**THE ANGEL OF HISTORY**

In the great house on Kildare Street the lamps were burning.

It was a winter night, the usual slant rain falling.

I had paused to light up a cigarette, to watch the lone Guard

stamp her feet, blow uselessly into her cupped, gloved hands.

In the colonnade of the National Library a man was standing,

a man neither old nor young, his head bare, half turned towards

the lights in the parliament house, the high blank windows.

I saw him reach inside his long loose coat, take out a notebook.

I crossed the road, gathering my own long coat around me,

stood in behind him, looked over his shoulder. He took no notice.

One after another I saw him strike them out from a long list of names:

Senators, Deputies, Ministers . One after another the names

dissolved on the page, a scant dozen remaining. I watched him

ink in a question mark after each of these, neat and precise.

He put the book away, sliding it down carefully into a deep pocket;

he turned and looked at me, nothing like pity in those hollow eyes.

He sighed, then squared his shoulders, lifted his face to the rain

and was gone. Gone as if he had never been. But I saw him,

I know who he was, I witnessed that cold, exact cancellation;

walked on, walked home, thoughtful, afraid for my country.