

REMNANTS

No ripples on the lake, no birds' refrain.
The park has found its peace, as has the world.
Bananas are the rage in Swansea town
and women can wear nylons once again

The iron fountain's clogged with fallen leaves.
The metal cup hangs empty on its chain.
Dai's hardened hands are guides on rubber rims
of rusted wheels that squeal each time they turn.

Llewellyn, mute, sits on the slatted bench,
his crutches propped between him and the rail.
He licks fine Rizla paper down one edge
and sprinkles Gold Virginia in a line.

Just two of them go to Cwmdonkin now.
Bits of the rest are somewhere in the town.
Welsh Guards a German mortar blew to hell,
in Belgian fields a million miles away.

The boys in gabardine, just out of school,
set satchels on the grass and light their fags.
Hey mister, they call out, who's got your legs?
then limp around the bench in mockery.

Now evening falls, and home the brothers head,
Dai turns the wheels, Llewellyn limps beside.
And tigers are no longer in their eyes
as once they were, a million years ago.

Jack McBride County Down