



11-15-2006

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### Recommended Citation

Brennan, Matthew (2006) "Night-Piece in Cork at the Ambassador Hotel," *Westview*: Vol. 25 : Iss. 2 , Article 21.  
Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/westview/vol25/iss2/21>

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# Night-Piece in Cork at the Ambassador Hotel

by Matthew Brennan

Unable to sleep at 3 a.m., I go  
to the open window of my third-floor room,  
looming high up on Military Hill:  
Downtown unfolds beneath me like a quilt,  
the river stitching this hillside to uplands  
in the south. Farther off, beyond the darkness,  
the river herring-bones into the Sea.  
Tonight, there is no light from stars for miles.

It makes me think of my own flesh and blood,  
the brood that came from Tipperary  
and County Cork, but now are gone and never  
known by us. They must have trooped to town  
on market days, before first dawn light,  
when stars were threads in the dark open skies,  
furrows in fields that later led them home.

The lights that pulse in this too-quiet night  
can't animate the dead and can't return  
to Cork what shined in their long-ended lives.  
But surely some illumination comes  
from rooftops and lamps of Brennans listed still  
in the Cork city phone book. Even now  
I see the surface of the river glow,  
a candle lit on All Souls' Day that flickers  
until the wick burns out and its last light  
changes to smoke, the way a river empties  
into a bay, its water sewn into the sea.

