

Fire and Flux

The miry-drenched wooden rib
to sleek and articulate the shoulders
and neck of the pot:

turning tools incised upon the body,
cured in fire and flux,
chemist-crackled colors;

upon the whirling wheel
turned, pulled, trimmed,
liquid-glazed kiln-banished:

like Eve placed beside the cassia-bark tree,
the potter's voice never again
among the resined branches.

Anne MacKay

On First looking into Heaney's Beowulf

A bunch of high class thugs
returns in a golden cloud of
exhaust fumes and dust, helmets
polished bright as maseratis,
spears and chain mail clashing,
enters to a riot of cheers.

The king's daughter and
groupies serve wine,
dripping meat and beer
while they boast and yell,
unable to shut up, telling
how the blood spurted
like a chain-saw massacre,
how sword thrusts blasted
guts all over the heath.

Then the big guy shouts how,
at great cost, he hacked the
slavering homo-monster and its
disgusting mother to pieces,
brought back the slimy head and
taloned arm. Roars of laughter.

Meanwhile, the bard, who's
no dope and knows on which
side his meat is seasoned,
commits to memory every heroic,
bloody word; great deeds to
inspire a millennium of brutal
bullet-pocked worlds to come.

Oldest Friend

When I was four
she lit my room with cymbals of light,
sharp, clear, enchanting. When dark
my flashlight made her image on the wall.

When I was ten they told me her name:
Artemis. Diana. Selene.

At eleven I read about her pathway
sparkling on the water at first rise,
leading to the Garden, hidden behind.

Those summers on the sleeping porch,
Antares bright in the summer sky,
she turned the fields and creeks
into a magic, dream-drenched land.

At twelve my body moved to her sweep and flow.
At fourteen we sailed into the night,
watching the clouds swim across her face.
Holding the tiller, my friend put her arm
around me, pulled me close.

Rock-ball, dust-covered, pocked with insult
she still surprises us with secrets and magic.

Autumn-gold and huge or high cold-silver,
still enchants me, sings to me, holds me
stone deep in the long slow night.