

Queens

By J. M. Synge

Seven dog-days we let pass
Naming Queens in Glenmacnass,
All the rare and royal names
Wormy sheepskin yet retains,
Etain, Helen, Maeve, and Fand,
Golden Deirdre's tender hand,
Bert, the big-foot, sung by Villon,
Cassandra, Ronsard found in Lyon.
Queens of Sheba, Meath and Connaught,
Coifed with crown, or gaudy bonnet,
Queens whose finger once did stir men,
Queens were eaten of fleas and vermin,
Queens men drew like Monna Lisa,
Or slew with drugs in Rome and Pisa,
We named Lucrezia Crivelli,
And Titian's lady with amber belly,
Queens acquainted in learned sin,
Jane of Jewry's slender shin:
Queens who cut the bogs of Glanna,
Judith of Scripture, and Gloriana,
Queens who wasted the East by proxy,
Or drove the ass-cart, a tinker's doxy,
Yet these are rotten — I ask their pardon —
And we've the sun on rock and garden,
These are rotten, so you're the Queen
Of all the living, or have been.



Born near Dublin on April 16, 1871, playwright and poet J. M. Synge was the youngest of five children in an upper-class Protestant family. He was a key figure in the Irish Literary Revival and one of the co-founders of the Abbey Theatre with W. B. Yeats and Lady Gregory. He died at age 37 of Hodgkin's Disease.