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Poems

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Poems

Abstract
SIS, THE REVENANT
Sis

When I was four or five
and you old enough to know better,
you washed my mouth out
with a cake of green soap:
I had dared to swear mildly.

You married not long after.
Housing Commission house
and children soon followed.
You took enough tranquillisers
to calm Saddam Hussein.

The house is near a highway.
Your plaster statue collection
vibrates as each truck passes.
You loll on a sofa watching soaps,
teeth handy in the kitchen
in case someone drops in.

Just before our mother died,
all squeezed in a hospital lift,
you pinched your grown son's arm
for some imagined slight.
In that sad moment, the taste
of soap came frothing back.
THE REVENANT

Was it Heathcliff I saw,
talc-pale, wrapped in a horse rug
taking the waters at Bad Ischl?
The man I saw had the right gypsy face
though his body was stooped with age.
I saw how he watched the porcelain-faced Frau
who massaged his legs with hot flannels:
his daemon eyes smouldered dry ice.
Next day he had gone, so I spoke
to the nurse who had tended his gout.
"Ah ja, you mean Herr Lockwood!
Each year he slinks from spa to spa
in search of some wraith he adored
when he roamed the Yorkshire moors".