

## *Grainne Ni Mhaille*

(County Mayo)

When Grace O'Malley, pirate  
 sea-queen and castle builder,  
 much captured and escaped  
 found her seaway up the Thames  
 to Elizabeth's Presence,  
 she was put questions about  
 loyalty and liegeman's aims.

A translator made the two  
 acquainted, Grace sixty-three  
 claiming still and yet she could  
 sail a galley, rule a crew,  
 would but Her Royal Highness  
 license the fire and the sword  
 to guard Ireland's western coast.

I get the fey picture of  
 two queens, one jewelled and most  
 golden in velvet and lace —  
 powder pale — and the other  
 more leather than lavender,  
 beyond concern for her face,  
 all stance, stride, all seaworthy.

Can't you hear some old courtier  
 jealous of his young missy  
 page her from Grace's straight side  
 asking then "Who was that knight  
 I seen you with last, Wife?"  
 getting for reply "That was  
 no knight, that was a Lady."

WILLIAM MCLAUGHLIN.