

MAN AND THE ECHO

(First stanza only – by William Butler Yeats)

Man. In a cleft that's christened Alt
Under broken stone I halt
At the bottom of a pit
That broad noon has never lit,
And shout a secret to the stone.
All that I have said and done,
Now that I am old and ill,
Turns into a question till
I lie awake night after night
And never get the answers right.
Did that play of mine send out
Certain men the English shot?
Did words of mine put too great strain
On that woman's reeling brain?
Could my spoken words have checked
That whereby a house lay wrecked?
And all seems evil until I
Sleepless would lie down and die.

Echo. Lie down and die.

THE REPLY

(It is all there is – by Dennis Michael Corcoran)

Man. I asked of some of the IRA
Men and women
All had had their say.
I asked of some of Sinn Féin's ranks
And of others
Less forceful
But who no less drank
Of freedom's cup and its heady draught.
Was it Willie's words which drove you out
An early grave your price to pay?
Or did they give naught but voice
To deeds of heart
Freely done
On those your dying days?
And here is what I heard them say.
Rest easy, dearest Willy.

Echo. Rest easy.