

The Dream Play

By Derek Mahon

What night-rule now about this haunted grove?

The spirits have dispersed, the woods
faded to grey from midnight blue
leaving a powdery residue,
night music fainter, frivolous gods
withdrawing, cries of yin and yang,
discords of the bionic young;
cobweb and insects, hares and deer,
wild strawberries and eglantine,
dawn silence of the biosphere,
amid the branches a torn wing
— what is this enchanted place?
Not the strict groves of academe
but an old thicket of lost time
too cool for school, recovered space
where the brain yields to nose and ear,
folk remedy and herbal cure,
old narratives of heart and hand,
and a dazed donkey, starry eyed,
with pearls and honeysuckle crowned,
beside her naked nibs is laid.
Wild viruses, Elysian fields —
our own planet lit by the fire
of molten substance, constant flux,
hot ice and acrobatic sex,
the electric moth-touch of desire
and a new vision, a new regime
where the white blaze of physics yields
to yellow moonlight, dance and dream
induced by what mind-altering drug
or rough-cast magic realism;
till morning bright with ant and bug
shines in a mist of glistening gism,
shifting identities, mutant forms,
angels evolved from snails and worms.

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