

4.1 Gallipoli – 25 April 1915 (for James Thomas Redpath)

Did I do well
not knowing precisely
the manner of your dying
among this sand, this sea,
to come, so far behind, and live a narrow space
in this translucent bay?

I do know
that all you'd lived,
and all I later learned of you,
came gathered to one knot in time –
the hour you fell:
when urgent manly hands
gave comfort to the dying light.
Or else perhaps you lay a space alone
beneath the martyred April sky.

Did you have time to guess
how from that single point would spring
the sequence of our widowed lives?
The long shadow of your going
has touched us all –
today, has brought me here.

There are spirits, there are
potent whispers here:
the wind still holds the fragments
of that half-dawned day –
the clamour and the terror and the din,
and the blood's insidious song.
But now the air seems healed,
and the birds have learned again to sing.

And I? among this sand, this sea,
did I do well to come?

Seddulbahir – July 1991.

*ANZAC MEMORIAL – Words of Ataturk:
There is no difference to us between the Johnnies and the Mehments where they
lie side by side here in this country of ours
You the mothers, who sent their sons from far away countries,
wipe away your tears: your sons are now lying in our bosom and are in peace.
Having lost their lives on this land, they have become our sons as well.*