

The Emigrant

Two places only
there were:
here and America.
The four corners of the farm,
and gone-beyond-the-sea.

With a twopenny nail
he etched into the iron
shank of his spade
the word 'Destiny',
drove it with his boot smartly into the turf
and left it standing.

Abroad commenced
at the town line.
The New World blinded him
on the Navan road
and again the first time he tried to speak English
and again the first time he saw an orange.

Anaesthetized by reels and barrels of porter
and eight renditions of 'The Parting Glass',
he fell asleep to the groan of oars
and awoke to a diesel thrust
and sleet over mountainous seas.

--Richard Tillinghast