

Saddled With Care and Compassion



Part I

Abundantly blessed, it was inevitable she'd be tested
As the bright land receded she felt happy with Pwyll -
Even in the time of sterility. (But dreamt often of her youth
Spent on horseback in the summer-green meadows.)

Relief to see a swelling stomach and enlarged breasts,
Joy of motherhood! Soon enough the child was born -
Became a crumpled foal in the manger peaceful.
Its mother exhausted and pale - sleeping in fits.

She woke to fake screams - blood on her face,
Tiny dismembered limbs - her son no more.
Framed, then convicted, she barely escaped execution,
Became, instead, a humiliating spectacle -

Saddled up at the gate of the castle, anybody's transport
Up and down the labyrinth of stone alleyways. And
All the time grieving for her missing child - seven
Long years, her dignity, her love of horses ...

Part II

The nightmare ended - a jilted lover's plot exposed
Ruddy peasants saw an abandoned infant beside a
pregnant mare - raised him as their own. Until an epiphany:
'The eyes of Pwyll!' and Rhiannon became woman again.

In Ireland, Macha was not above cursing the heartless.
Those who cheered and laughed when she (pregnant) -
Was forced to race the king's thoroughbreds. Rhiannon
Sought no vengeance - and a peace settled on Dyfed.