

Peter Redgrove

THE COUNT OF SOME ACCOUNT

A mass of beard and talon filled the coffin.
One tear was all she allowed herself.
A hush beamed from the cloudless portion of the sky;
She watched the little travelling silence sorrowfully,
Fatal to him.

They were on the high ground of the island where
A little grassy alp parts two peaks; on this coll
The mourners worried their fiddles or with tears on their cheeks
Wept into their hats. Yet that night the unbearded
Count walked, patrolling his battlemented chateau –

It was this habitation was his solid shadow,
And having rebuilt it in his image he could no longer be
Caught in a mirror, his reflection now
Towered on this hill, nor
Caught in a coffin, like the mortal folk,
Nor in the dust, not on the sunniest day; others
Could get lost in his corridors and wander there
Until he chose to let them out or bite them.

The kinswoman thought the funeral was all right
When the parson stopped talking and gave her leave to think
Where the Count might be found; she turned away
And entered the gates, seeking not his shade
But his actual body among the actual stones raised
Into the ancestral home created for her
High up, on the island; he, the soft Count
Beardless, without fangs, talonless, and yet
The Ancestor, the only one, who built
From the beginning for her alone.