

IN THE HIGHSTREET OF TRALEE

Run girl, run!
Under your blue blouse
The birdie paps are flying.

God made you thus
To pleasure us
Against our dying.

WHY?

In an old letter found
in a drawer she mentions,
almost casually, marks on
her wrists. She writes that
“they can now hardly be seen.”
Who? When? Why? That superb
girl, what agony was she
passing through?

THE RAIN ON THE ROOF

Tonight the small talk of the rain*
Is speaking to us again.
It began as a storm,
Then quieted down into a steady patter.
It's a reassuring sound that tells us
Everything is going to be all right;
We'll wake up to good weather.

Each of us can hear in the rain-talk
Whatever voice we most want to hear:

*“small talk . . . ” Thom Gunn

Our mother's or that
Of a never to be forgotten lover.

When you turn over and wake
We listen together.
When you drift back to sleep
I lie watching you.
I listen to your breathing
And the rain-talk tells me
That our time together
Will always be happy.

AT THE END

Let no mortician be her
last lover I have sent

to Benares for two cords
of the finest sandalwood.

DAWN (from *Byways*)

after Daphne and Apollo (Ovid)

And speaking of those
With whose destruction
The gods amused themselves
Notable was Dawn of Santo, Texas,
The most perfect face and body
That ever I beheld,
Each part perfection,
Modeled on the Venus of Milo
And perhaps, who knows for no one
Ever saw her, the Kyprian herself,
She violet-eyed, born of the seafoam.
Her father began tampering with her