The Word That Clamors

Jesuit Poetry That Reflects the Spiritual Exercises

JAMES TORRENS, S.J.
THE SEMINAR ON JESUIT SPIRITUALITY

A group of Jesuits appointed from their provinces in the United States.

The Seminar studies topics pertaining to the spiritual doctrine and practice of Jesuits, especially American Jesuits, and communicates the results to the members of the provinces. This is done in the spirit of Vatican II's recommendation that religious institutes recapture the original inspiration of their founders and adapt it to the circumstances of modern times. The Seminar welcomes reactions or comments in regard to the material that it publishes.

The Seminar focuses its direct attention on the life and work of the Jesuits of the United States. The issues treated may be common also to Jesuits of other regions, to other priests, religious, and laity, to both men and women. Hence, the studies, while meant especially for American Jesuits, are not exclusively for them. Others who may find them helpful are cordially welcome to read them.

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James Torrens, S.J.

STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUALITY OF JESUITS

30/3 MAY 1998
For your information . . .

You never know what the mail will bring! That is perhaps even more the case when one is the editor of a journal such as Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits. As examples of the more unusual, consider the following three missives from recent weeks. The first is a serious advertisement for a book that uses eight biblical texts and midrash to retell stories of several women in the Bible. The idea and the subtitle of the book, Biblical Women, Irreverent Laughter, and Righteous Rage, are arresting; but what surely attracts the most attention is the title itself, Spiritual Lemons. In the second example, a person at a state correctional facility writes to offer to become “an asset to the Jesuit/Catholic faith by being a spy/decoy/undercover worker to further the cause of same, to use the means . . . to fact-gather on religious, political, etc. dissidents and so-forth, and report via various subversive means.” The writer also offers to give speeches in Catholic churches and other institutions “about how the Virgin Mary via her faithful, obedient servants ‘on the streets’ helped me to receive my freedom.” The third piece of mail, several printed pages, brought the news that besides being “the mother of God and the mother of Christ,” the Blessed Virgin Mary is also the “Spouse of Christ” and the “Spouse of the Holy Ghost” and the latter “conforms also to the natural law.”

On a completely different note, I have regularly called attention in these comments to various Jesuit anniversaries. This year, 1998, and this month of May bring such an anniversary, one especially important for the Missouri Province of the Society of Jesus and through it for the American Assistancy. On May 31, 1823, one hundred and seventy-five years ago, what became the Missouri Province came into existence when seven Belgian novices, two priests, and three brothers stepped ashore at St. Louis on the Mission Bank of the Mississippi River. They had started their journey on April 11, walked the “National Pike,” the old Cumberland Road from Maryland to the Ohio River at Wheeling, traveled down the Ohio by flatboat to Shawneetown in Illinois, and then tramped across southern Illinois, covering an average of twenty-five miles a day, until they reached St. Louis. From there began what came to be a province that at one time stretched from the Gulf of Mexico to the Canadian border and from the Appalachian Mountains to beyond the Rockies. At one time the province included territory that is now part of seven of the ten United States provinces. From the original Missouri Province, in the course of successive divisions through the years came the Chicago, the Wisconsin, and the Detroit Provinces. Today those four provinces have a membership of 1,171 Jesuits, almost one third of all the United States Jesuits, with nine colleges and universities, ten retreat houses and spiritual centers, twenty-two parishes, eighteen high schools or middle schools, several domestic missions, and formal province institutional commitments in many other lands, not to mention numerous other corporate and individual apostolic works. Ad multos annos!

Another anniversary, this one international. Exactly four hundred and fifty years ago this year, the Society of Jesus began its apostolic work in Africa. Simão Rodrigues, one of the first companions and at the time provincial of Portugal, sent four Portuguese Jesuits to what was then called the Kingdom of Kongo. They landed in Africa on March 18, 1548. Among their earliest works were the first catechisms in the indigenous languages and, within a generation, a college at Luanda, today the
capital of Angola. Father General has written a letter to the members of the Portuguese Province and the African Assistancy to commemorate the occasion.

