

Three Portraits of Cereal Killers

1. Circle makers

In dead of night they steal—who knows?
Soft from starships or on tip-toes?
To leave a sign or play a trick?
To teach the wise or gull the thick?
With ray guns or with planks of wood?—
To break their necks before they should
And leave thousands of unripe dead
And feed them tales who expected bread.

2. Breakfast brands

The box's gaudy sides belie
The dust-dry lumps within
It most definitely does not do
What they say on the tin
Was it for this dull mockery
That we got out of bed?
As healthy as it claims to be
It's definitely dead.

3. Hades

Doomed by his dark dominion of the dead
Never to feel a woman's loving touch—
O hard fate! even for a god too much—
He dared violent trickery instead.
When she by hunger past endurance tried
Yielded and ate, part of his heart for love
Died too to save the rest; meanwhile, above,
Alone and desolate her mother cried.

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Written for the poetry evening "Vicious Killers" at the Whitechapel Gallery on 13th August 2009, mostly in the National Gallery on 7th August 2009, and tweaked thereafter. I don't think anyone at the reading got the pun.