker'. Dublin is "the umpteenth city of confusion" (CP 92), with "Pale light" (ibid) over it, and out of the "faint multitudes" (ibid) "A murmur of soft, wicked laughter rises." (ibid) The picture turns even darker as the city is seen as "A theatre for the quick articulate / The agonized genteel, their artful watchers" (CP 93), with the speaker perhaps belonging to this last group. There is nothing elevating about Dublin; on the contrary, it is a place where "dead men, / Half-hindered by dead men, tear down dead beauty." (ibid) If this is what greets the speaker on arrival, he needs to forge his own approach to be able to handle all this: "Return by the mental ways we have ourselves / Established." (ibid) This recalls "Nightwalker" with its aloof speaker, contemplating and describing but not engaging, remaining always careful to keep enough distance between himself and what is observed, with commentaries reserved for an antagonistic position rather than a supporting one.

In the much later poem "One Fond Embrace" the meditative speaker involves also the city of Dublin in his reflection. The city has moved along the course of 'development' indicated in the earlier poems and it is now shown as a background to a resulting rigid social division into two groups of the rich and the poor where development occurs solely for the sake of profit for a small group:

> Invisible speculators, urinal architects,
> and the Corporation flourishing their documents
> in potent compliant dance
>
> – planners of the wiped slate
> labouring painstaking over a bungled city
> to turn it into a zoo. (CP 284)

The contrast is made explicit in the juxtaposition of residential districts, with a "twinned experimental / concrete piss-tower for the underprivileged" (ibid) in one of them. The centre of the city does not fare any better: plans exist

and function until the money runs out, what is left is an unfinished 'memorial', inducing the speaker to an angry wish: "May their sewers blast under them!" (CP 285) In spite of all its repulsive features the place is still one with a profound importance for the speaker: "I never want to be anywhere else" (CP 283).

Kinsella's renderings of Dublin reflect the stereoscopic vision of a person connected to the city by various ties yet retaining his critical faculties in spite of all attachment. In Kinsella's voice the former civil servant, the poet, the translator of Gaelic poetry and the Dublin citizen meet and negotiate their different claims, thus the vision is a complex and challenging one. Limitations and shortcomings are not generously forgotten but the final verdict is a return to emotional categories and life-long attachment – that Kinsella considers Dublin his place is the confession of a rooted person.

Though a poet of rural origins in County Kerry, Brendan Kennelly has long been a Dublin resident. His keen eyes for perception grant him a familiarity with the details of modern metropolitan life and his "Dublin: A Portrait" gives a vision of the city in which the least sympathetic aspects of modern Dublin are foregrounded and the finished picture is one that perfectly undermines any idealising attempt of the city. His attempt is radically different from that of Kinsella and his account does not involve self-reflexive or introspective elements but the city of his vision is also one dominated by the less attractive consequences of economic development and the concurrent rise of living standards. Though Kennelly is never explicit about his belonging to the city as a resident, there is a moment which approximates the confessional: the early Sunday morning walk of another poem opens up a city which he appears willing to embrace, yet not without a strain of ambiguity.

Kennelly's principal vision of Dublin is provided in the poem "Dublin: A Portrait." A comfortably distant perspective is immediately established by the first word of the poem, "there", which indicates the position of the persona as an observer detached from the scene. The deficient syntactic structure of the first sentence supports a panoramic technique of registering catalogue items – items which are supposed to be people of the city:

> There the herds of eloquent phonies,
> Dark realities kept in the dark,
> Squalor stinking at many a corner,
> Poverty showing an iron hand;
> There the tinker sprawls on the pavement. (ATFV 123)

Proper syntactic order appears from the second sentence on and the comments on the various catalogued items become more elaborate. The whole city becomes a hotbed of gossip and rumour, church towers serve to block out the light rather than guide the human glance skywards and religious ritual is reduced to bargaining with God for getting on, indicating the complete conquest of the spiritual by economic forces. The only real effort is reserved for the sea which is engaged in the next to impossible struggle of cleansing the city of its human load and filth.

The "items" of Kennelly's catalogue are people of different social positions yet the ironic distance reduces them to little more than vegetative beings. The listing begins with "the herds of eloquent phonies', accompanied by the tinker, the typical Irish element, and the lunatic, then a brief glance at the suburban world introduces the prosperous "dead men', just to return to the other extreme, the "defeated', who "Makes a drunken myth of deprivation" (ibid). None of the registered representatives of Dublin life acquires any sort of dignity, all of them merit only the contempt of the observer, pointing to the repulsive and impersonal nature of city life. "Communal value" is dependent on social consensus which is not shared by the persona – the "eloquent phonies" are presumably fashionable in terms of city life, the "dead men" or "corpses" of the suburbs certainly are such creatures.

