

His Work Killed Him, A Puzzle Box Poem

by Christopher Carter Sanders

(Homage, Sir Henry Howard)

“Strife was born... the elder daughter of black Night.”
—Hesiod *trans.* Lattimore

The
Halidom
In your hand:
A book.

Competitive speed and
Shaped by the myths
First to claim it
First to take.

Strength of a thought
You haven't had
Last to read it,
A look.

Here is the Bible
Written in fifths
Five denials:
Five gifts.

Here are Greek Myths
You quote every day
Plucked black strings
A pictured way.

Here is a symphony
Sung for the deaf
Or who is to say?
Struck white clef.

Sir Henry Howard
Though in a hurry
Made of fourths:
Died but once.

The Earl of Surrey
Or so I hear
Was full of beer
Ruled little else.

Wrote a sonnet
The first to bend
The most foolish proud boy...
But made a good end.

Theogony
Of the mundane
Had eaten:
The blame.

Of invented forms
Of little, of rhyme
Of His own trick
Of a labeled quarter.

Plethora, god-patron
Before Time
Designed a shield:
His own death-warrant.