

→ Church is medieval ruin

Irregular rhyme scheme

★ human cost of musical quality  
★ tragedy

★ tying mythology to reality to create an image  
★ character journeys through realms of the dead  
personal address

Sweeney Astray  
→ character from Irish poetry

→ tying cousin to him  
- gives cousin heroic, mythical quality

→ going back + reaching forward  
★ love + respect instead of hatred + fear  
→ political message

his people farmers  
- avoidance of violence

- neutral  
→ opposite of IRA

∴ Colum did not deserve this

★ changing his death to something softer, controlled  
→ reclaiming Colum

Dante → Catholicism → drawing on this

free verse epigraph

### The Strand at Lough Beg

in memory of Colum McCartney  
personal cousin

place in Nth Ireland  
★ Lake  
1979

eulogic style → when it floods you can't get to it

All round this little island, on the strand  
Far down below there, where the breakers strive,  
Grow the tall rushes from the oozy sand.

Dante, Purgatorio, I, 100-103

leaving safety purgatory, allusions

Leaving the white glow of filling stations

And a few lonely streetlamps among fields

You climbed the hills towards Newtownhamilton

Past the Fews Forest, out beneath the stars—

Along that road, a high, bare pilgrim's track

Where Sweeney fled before the bloodied heads,

Goat-beards and dogs' eyes in a demon pack

Blazing out of the ground, snapping and squealing.

What blazed ahead of you? A faked roadblock?

The red lamp swung, the sudden brakes and stalling

Engine, voices, heads hooded and the cold-nosed gun?

Or in your driving mirror, tailing headlights

That pulled out suddenly and flagged you down

Where you weren't known and far from what you knew:

The lowland clays and waters of Lough Beg,

Church Island's spire, its soft treeline of yew.

There you once heard guns fired behind the house

Long before rising time, when duck shooters

Haunted, the marigolds and bulrushes,

But still were scared to find spent cartridges,

Acrid, brassy, genital, ejected,

On your way across the strand to fetch the cows.

For you and yours and yours and mine fought shy,

Spoke an old language of conspirators

And could not crack the whip or seize the day:

Big-voiced scullions, herders, feelers round

Haycocks and hindquarters, talkers in byres,

Slow arbitrators of the burial ground.

Across that strand of yours the cattle graze

Up to their bellies in an early mist

And now they turn their unbewildered gaze

To where we work our way through squeaking sedge

Drowning in dew. Like a dull blade with its edge

Honed bright, Lough Beg half-shines under the haze.

I turn because the sweeping of your feet

Has stopped behind me, to find you on your knees

With blood and roadside muck in your hair and eyes,

Then kneel in front of you in brimming grass

And gather up cold handfuls of the dew

To wash you, cousin. I dab you clean with moss

Fine as the drizzle out of a low cloud. ★ link to nature

I lift you under the arms and lay you flat.

With rushes that shoot green again, I plait

Green scapulars to wear over your shroud.

→ reference to Dante, first person to purgatory - classical allusion

→ monk identifying garb

→ ritual, loving prep for burial

→ religious, medieval layering

→ rewriting this scene from Dante: putting him + Colum in it

→ present language

★ reimagining of moment → similar to Casualty

PLACE  
isolation

IRA?

speculative

Kenning → sensory description - heightened images

geographical placement  
removal from place

★ guns for different use  
- link of first + second stanza  
be there

→ his cousin shouldn't have been there

back into the past at Lough Beg

alliteration + sound  
- grasses  
simile  
kenning

execution, prayer? → imagined, fantastic

→ religious, medieval layering  
→ rewriting this scene from Dante: putting him + Colum in it  
→ ritual, loving prep for burial