**ALL IRELAND FINAL**

We stand for the anthem, buoyant and tribal, heart beating with heart,

our colours brave, our faces turned from the uncertain sun.

The man beside me takes my hand, good luck to yours, he says;

I squeeze his calloused palm and then — he’s gone.

# A shadow socket where he was, the man beside him vanishes

and another before me, behind me; all around Croke Park

one by one we wink out of existence: tens, hundreds, then

thousands, the great arena emptying out, the wind curling in

from the open world to gather us all away. Each single one of us.

I could feel myself fail at the end, but then maybe everyone thought that,

each one of us the last to go. The whistle blew and we all

came back with a roar, everything brighter and louder, desperate and vivid.

I held his hand a moment longer, I wished his team all the luck in the world.