

THE LEGEND OF EVELYN ROE

(After Bertolt Brecht)

When springtime came and the sea was blue,
her restless eyes aglow,
there came on board with the very last boat
the youthful Evelyn Roe.

About her limbs was a wondrous shawl
O more than earth more fair.
No other fine trinket of gold she wore
apart from her wonderful hair.

"O Captain I would travel with you
to the holy land of Christ"

"Then travel with us for we are fools
whom beauty has much enticed."

"The Lord will pay. For I am poor.
My soul belongs to Jesus."

Then give to us your lovely flesh
for the Lord you love can pay no more
since he has pre-deceased us."

They journeyed on in sun and wind
and loved sweet Evelyn Roe.
She ate her bread and drank her wine
and let her sweet tears flow.

They danced by night. They danced by day.

They left the course alone.

Fair Evelyn was so shy and soft:

while they were as hard as stone.

The springtime went. The summer went.

She ran at night with a tattered shoe:

from rail to rail she stared in the grey,

to find for herself a silent shore,

the poor girl Evelyn Roe.

She danced by night. She danced by day;

until at last she seemed run down.

“O Captain, please, when will we come

to Jesus’ holy town?”

The captain lay upon her lap

and kissed and laughed quite so:

“If it’s anyone’s fault we don’t arrive

then it’s due to Evelyn Roe.”

She danced by night. She danced by day

until her eyes began to puff.

From captain down to the youngest boy

they all had had enough.

She wore sheer silk upon her flesh
so calloused and so spare
and wore upon her troubled brow
her dirt-entangled hair.

“This sinful flesh dear Jesus Christ
shall never see you more.
You will not wish to see me now
for I'm become a whore.”

She ran so long from rail to rail
it ached her heart, her foot, her knee.
She went at night when no one saw —
she gave herself to the sea.

Now this was in coldest January
She swam a long way out
and it's not till March or April
that the blossoms open out.

She gave herself to the darkened waves
They washed her white and clean
She'll probably reach the holy land
before the captain's been.

In Spring she came to Heaven's door
but Peter bade her go —
“God has said that he will not have
the whore that's Evelyn Roe.”

And likewise when she came to Hell
the door was bolted too —
The Devil screamed, “I will not have
the pious Evelyn Roe.”

She wandered out through wind and space.
She wandered to and fro.
At night I've seen her pass this way:
she tottered much, but would not stay,
the poor girl Evelyn Roe.

NOEL MACAINSH