

M. B. Duggan / FIST OF FLOWERS

1 Horse-Chestnut

Terminal buds spit out branches

Flower

Growth stops Only

to break again from lateral buds

Forked branches mimic the roots' pattern

Between the 2 a crow with 2

left wing-feathers gone has its

prismatic back flooded by petals

for a moment

Then they slip off

2

A fox-glove's basal
leaf-rosette fanned

over grass
Killing it

The quick stalk
gone woody
covered with the hard
seed-head bulbs

held
at its tip
a white fist of flowers

3 Convolvulus

Totally without scent Hidden
by coarse vines Yet
the conic whiteness
could match thought for delicacy

Tendrils can twist it 1
complete rotation in 2 hr
It can bind
the plow in
its furrow bind
the blade in
its swing bind
the hand
in its grip
It closes against the rain and then
bares its teething petals
and flowers innocently

4

2 leaves ring the stalk
Spring out Above at right
angles
2 again The pattern

cannot tire It poured
over walls

Tore them The bitter stinging
nettle drove
its root-wedge down sightless cracks

Vivid through yellow
leaves green veins
race with the vigor of decay

5

The swamp is frozen 2
sticks
fall Dent it

The yellow arum's loose tunic
unfolds
Reveals a green torch
burning the water

6 Hemlock

*— that inaccurate expressions not
only annoy
but also corrupt the soul To love*

*the precise — Earth
funnelling up this stalk curves*

its back like an athlete throws
off
a leaf From this joint

new stems break up into
200 flowers Socrates

drank this *A tremor ran through his body
The man removed the covering from his face
and we saw him staring Crito looked
and closed the mouth and eyes This gentle*

cold soaked up from the feet
Through thighs Trunk Chest The eyes

the last
to be covered over