

Lines in Memory of My Father

Fishing, one morning early in July
From the canal bank—that was the closest ever
We came to entering each other's world;
That, and one wintry day at the Museum,
Looking at ancient coins and skeletons,
Dead butterflies, old guns and precious stones;
Each of us slightly awed, and slightly bored,
And slightly uneasy at each other's boredom.
I cried, of course, the morning that you died,
Frightened by Mother's tears and your grey spittle,
And frightened at being suddenly bereft
Of someone I had never loved enough,
But vaguely understood had loved me.

To-day in Dublin, passing the Museum,
A dead leaf blew across my instep, stabbing
My memory suddenly: little frightened fishes
Flapping bewildered in a cheap white net,
Then gliding in a water-filled jam jar;
Nudging their awkward heads against the glass,
Groping in vain for green and spacious freedom.