

1971

Winter Landscape

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The Scot-free renegade. Jones
And Barry took the plunge
Right, when the sovereigns spun;
Plenty of Irish pluck
Called wrong, was not so lucky.

"*My* sovereign," said saucy
Jack Barry, meaning Congress;
And yes, it's true, outside
The untried, unstable recess
Of the classroom, every one has one:
A sovereign—general issue,
Like the identity-disc,
The prophylactic, the iron
Rations. Irony fails us;
It butters no parsnips, brails
No sail on a ship of the line.

WINTER LANDSCAPE

Danger, danger of dying
Gives life in its shadow such riches!
Once I saw or I dreamed
A sunless and urbanized fenland
One Sunday, and swans flying
Among electric cables.

There are so many of us,
Men and swans, in places
Congested with new dangers.
It hurts that we are mortal
Less there, for we remember
Mortal is what the race is.

Swans in unimperilled
Flight above bare hawthorn
Ask, as a more austere
Occasion, a taste for the sparse
That likes its landscapes Northern,
Serener, and more hurtful.