Photograph of a Passerine in Song

His roosting songfulness —
the whisper of his wing music —
I am songless at his far-carrying
flight song.

Rose breast, large eye,
he gives a call not heard at any other time,
beginning with a single, begging note,
a sub-song of about seven notes,
then turns away his head,
holding up his beak a day’s length
to clouds at different levels in the foliage.

Thinking of MacNeice’s ‘the drunkenness of things being various’, it is appropriate to include a funny poem in this address. The removal of Seamus’s remains at the Church of the Sacred Heart, Donnybrook, in Dublin, was an overwhelming occasion emotionally for all of us there. The poet Paul Muldoon delivered the eulogy, which was very witty in a style typical of Paul, he being a poet of consummate wit and erudition. Prompted by this, I endeavoured to compose a poem in the manner of Paul Muldoon. The poem is based on an anagram of Seamus Heaney’s name. This name has always struck me as distinctively symmetrical, the ‘ea’ in ‘Seamus’ repeated in the ‘ea’ of ‘Heaney’. This is an interesting link back to the name of Yeats, also containing ‘ea’, an alphabetical

curiosity indicative of the rhythms and rhyme that Heaney inherited from his great predecessor.

A Pauline Verse

For Onesimus

I warned Paul, now that we know
The latest half-rhyme for dear Seamus,
Wasps, leaves and berries at Lammas,
The twittering of gathered swallows,

I would twitter all his name means,
The golden means in what was his name,
From ah to Amen, amass and ame,
Amuse and Amy. From ash to Ashe

And ashes to ashen, assume to aum.
From ease to easy, eau and enu.
From ham to hay to hey to hen,
From he to hue to hum, human

And Hume. From hymn to hymen,
No less. From eyes to Enya.
From mane to manse to may
To May and many, from my

To mash and mesh and mush,
Meas and Mass, mensa, mens
Sana, Manus, mess and messy.
Muse ever. From nay to neem,
Part of it is decaying, part matured.
Like peeling up a new heart.
Like opening up a new heart.
Darkening to elephant gray—
Have the places left you along with me?
The horns of the moon have met four times.
Since I lay with you upon beech friends.
Trying to fall out of love, beeches.
Inscribed by your name.
Into the anonymous murmur, the cup-marked
Some whose eyes have never be met.
Some whose eyes have been deserted you.
Since words deserted you.

Like a city without a park. If you
Could roam London as an aerial spirit,
The gossamer roof of the museum.
Would look for your story.

There are compressions and explosions of space.
As the underground people we knew.
Take up the word-work.
Sleep downstairs on the window-sills.

The Beatles came here, when we were young.
Scamus sported a 'Beatles' hairstyle, which looked very well on
him then.
I wrote many poems over the year following his passing,
remained behind. The following is called To The Source
Pron, which Scamus was.

To Nessai, same to same to say
And sean, sean and sean, sean.
Shun, shame, sense, sens and sench.
From surn to sorna, she to shen.
From sun to am, use, ya to yeah.
Yeah, yeah. From yam to ye and yim.

From him to Eneas-Siar.
To annas. From Una to Esau.
To Aneas. From me.
To Shaman.

The following poem, the name 'O'Highnight', is the
Irish-language version of 'Heaney'. 'Discol's Sleeping
Beauty' is the name of a packet of blackberries as they
were once called, recalling the blackberry's fruit that
features significantly in Scamus Heaney's poetry. The
poem surveys his development from a peasant rural

[33]