Just a year ago, in the May 1997 issue of STUDIES I had mentioned the Review of Ignatian Spirituality, edited from Rome by Joseph Tetlow, S.J., as “an international forum on the spirituality rooted in the Spiritual Exercises.” The most recent issue has a special article that fully lives up to that concern for the Exercises and to the internationality of the enterprise as well. Its rather commonplace title, “Notes for the One Giving Exercises,” conceals a very informative and perceptive series of findings on four central questions about the Exercises that a panel of experienced directors and consultants from around the world arrived at during their meeting in Rome last February. The four questions read as follows: “Whom are we inviting to make Exercises? What are we offering them? What do we expect to happen? What actually happens?” The participants came from Brazil, Germany, Canada, the United States, Poland, the Philippines, Italy, India, and the Congo. You may be surprised at and you will surely be enlightened by this brief, eleven-page article. The Review can be reached at the Secretariat for Ignatian Spirituality / CP 6139/ 00195 Rome Prati/ Italy. The telephone number is 39-6-689-77-384 and the fax 39-6-687-92-83. (No, I have not omitted a last digit on the fax number; it is just one of the idiosyncrasies of the Italian telephone system.)

Also last year, in an earlier STUDIES I had referred to a particular book as one that “every once in a while . . . comes along that opens up a whole new line of thought and interpretation.” Here is another such book, Landmarking: City, Church and Jesuit Urban Strategy by Thomas M. Lucas, S.J. (xvi + 245 pp.; Chicago: Loyola Press, 1997; $34.95). The November 1997 issue of National Jesuit News has already published an excellent review of the book by Edward W. Schmidt, S.J. The book gives the first extended, carefully researched study of St. Ignatius’s urban vision for the Society of Jesus, doing so with insight, imagination, and the ability to successfully tell both an overall story and many illustrative particular stories. To give but one example of research, who would ever have thought that about one thousand of Ignatius’s almost seven thousand letters dealt with real estate in one form or another? And what forms they were! And what a difference this can make to our portrait of Ignatius and our understanding of what Jesuit apostolates really have been and perhaps ought to be for the future. To the pleasure of a good read add the pleasure of handling a book beautifully designed and handsomely published.

As happens every year at the end of the May-June meeting of the Seminar on Jesuit Spirituality, several members will finish their three-year term of office and several will be waiting to take their places in September. My thanks and, I am sure, those of the readers of STUDIES go to Gerald Fogarty and Clement Petrlik, both of the Maryland Province, and Carl Starkloff of the Missouri Province. Our new members-to-be are Philip Chmielewski (CHG), Richard Hauser (WJS), and Thomas Lucas (CFN). I shall tell you more about them in the September 1998 issue of STUDIES.

John W. Padberg, S.J.
Editor
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IN MEMORIAM

Edward Malatesta (1932–98)
China Hand and Spiritual Guide

The Question
(La pregunta)

Osvaldo Pol

Everybody passes
and asks—
from the narrow space left them
by the bodies of others
and the crucial adventure
of the journey—

they pass in a long line
and ask me

"Your God . . . Where is your God?"

The original Spanish text:

Todos los hombres pasan
y preguntan
—desde el espacio estricto
que les dejan los cuerpos de los otros
y desde la aventura necesaria
del viaje—

pasan en larga fila
y me preguntan:

Tú Dios . . . ¿Dónde tu Dios?
THE WORD THAT CLAMORS

Jesuit Poetry That Reflects the Spiritual Exercises

INTRODUCTION

What lies ahead in these pages is a sampling of recent Jesuit poetry reflective of some aspect of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. I had some misgivings while soliciting these texts, because poets do not, after all, pick subjects to write about; rather, they follow the thread of some striking experience or rhythmic pattern. But when I listed the highlights of the Spiritual Exercises—leading concepts, key annotations or meditations—and invited submissions from Jesuit poets, I received plenty, and their enthusiasm for the project really buoyed me.

This collection would be valuable, I think, simply for making the point of the living and persistent influence of the Exercises on our works of imagination. But its real intent is more practical, more geared to the readership of STUDIES— to afford a stimulus, render substantial help, be good company to anyone making the Exercises today. These poems, often with vividness, present the contemporary context in which God invites us and Jesus Christ comes to us.


