

ROBERT FLANAGAN

The Garden, The Children

Dirt where I promise beans and corn,
you ask when they will come.
I tell you what I can:
“These things take time.”

Your mother has cried with pain
from childhood scars and, given nature,
memories of your future.
“The beans need rain.”

Blood-dark, I at times become
a man to fear, the stranger
who masks fear with anger.
“The corn needs sun.

Safe for now from flood or drought,
we stand by our measured plot.
“Children, I’m . . .
Sun. Rain. And time.”

Kathleen Ni Houlihan

Black shawl binding
pinched meal-grey face,
the old woman is
knotted
by hunger’s drawstring.
On the road
an Irishman is fallen
young as other sons, broken
as a husband left unburied
in the bogs.
She touches the body
inquisitively
as a lover, cradles the head.
Her lips brush a cool cheek;
teeth, yellow and long,
tear into meat.

The Song of the Separated Man

I
she hurt
I am
and the children
I am afraid
touching hurts
I am afraid of
loneliness
my comfort
I am afraid of being
alone
untouched
hurt