

POETRY SELECTED BY ALISON BRACKENBURY

Dr Stagbant Talks Of Roses

Let us walk in the garden for a while,
I would like to show you to my roses,
as that rogue Sheridan would have it.

Meet my dear friends – see, here
is General Jaqueminot, a fine fellow,
is he not? though perhaps a little florid –

and let me present you to Louise Odier,
a pretty thing, despite that unfortunate
last name – have a mind to those loose

paving stones: the terrace is aging, as
alas, am I. Look, Cardinal de Richelieu,
is nodding to the Empereur du Maroc

and you will have noted, will you not,
how these soft and subtle shades of purple,
mauve and lilac are my preference,

how they suit my pensive moods,
my melancholy humeurs in these lone
years of mourning? Tell me now,

do you recall those lines of Ronsard,
written for Cassandre. Let me see, how
do they go? Something like this, no?

*Mignonne, allons voir si la rose
Qui ce matin avoit desclose
Sa robe de pourpre au Soleil...*

etcetera, etcetera. Some scholars have it
that the dress is scarlet, but most surely
they are wrong, would you not agree?

No, no, Ronsard must have had in mind
a rose like this one, Daphné, my latest
acquisition, a gallica, her silken petals

tumbled in most charming disarray.
Let me pluck one for you. – ah, how
both of you do scent the evening air.

Angela Kirby