We may as writers be awed by so much in Hopkins that we could

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never hope to duplicate—those jammed-together, exclamatory, drum-beat lines, his horror of Latinisms and startling reach of vocabulary, his innocent awe-struck faith, his tremendous empathy for the struggles of ordinary life, not to mention the “terrible sonnets,” where he is holding on for dear life. But his work invites us not so much to match his quality as to carry forth our mutual tradition. Hopkins had a very Ignatian way of seeing. Jesuits today will have a different idiom—will be experimental and questioning and devotional in a different mode—yet they will be faithful to the same insights that drove and supported Hopkins.

Undeniably, some very authentic Jesuit writing does not fit under headings from the Exercises, which might well be a kind of Procrustean bed for them. This is the case, in particular, with Jean Mambrino of the French Province, although you will find two poems by Mambrino under “Principle and Foundation.” I discuss Mambrino’s resolutely different direction in the afterword, but will also point out here his effort, in each of his volumes, to work in a different form, in a new rhythmical and structural mode.

My familiarity with Mambrino centers on a well-named volume Oiseau-Cœur (loosely, “with a bird’s heart”), published in 1979, which includes two earlier collections and a new one. The very title of the book suggests lightness, aspiration. The poet, in this work, is preoccupied with the earth—its rocky landscape and woods and watery stretches, its birds, the effects of wind, and especially the play of light. The human being, when traceable in the text and the poet’s vision, seems drawn into it by the aura of place, by a silence or absence that conveys a mystical Someone. In illustration I offer one representative poem, “A Lone Cypress Suffices” (“Un Seul Cyprès suffit”).

A Lone Cypress Suffices

A lone cypress suffices
    at the heart of distance
    to make the hills turn
    the forests   homesteads   hills
    and light detached from the sky

still it is at the center
    of nothing
    it seems outside of the day

of a green deeper than the pines
    almost black
it enlivens it gives bearings to a round of hills
the noise of invisible water the bitterness of forests
what can it know it lasts and shapes out the nothing from on high.

The original French text:
Un seul cyprès suffit
au coeur de la distance
pour faire tourner les collines
les forêts les mas les collines
et la lumière détachée du ciel
et pourtant il n’est au centre de rien
il semble à l’extérieur du jour
d’un vert plus foncé que les pins presque noir
il anime il oriente la ronde des collines
le bruit de l’eau invisible l’amertume des forêts
que peut-il savoir il dure et désigne le rien d’en haut.

This collection benefits not just from a taste of Mambrino but from three Spanish-speaking poets—Emilio del Rio of Spain, Luis Carlos Herrera of Colombia, and Osvaldo Pol of Argentina—and one Dutchman, familiar to readers of STUDIES, Paul Begheyn. Paul is principal translator of his own poems and I the polisher; for the other poets, I bear all the responsibility.

I take this opportunity to thank my fellow poets who responded with such alacrity to this project, even from Down Under (Peter Steele), even from north of the Arctic Circle (Edward Ingebretsen, spending the year in the University of Tromsø, Norway, as a Fulbright fellow). I must also apologize into the unknown—to all those Jesuit poets not appearing here. Their absence may well be due to a lapsus mentis on my part, but more likely they are unknown to me and I look forward to learning of them. Now may all readers savor what follows.
FIRST WEEK

Spiritual Exercises, Definition
Preliminaries, First Annotation

We may consider “spiritual exercises” to mean any way of preparing and disposing the heart to rid itself of disordered affections and to seek God’s will for one’s life. The notion of exercise involves exertion, overcoming one’s laziness and resistances.

Element
Peter Steele

Praying to you can be talking to the sea
Out there beyond this field, those trees
And the last tongue of land.

It is where our language ends, our dreams begin,
A world of no more world, the place
Where earth sweats into space.

And being a timid man with a taste for armour
Inside as well as out, I pray
That you will keep your distance.

Mostly it seems to work. You have the goodness
To leave me home and dry. Why then
Do I feel, unwilling, brine

In averted eyes, sweat on the folded hands,
The tongue stung as with salt, and inside
The tide mounting my veins?
The Brink
Vernon Ruland

The conch in one hand
of Vishnu welcomes you
to worship. In his other,
a discus of fire slams you
to ashes if you refuse.