The unfavourable portraits of typical characters give way to more general and at once more impersonal elements: gossips and "Rumours of rumours" fill the city, further reducing the personal dimension of the picture, just to come to a nadir in the oxymoron of the "Holy frauds" who "Bargain with God that they may get on" (ibid). The all-conquering merchant mentality noted by Kinsella is made manifest without any sense of shame. The poem closes with the image of the sea in its never-ceasing conflict with the shore. Though the sea is engaged in the activity of "Washing the feet of the stricken city, / Trying to purge its human filth" (ibid), the religious associations of the words do not create the corresponding atmosphere, and the progressive aspect clearly marks the futility and impossibility of ever completing the otherwise noble enterprise.

The second part of the title of the poem, "A Portrait" indicates distance, the idea of recording details from an objective perspective – yet Kennelly's persona cannot remain unengaged, even if it involves a rather obsessive exhortation of what he sees around himself. The repeated "There" points to a panoramic viewpoint but the picture is informed by the experience of the keen-eyed observer in close relation with what he is dealing with, a person with intimate and perhaps even immediate knowledge of these details. The technique of the poem reflects the ambivalence of the point of view of the

persona – the imposition of rhymes on the material suggests the apparent order of life but it does not guarantee anything below the surface, as the lack of stanza patterns or further division of the poem into sections also indicates this.

Another Kennelly poem bears the emblematic title "The Celtic Twilight" – yet this title is followed by a demythologisation and desecration of a phrase with many literary resonances. Kennelly's "Celtic Twilight" is what it primarily is, the late phase of the day in a "Celtic" location, Dublin, the modern city. The usual associations of the phrase in the title are immediately blocked as the first line of the poem opens the description of the twilight scene with "decrepit whores" (ATFV 119) and continues with corpses floating on the water of the Grand Canal. The corpses turn out to have been a dog and a cat, and the animal imagery is carried on as the women and men are seen as mutually intent on preying on one another. The prostitutes are "scavengers" (ibid) yet the not-so-muted sympathy of the speaker sees them as victims or preys as well, with "Dublin's Casanovas" to blame, without question, for their misery.

The second stanza focuses on one of these decrepit women and her desperation is portrayed. Demythologisation continues as echoes of Yeats haunt the poem – the shrill voice this time belongs to a prostitute who, having been cheated by a client, is "Preparing once again to cast an eye / On passing prospects" (ibid). The image of the "infested waters" (ibid) returns with the floating carcasses, to provide a fitting scenery for these "lurid women and predatory men / Who must inflict but cannot share / Each other's pain" (ibid). The closing image of strangers locked into the same situation yet unable to recognise it casts a shadow over Dublin life and perpetuates the twilight – desecration is complete, the Celtic twilight returns to the common language to repossess its literal meaning and shed the old metaphorical, just to take on new figurative ones which are this time less noble than the previous one.

"Clearing a Space" is a poem placed in the collection *A Time for Voices* right after the other two Dublin poems. The juxtaposition is certainly not unintentional as the poem contrasts with the former ones: it offers a somewhat Wordsworthian approach to the city as it is devoid of people, and by virtue of this the city is not itself, on the unusual occasion of a Sunday morning "about six o'clock" (ATFV 124) which is sleeping time for most people. At the unusual time of observation the city takes on a different image, it wakes to a life of its own, an existence independent of and indifferent to its human population. "The river is talking to itself", "The city turns to the mountains / And takes time to listen to the sea", there is a

"relaxed sky" (ibid) above. The buildings equally keep to their own counsel, the parks are allowed their due privacy.

Yet the city, however empty of people it is, does not lose its human dimension – as an endless reservoir of nurturing and sustaining energies it is a "friend" (ibid) of the observer. The ambiguity of the first line of the last stanza, "I make through that nakedness to stumble on my own" (ATVF 125), suggests that the common feature of city and human being is that enigmatic "nakedness" which is discovered only when observed on a special occasion (and perhaps by an unusual observer too). The persona's embracing of Dublin can occur only at such an hour, the true resemblance of the city to a man can, paradoxically, be understood only when the people are removed from it.

Though Paul Durcan's poem "Going Home to Mayo, Winter 1949" is concerned primarily with the West of Ireland, the starting point of the indicated journey is Dublin. By virtue of functioning as the place to escape from, Dublin is commented upon in a number of lines in the poem – "the alien, foreign city of Dublin" (ASIMP 34) is left behind in the first line, just to be addressed on return as "the daylight nightmare of Dublin City" (ibid). The city indeed casts a sobering sight to the returning travellers as suburban detached houses are quickly replaced by "blocks after blocks of so-called 'new' tenements" (ibid) and all these houses remind the speaker of the damnation of modern city life: the houses and blocks of flats are "crosses of loneliness" (ASIMP 35) and gates solemnly parade as bells tolling the "mutual doom" (ASIMP 34) of the inhabitants – of whom the speaker and his father happen to be two representatives. Durcan's Dublin is thus closely related to the versions of Kinsella and Kennelly in terms of its generally unfavourable atmosphere, yet Durcan goes one step further than Kennelly and Kinsella as his version of the city becomes a reminder of the transitoriness of human life, of its inevitable progress forward in time towards a closure without any reference to redemption, and it also expresses the failure of the city to provide some sort of shelter, let alone home, in the temporary world of human existence.

