

JOHN F. DEANE

An Elegy

Flora in the roadside ditch
are boasting the watercolor purple of a pride of bishops—
vetch, knapweed, clover, and the rosebay willow herb;
and I would make a poem

the way old Bruckner caught a flight of pelicans in his
Ecce sacerdos magnus . . .
for eight-part choir, key magenta, though these times the spirit
slumps, mal-tended in this limping country. Now

a blackcap, fast and furtive, comes to feast on the white berries
of the dogwood hedge; bullfinches,
secretive, subdued, flit in a shock of rose-petal black and white
across the alder thicket

and I am urged to praise, willing to have the poem
speak the improbable wonderful. Today
the poet Seamus Heaney said he was leaving us for a while,
visiting, with Moses, high mountain pastures

for he has been slewed by grief for the misery of the people.
As gift and punishment
he glimpsed the heels of YHWH, will come down to tell of it;
What name, he said, shall I give them, should they ask?

District and Circle, came the call, or *Seeing Things*. Now I
have been high on Slievemore heathlands; I heard that piercing
whistle, peremptory and off-key, I watched
the sheepdog low-crouched, eager, willing to spring; the furze blazed

with a cool gold flame; blithering sheep
were marked with blobs of red and purple dye, cumbered
with knobs of dried-in mud; what name shall I
give to the people, should they ask? Milady Hare, who waits,

rump high, brooding in a patch of sorrel?
Or Crested Grebe, perhaps,
elegant on the waters in brown Connemara tweed? The name then—Seamus,
abundance, lover, the promise and the death.