

## The Emigrant Irish

Like oil lamps we put them out the back,

of our houses, of our minds. We had lights  
better then, newer than and then

a time came, this time and now  
we need them. their dread, makeshift example.

They would have thrived on our necessities.  
What they survived we could not even live.  
By their lights now it is time to  
imagine how they stood there, what they stood with,  
that their possessions may become our power.

Cardboard. Iron. Their hardships parceled in them.  
Patience. Fortitude. Long-suffering  
in the bruise-colored dusk of the New World.

And all the old songs. And nothing to lose.

--Eavan Boland