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## MARY O'BRIEN

### XII

I was young in a land  
 where the harsh voice of John Knox  
 still stained the passionate loveliness of the land  
 while runts with bad teeth sang  
 of his old young antagonist  
                                 Mary, Queen of Scots  
                                 got her head chopped off.  
 We sang, playing games  
 in the chasms of tenemental grime  
 except, of course, on Sundays:  
                                 Work and pray child.

I was young in that land  
 where acres of aching loveliness  
 were turned to purple playing fields  
 where stags and little birds  
 could be murdered for fun  
                                 while the people  
 huddled with fleas in rancid beds  
 or prayed, but also sitting up  
                                 for kneeling's popish.



Mary, May 1957