

Three Poems by Pádraig Daly

MERTON

Advent

He moves with chilblained hands,
In coarse overalls and woolen cap,
Doggedly following silence;

In the Winter monotony of the woods,
Waiting, learning merely to wait.

MARGARET PORETE

On the fourteenth day, I came to the béguinage;
My rooms were simple and silent.

Outside, the fallen leaves were intensely yellow
As if they held in themselves the secret of light.

From my door, I watched the sensuous flow
of rain along the rooftops;

The pathways were covered afterwards
with limpid waterpools.

I was aware of the Godness of God,
His difference and his nearness.

And, even as my heart was ravished,
I became conscious of enormous evil,
Waiting with book and virtue to undo me.

[Margaret Porete was a Beguine Mystic who
was put to death by the Inquisition in Paris
in 1310]

COMPLAINT

I will tell you, Sir, about a woman of yours
Who suddenly had all her trust removed
And turned to the wall and died.

I remember how she would sing of your love,
rejoice in your tiniest favour;
The scented jonquils,

The flowering currant-bush,
The wet clay
Spoke to her unerringly of benevolence.

I remind you, Sir, of how, brought low,
She cowered like a tinker's dog,
Her hope gone, her skin loose around her bones.

Where were you, Sir, when she called out to you?
And where was the love that height nor depth
Nor any mortal thing can overcome?

Does it please you, Sir, that your people's voice
Is the voice of the hare torn between the hounds?