A curious tourist, perhaps
you nibble free at every shrine.
Beware the sacred threshold!

Swept quick beyond your depth,
no longer seeking but sought,
you’ll not back out unchanged.
Generosity
Preliminaries, Fifth Annotation

It is crucial for the one making the Exercises to enter on them with a large heart and generosity ("grande animo y liberalidad") toward our Creator and Lord, offering all one's desires and freedom, all one has and is, for whatever it is God wishes.

The Possibles
Edward Ingebretsen

I make you my offering
in peace; from my fields and forests
twig and cut of oak
the unaccustomed wildflower

I make you my offering
of clay hands; these are all
that is final to me
the reach, the reach,
the failure ever to reach

I make you my offering
in peace.
You are all the sky to me
the light of my eyes,
my thriving

I make you my offering, the possibles:
you are my day
the late orange sun
and the going home
the night

you are
the quiet of my heart:

Father.
Ups and Downs of the Spirit
Preliminaries, Sixth Annotation

The person directing the Exercises should look for the following in the exercitant: not a flat, untroubled surface, but some waves, some heights and depths, excited moments and darker, uncertain times. A lot hinges on faithfulness to the instructions of Ignatius.

The Cat Starts Scratching
William Rewak

Young, the desire is not there:
no evil intent, or even
rudeness; the heart is not baked enough
to want the final touch; the brain
has no antecedents to know the lack.
What seemed piety, for most of us,
was either a need to please or a halting
attempt to discipline grace. Like
disciplining a cat. If peer
followed peer into the darkness and named
it light, there was, at least, company
and therefore corroboration. But two eggs
every morning, for years, you want
more. Some parts die
and they tug, not forgotten; some
start pulsing, urging, unready.
And the cat starts scratching; the light
is still darkness but it beckons, insistent,
then you know and desire finds its way.
Prayer, Essentially
Preliminaries, Modalities of Prayer

The Exercises instruct us in prayer, whether by setting the pattern for meditations and contemplations or by attending to the specific variants suggested in the appendix—examination of conscience, prayers dwelt upon word by word, or rhythmic matching of words to breaths.

Psyche at Prayer
George McCauley

What does she see,
her eyes cast
down a chasm
deep within her, deep
cascading space, her
special silence framed
against a silent world,
donna immobile,
her mouth half-parted,
stopped in air as
though she’d scare away
a bird-like presence,
listening all
at once, if that
is possible, to the
unspeaking
universe, her arms
reposing unadorned
upon her limp thighs,
her very form
a waiting, wanting,
what? Is it
because she cannot
have or is too
full of having?
I watch her wake
from prayer,
the way her eyes

at first seem
pricked by the
undarkened sun,
the way she shrugs
off dreams
reluctantly
and flicks
a woolly caterpillar
from her hem
without killing it,
and shuts the
gospel book upon
her knee with reverent
finality as though
she knows
a secret now
that must be kept
next to the car keys
in her purse.
She pats her hair,
and looks around
as if to say
she’s fine,
she really is,
and smiles upon
the newborn world.
A Kind of Air

Edward Ingebretsen

After all—
being a kind of air
others shall breathe
to set down roots, throw out branches
that connect and reach—
one doesn’t live for oneself.

So we go on
faithful to nothing
if not to our own diminishing
in the steady ways
death overtakes us.
Our single task: finally to be honest—
the bag of virtue we carry
remains empty, if we must fill it.
Our only work: to awake
where God can find us—
Samuels, all, in the other room.

Prayer, then, is the shape
breath takes:

my God
do not forget
that it was you
in the cornerless night
who first awoke me.
Claim my voice.
I ask your forgiveness
and the shadow of your light.
For this is the beautiful thing
a Samuel is given to do:
earlty awakened,
to seek you.
To the Creator Glory
Principle and Foundation

The psalms of praise, especially Psalms 95 to 105, can help us bridge, and attune to, the new environment of the *Exercises*. We begin harping not on ourselves but on and to God, joining a great chorus in praise and reverence of the Goodness in whom we live and move.

