



Parallel War

Kieran Fionn Murphy
University College Cork

In a parallel world, there's war
on a frosty Finbarr's Road;
bodies repose near brown water,
where the swollen river flows.

On a frosty Finbarr's Road,
explosions crater silver streets
where the swollen river flows.
Black ash drops instead of sleet.

Explosions crater silver streets.
Instead of cars, armed drones and tanks,
black ash drops instead of sleet,
broken phones and bombed out banks.

Instead of cars, armed drones and tanks.
Are they volunteers? Conscripted?
Broken phones and bombed out banks,
bellies empty, food restricted.

Are they volunteers? Conscripted?
Bullets strike in red and bloom.
Bellies empty, food restricted,
do children hide in shattered rooms?

Bullets strike in red and bloom.
Too dark by day, too light at night.
Do children hide in shattered rooms?
Who decides to run or fight?

Too dark by day, too light at night.
That man, ahead, in yellow vest –
who decides to run or fight? –
muscled arms, DeWalt tool chest,

that man ahead in yellow vest
would wear a flak jacket instead.
Muscled arms, DeWalt tool chest –
not that – grey gun, helmet on head,

would wear a flak jacket instead.
A woman pulls her laundry in –
not that – grey gun, helmet on head.
Does she hide a sniper's grin?

A woman pulls her laundry in;
her balcony: four-story height.
Does she hide a sniper's grin?
Am I cross-haired in her sight?

Her balcony: four-story height.
Though this day I walk in peace,
am I cross-haired in her sight?
In that world, am I deceased?

Though this day I walk in peace,
pray for family and friends,
in that world, am I deceased,
earth-propped, leaking, shot all ends?

Pray for family and friends.
I had a cousin twice removed
earth-propped, leaking, shot all ends.
What has conflict ever proved?

I had a cousin twice removed,

in Clougheen: six young men dead.
What has conflict ever proved?
Some missed hands, a foot, a head.

In Clougheen, six young men, dead.
Tans reloaded, checked on them.
Some missed hands, a foot, a head.
Were they hit again with phlegm?

Tans reloaded, checked on them.
Coffins shiny, wood like toffee.
Were they hit again with phlegm?
I'm untouched – need a coffee.

Coffins shiny, wood like toffee,
in Forde's dead house, Proby's Quay.
I'm untouched – need a coffee –
a flat white waits in Alchemy.

In Forde's dead house, Proby's Quay,
bodies repose near brown water.
A flat white waits in Alchemy.
In a parallel world, there's war.