

## **A Quick Lie**

So, every fifty, sometimes forty, years  
they come along and dig another body up  
and put a box down in its place.  
A black cloud dips its heads around the hole  
then leaves, and shovelfuls, fill it up again.  
The ground is left, a little higher than it was.

And here I sit, beneath this tree,  
on the glummer side of the church,  
at the back wall, with all my teeth,  
and smiling, all that I can do  
to sightlessly observe decay of memory  
within the living of the dead.

The sexton heaves up mostly dust  
or breaks a bone too large to fit within his bag  
of people to be tidied out of sight  
like useful screws and scavenged soaps.  
It leaves a pristine pit to hold  
a year or two of an eternal rest

before they tumble, shattered, cell  
to narrow cell, and spoil their neat repose  
unseen, within the sliding of the earth  
and of its creatures. I, and only I,  
lead-lined, am still where I was put  
so quickly, in the middle of the night.

Somewhere, there is another pit  
where cheek- and ankle-bone are clacked  
and voices mutter how they never knew of this  
then slip into the mouldiness  
of time and of the earth, and flowers  
that are admired in the spring.