**Psalms 23**

Francis P. Sullivan

My Shepherd, my field,
My well, my brimming drink,
My steady pace, sturdy weapon,
My balm, my home, my God.

**Psalm**

Francis P. Sullivan

(1995, a year before his death)

The thought of you does not keep me alive.
I am too much animal, you are too much spirit.
I have tried prayer for the newly doomed,
as if I’m on a sphere’s edge looking at infinity,
to ask you to come console their terrified eyes,
but I drift into half sleep, the pleasure of immunity.
Though I have heard doom words and seen the days ahead roll up on me like a poster to its blank side.
I do not want immunity. If I could open one hand,
motion you somewhere, sit in this chair, or stand where I can see you a minute! If I could shake my head in amazement at your arrival, or have tears of joy, or sense you had some grief, smelling moisture of you, or the odor of your love for the different roses in the vase, the play of baby’s breath, or the light below the evening star out the window, rusty and rough and squeaky like a hinge!
This is not demand. Animals are distracted.
There is always another scent for them, until there isn’t.
Exaltavit humiles

Daniel Berrigan

All things despised, capricious, cranky
have an hour of morning. Sumac jostled
by shouldering oaks to the forest edge—how it burns
clearer than they. And cobweb, no more than an afterthought,
trembles at dawn like new-hammered silver.

The crouching rocks, overlaid
with purest lace.

The wild brown grasses;
a canticle at the furnace door:
_Bless the Lord, rime at morning, frost and cold air!

Roots, bound hand and foot, hear and heave mightily,
lie cruciform, await the breaking spell.

For a moment nothing is wasted, nothing of no moment:
to the banquet grace calls, grace clothes the unwanted poor.

Morning Rises

Jean Mambrino

Morning rises from the calm waters
and the birds taking to flight
open the heavens
open from their wings
a breath of freshness
that to uplifted faces leaves

only exile every heart
alone on its isle and wounded.

For every bird in its flight
carries the heavens off.
The original French text:
Le matin monte des eaux calmes
et les oiseaux dans leur envol
ouvrent le ciel
ouvrent de leurs ailes
la fraîcheur qui respire
ne laissant aux visages levés
que l'exil chaque coeur
dans son île seul et blessé.

Car chaque oiseau dans son vol
emporte le ciel.

The Gift
Le Don

Jean Mambrino
(translated by Jonathan Griffin)

“Life, my sister . . .”

—Pasternak

The munificence of the lilacs upon the heights of evening
is no less ephemeral than their scent which never ceases
to spread about, to conjure the dawn
sky in the deep of the twilight, blood on the sea,
sombre love, suavity of tears, the blue
trace of a wound, and always the abundance of the fragile
flowering, when lovers breathe their bliss,
have longed, since they were born, to retrieve the useless
fullness exhaled by each fragment of life,
at each secret instant of the world, where they nest
in the assurance of that gift which speaks only of April
and prepares summer where the lilacs will be no more.
The original French text:

"Ma sœur la vie"

—Pasternak

L’étincellement des lilas sur les hauteurs du soir
n’est pas moins éphémère que leur odeur qui ne cesse
de s’étendre alentour pour susciter le ciel
de l’aube au fond du crépuscule, le sang sur la mer,
le sombre amour, la suavité des pleurs, la trace bleue
d’une blessure, et toujours l’abondance de la fragile
floraïson, quand les amants respirent leur bonheur,
désirent dès leur naissance retrouver l’inutile
plénitude exhalée par chaque fragment de vie,
à chaque instant secret du monde où ils se nichent,
dans l’assurance de ce don qui ne parle que d’avril
et prépare l’été où les lilas ne seront plus.
Death Speaks to Life
Principle and Foundation

The philosopher Karl Jaspers was notable for concentrating on the questions put to us by our mortality, the fact of death. That can well be said of Ignatius and of the concept "saving one's soul." How can we be now what we would like to be, before our Creator, at our final moment?

Reconnaissance

Vernon Ruland

I sit on this slope
wondering what is
this thing I am.

My questions climb
like laser darts
slicing the clouds.

What will become of
me, the warm cistern
behind this left ear?

