

TS KERRIGAN

Diversions

She was passing my chair
To attend to some mums
In a porcelain vase,

When her fingertips strayed,
A second or two,
On my shoulders and neck.

With a shudder inside,
I glanced from my book,
Though our eyes never met.

When the mums were arranged,
She sauntered to town
With a train of cologne.

But the rest of the day,
The book put aside,
I relived each caress,

Those diversions of love
She'd forgotten about
In the moment she passed.

Magdalene

Aware her power belongs to night
(The moon ascendant, day dispersed),
She dreads the dawn's first rays of light,

Confounding all her spells and charms
To quell the god, preserve the man
who holds her nightly in his arms.

To keep resurgent dawn away,
She tries to nail the shutters closed,
She draws the bolts against the day.

But light descends from morning skies
Breaks through her patchwork barriers,
Rekindling visions in his eyes.

Restored as god and man once more
(The sun ascendant, dispersed),
He leaves her, standing by the door,

To ponder things she can't possess,
The glimmer of the moon and stars,
The summer's scent, the wind's caress.

Mr. Heaney

How delightful to meet Seamus Heaney!

He's an erudite man, Mr. Heaney.
While he's swilling poteen,
With barmbrack in between,
You can hear in the background Puccini.

Such an elegant choice for a reading.
He's conversant with frogs
And knows all about bogs,
Representing the best culchie breeding

He's charisma itself, your man Heaney,
Well beyond debonair
With the thatch in his hair,
Like his hero, the charming Mad Sweeney.

How delightful to meet Seamus Heaney!

Rilke's Death

Milton died of blind ambition,
Robert Burns of heart disease,
Byron of a Greek condition,
Keats of Scotch conspiracies,
Wordsworth fell to inanition,
Shelley drowned in stormy seas,
Swinburne with no inhibition,
Wilde was killed by court decrees,
Hardy in morose reflection,
Dylan by his "revelries."

Rilke's end exceeded those,
Showing beauty's blacker side;
Reaching out to touch a rose,
Pricked by thorns, he sickened, died.

**Elegy for the Young Who
Fell in Unpopular Causes**

Those boys, who fashion now deploras,
Formed both by what they heard and saw,
Were sent away to hopeless wars.

Who swaddled them in stars and stripes,
Declined to teach them natural law?
Who forged their outworn archetypes?

Their paltry medals time disclaims,
Their brief renown the years withdraw.
Who still recalls their faces, names?

Sans epitaph or requiem,
Consigned to earth like men of straw,
Their towns, in silence, buried them.

Interred in ground without a cross,
Assessed by standards none foresaw,
The ages calculate their loss.

Those boys, dispatched to fight a war,
Were sent to die untutored, raw.
Whose causes were they fighting for?

The Lost Children

See Dick lose his way in dreams,
Running down imagined roads,
Wading through concocted streams.

See Jane try to match his speed,
Fall behind, ignored, alone,
Wandering in straw and seed.

Children sin against the breath;
Every muddled prayer they speak
Only brings them nearer death.

See the grey in every leaf,
Winter's scroll of prophecies,
Days of heartbreak, nights of grief.

See Dick lose his way in dreams,
Jane not knowing where to turn,
What condemns and what redeems.

The Secret Caller

She often rang at one or two,
Her breathing's all I ever heard.
In all those months I never guessed
The she who called me up was you.
Whatever did you want with me?
(You once deceived me, broke your word,
Despising me as you confessed.)
A little late night company?
It still awakens me these nights,
The phone. More games of hide and seek?
I let it ring, insistent, sad,
Lie back in bed, leave off the lights.
You wonder why we never speak?
It's clear, our old connection's bad.

Best,

Tom