

SEVENTH CHILD

She is the seventh child. Of six sisters,
All called Lizzie, none knows the next.
Diphtheria preys on their small bodies.
She hears the harshness of rooks
High in the trees, above the land
That slips away to places she will never know.
That night, in the churchyard,
Her father sits with her.
The sky is myriad and tatterdemalion with stars.
He is a gaunt man, and struggling
To show that paternal affection
That will not be commonplace
Till many decades more have passed.
He points to The Pleiades which he says
Are the crystallised souls of her dead kin.
The Seven Sisters they are called.
Time and again she counts but six.
He continues to speak but Lizzie is away,
Marvelling at the pagan atavism of his words,
From a time before rood and lych-gate.
In her own head, mystical and clairvoyant,
Knowing that when she dies, and only when,
The seventh sister will wink down on earth
From her jewelled resting place in the sky.