Eavan Boland's poem "The Huguenot Graveyard at the Heart of the City" introduces another, and comparably friendlier, aspect of Dublin City proper: apropos of the cemetery of refugees of religious persecution the city takes on the image of a safe harbour of tolerance. The abstract notion of religious persecution becomes a tangible practical term in the moment it receives a body in the form of an actual location. The sight of the cemetery "in the alcove of twilight" (IATOV 31) is set against the backdrop of busy urban life, "Car exhausts and sirens" (ibid) and buses passing. The names on the graves often ring familiar, they "have eased into ours" (ibid) and their

exile is modulated into something less explicitly alien as the persona acknowledges that "There is a flattery in being a destination. / There is a vanity in being the last resort" (ibid). The story of the refugees follows: they fled from France to complete their course of life in Ireland, following their faith which banished them from their homes and now this "faith lies low with the lives it /dispossessed" (ibid). They begin to appear strange and even exotic, the speaker considers them as these refugees might have thought about Ireland, contemplating also their addition of sounds to Dublin speech, thus becoming a part of the spirit of the place. There are haunting images of the moment before their departure from their native land, which then lead the speaker to look at Dublin in a different light: the city "which is dear to as and particular" (IATOV 32) was for these people "merely / the one witty step ahead of hate // which is all that they could keep. Or stay" (ibid). The conclusion somewhat undermines the otherwise generous-looking image of Dublin in the context of receiving such victims of religious persecution: its status is not particular, it is not in fact a destination but a next step which in time proves to be the only one, so the city acquires its privileged function only with hindsight, viewed from a later perspective. This notion perhaps explains why the title of the poem employs the preposition "at" instead of the more usual "in".

Boland's Dublin, however, is not exclusively the busy urban world which still offers such places and instances of silent meditation as the Huguenot graveyard. Dublin also has suburbs, already noted by Kennelly, and such places require their representation too, especially if the point of view is a less usual one. "Suburban Woman" is set in such a modern frontier zone as the world of the suburbs, located at the meeting of city and country. The title immediately focuses on a rather unusual topic in Irish poetry, a suburban woman, representing a voice muted for several reasons. Partly in accordance with this sounding out of repression the poem is dominated by an imagery of conflict and fight: spousal disagreements become guerrilla fights, everyday routines are described as struggles, the evening moment of letting the blind down is the putting out of the white flag – all these create the image of a militant figure, the suburban woman of the title thus is one who is absorbed in a hard and long-lasting fight with the circumstances, as the frontier demands it. In the closing section the speaker explicitly allies herself to this woman figure, acknowledging the filter of writing between them.

The urban frontier is further explored in "Ode to Suburbia". Despite the claims of the title, the elevated style and subject matter are absent from the poem; this is one way of indicating the quotidian and undignified world of the suburbs. "No magic here" (SP 31) concludes the poem, after the often nerve-racking routines are enumerated in an environment which is

constricted and claustrophobic. Uniformity and physical proximity foster curiosity; this is also fuelled by the unexciting routines of one's own life which leads them to seek something interesting or at least unusual or different in someone else's life.

What would normally be considered a sign of prosperity comes to be subverted, just as it happens in Kennelly's world: the suburb, instead of signalling rising standards of living, is an "ugly sister" (SP 30), a place where life is seen as a "blister" (ibid) on the general dark, back gardens are claustrophobic and "varicose / With shrubs" (ibid), and windows have turned into "mirrors which again / And again show the same woman /Shriek at a child" and which "multiply" (ibid) the household chores among which not much difference is indicated between washing up and rearing a child. This is a world which destroys its inhabitants, principally the addressed female ones – women come to be distorted into shapeless masses of human flesh, in which state "human" is only felt and understood through the physical pain experienced by them. This disillusioned and unmagical place, however, is still capable of working miraculous transformations: this monotonous and self-annihilating routine yields changes and knowledge, a daily re-enactment of the general pattern of fall and salvation, of death and resurrection with something new added to it. The suburb thus recovers something of dignity, though not particularly because of its nature as location but by the fact that it is 'home', and home involves family, with the woman as its central force and source. This also implies, by a juxtaposition with the poem dealing with the Huguenot graveyard, that the source of regeneration and growth is the suburb rather than the centre of the city.

Dublin's old image as a city of beggars and poverty thus slowly changes yet what comes in the wake of the old is not enchanting for most of the poets either. Economic changes bring a general rise in the standards of living but they do not eliminate deprivation – in fact, they bring about new forms of it, proving that the idea of 'general' is a deceptive one. The inhabitants of Dublin may worry for a change as part of the internationalisation of the capital, which leads to a predictable decline in its 'Irish' character and to the flourishing of criminal activities but at the same time it turns Dublin into a favourite destination for international tourism, which in turn means further income and prosperity. Change is never unequivocal, especially not in the world of modern cities, yet this is perhaps to the benefit of Dublin's poets since it provides rich material for contemplation and at the same time assigns them the task of formulating their own relation to the city, which in all cases involves the element of belonging.

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