I: Mail at Xmas

The war a dozen years over, my father who fought the Nazis bravely
(though the Germans were “our brothers”) has been warning me again
that the commies are coming for everything including his second-hand
Morris Minor that barely fits into his garage and once in seldom leaves.

They’re welcome, I think as I pedal the red GPO bike with my heavy leather
GPO satchel through this greasy orange street light morning fog spreads
over semi-detached houses, whose house numbers are indecipherable until
you go right up and stick your nose on them at the new housing estate called
King’s Hedges Road, where there are no kings, except the three I bring, and
any hedges are buried with ancient Angles in rotten fen sedge and gray mud
under rime-encrusted postage-stamp lawns, here where I wander round and round
on my heavy bike, lost, banging into things, bearing tidings of comfort and joy.
II: Digging Come Spring

Heavy gray marl sticks to my spade, water seeping into the deep gash I gouge through rotten sedge and reeds, sucking at my feet, the old fen rising in a line we pile near where they’d built another council estate and found an Angle burial ground. In this stink of ancient air I stand up straight to breathe. “Kill it, kiddo! Kill it!” laughs Shay, one of the Irish navvy twins, shoulders too wide to fit into the trench, posing with one foot on the pipes we’re laying while rolling giant clay phalli, balls to match, which he demonstrates for housewives who watch from behind curtains, colored scarves round their heads, pretending to look past us across their small dug-up lawns into the distance and its bit of sun.