Changing Rooms

In memory of Richard Ellmann

Jon Stallworthy

The unfamiliar key unlocks
the un-named, unfamiliar door,
but I'm brought up short by the box
stamped ELLMANN on the floor.

They must have moved our books in that –
yours out, mine in – and look here, piled
together on your desk, my desk,
your *Yeats, Joyce, Wilde*.

The window wears the ghost of a smile
and it is the wind whispers: *Did*
you imagine me in that box
with my name on the lid

any more than the one before?
Yes and no, old Houdini friend,
old shape-changer. I imagine
you now 'at journey's end',

sitting down to dinner in *Tir-*
nan-Oge, beguiling and beguiled,
inseparable there as here
from Yeats, Joyce, Wilde.

Wolfson College, Oxford

17 October 1987