

### Along the Canal

Unmooring behind the backs  
of coal-darkened warehouses,  
small window after small window  
smashed or cracked,

we saw the spoilage  
the rusty pipes crisscrossed  
over and under,  
leaking corrosives.

Then the murky water seemed  
to renew in a meadowy place,  
with coots and moorhens calling.

The twilight returned starlings,  
thousands swirling,  
pouring themselves into the reeds.

That night, head against the stern,  
I dreamt my first living creature,  
a slate-eyed wolf, staring.

Thirty years later, I am parked  
in a new, mostly empty lot:

And birds, just past dawn, rise and  
fall on ground they cannot enter,  
splinter the air into bits of black ash.

*THELMA McCourt*