



## The Ballad of Calvary Street

- On Calvary Street are trellises  
Where bright as blood the roses bloom,  
And gnomes like pagan fetishes  
Hang their hats on an empty tomb  
5 Where two old souls go slowly mad,  
National Mum and Labour Dad.
- Each Saturday when full of smiles  
The children come to pay their due,  
Mum takes down the family files  
10 And cover to cover she thumbs them through,  
Poor Len before he went away  
And Mabel on her wedding day.
- The meal-brown scones display her knack,  
Her polished oven spits with rage,  
15 While in Grunt Grotto at the back  
Dad sits and reads the Sporting Page,  
Then ambles out in boots of lead  
To weed around the parsnip bed.
- A giant parsnip sparks his eye,  
20 Majestic as the Tree of Life;  
He washes it and rubs it dry  
And takes it in to his old wife —  
'Look Laura, would that be a fit?  
The bastard has a flange on it!'
- 25 When both were young she would have laughed,  
A goddess in her tartan skirt,  
But wisdom, age and mothercraft  
Have rubbed it home that men like dirt:  
30 A golden crown beyond the tomb.
- Nearer the bone, sin is sin,  
And women bear the cross of woe,  
And that affair with Mrs Flynn  
(It happened thirty years ago)  
35 Though never mentioned, means that he  
Will get no sugar in his tea.
- The afternoon goes by, goes by,  
The angels harp above a cloud;  
A son-in-law with spotted tie  
40 And daughter Alice fat and loud  
Discuss the virtues of insurance  
And stuff their tripes with trained endurance.

Flood-waters hurl upon the dyke  
And Dad himself can go to town,  
45 For little Charlie on his trike  
Has ploughed another iris down.  
His parents rise to chain the beast,  
Brush off the last crumbs of their lovefeast.

And so these two old fools are left,  
50 A rosy pair in evening light,  
To question Heaven's dubious gift,  
To hag and grumble, growl and fight:  
The love they kill won't let them rest,  
Two birds that peck in one fouled nest.

55 Why hammer nails? Why give no change?  
Habit, habit, clogs them dumb.  
The Sacred Heart above the range  
Will bleed and burn till Kingdom Come,  
But Yin and Yang won't ever meet  
60 In Calvary Street, in Calvary Street.