Will this awareness
I feel now, persist
beyond the darkness?

Will it matter then—
dying, and after—
that I sat wondering?
Now or Never

Vernon Ruland

Too little time
to glance back
as the torrent
vaults and tumbles.

Before they open
your deferred letter
mending blunders,
blurting out love—
people die on you.

Lean Essentials

Vernon Ruland

I like the condensed power
in aging masters—disciplined
minimalism, trimmed clean
of velvet gush and flare.

Relaxed magic of _The Tempest._
Beethoven’s taut final quartets.
Late Heidegger and Wittgenstein
edging toward wordless reverence.

The dynamo sputtering slow, each
creative spurt must be rationed.
Death prompts a no-nonsense style,
impatient with preliminaries.
The Sin of the World
First Week, First Exercise

This is what we look earnestly to the Lamb of God to take away—the sin of the world. At a certain moment in experience, the recognition of evil seems crushing. Lest we live in some spiritual never-never land, our prayer needs to reproduce that, on the way to liberation.

Roadrunner
William Rewak

“It's a bright and guilty world.”
—Michael O'Hara in The Lady from Shanghai

Only a child thinks forever:
having learned of no other possibilities
in the few years the three of them sat
hunched together for the evening news—
with a flip to the Roadrunner during commercials—
she presumed the conversation would continue;
she remembered, early on, the bustle
on oatmeal mornings, riding high
on her swing out by the long green beans,
and laughing as words made sense.
Sunshine was heavy then, burrowing
into the earth and exploding into sunflowers,
sweetpeas and blue larkspur—the blossoms
she’d pick and arrange around her day;
afterwards, she scattered the dried petals
as sacramental leavings of a finished task.
But she thought things human remained
(as she thought bones would always be straight):
then, without careful parsing, one went
one way, the other another,
and the evening news continued its digression;
mornings were quiet. She objected
she had not been prepared, that swings and beans
were no lesson, the sun should have hinted
at a colder language. You don’t hear
whispers on a swing, she learned; you miss
eyes looking into the distance when the Roadrunner
has you riveted, wondering if once again he'll evade doom. You don't notice hands not touching and you don't know about the black space when words fail.

Holy Week, 1965
(North Vietnam, the air raids go on)

Daniel Berrigan

For us to make a choice was always a wrong choice—why not die in the world one was born into? what was wrong?

They were patient almost as time. Their words ate like a tooth.

They looked into our eyes wild by starts, like the times. They saw and marveled, and shook. We saw out of the edge of the eye hell;

out of the center eye a command. And blinked their asperges away; be blind.
Colloquy
First Week, First Exercise

I imagine Christ our Lord before me, as he enters into his passion. In him God has become human and is acceding to a painful death for my sins. I ask myself what I have done for Christ, what I am doing now for Christ, what I ought to do for Christ.

Ecce homo
(Zie de mens)
Paul Begheyn

He stands there on display, 
no longer able now 
to hide his nudity.

The untouched body, 
not yet delivered 
to the brute passions,

rises majestical, 
proud as a tree 
high over the herd.

The judgment room goes still 
and every menace 
stiffens to a pose.

He plants his left foot 
a half-step ahead 
and offers his cheek 
as if for the first time 
he connects to those who 
have known him long.

Now there’s something between us: 
I here, you there, 
savior of desire.

You reach me a mirror 
in which your life 
no longer but mine 
in all its poverty 
is figuring. 
Have mercy on me, Man.

The original Dutch text:

Daar staat hij nu ten toon, 
niet meer in staat 
zijn naaktheid te bedekken.

Het onberoerde lijf, 
nog niet aan drift 
van beulen prijsggeven, 
rijst majesteitelijk 
fier als een boom 
hoog uit boven de kudde.

De ruimte zwijgt, bruinrijs, 
en elk gedreig 
verstart tot loze pose.
Hij zet zijn linkervoet
één stap vooruit,
en biedt zijn wang alsof er
nu voor het eerst iets is
met wie hem al
zovele jaren kende.

Nu gaat het tussen ons:
ik hier, jij daar,
verlosser van verlangen.

Jij houdt een spiegel voor,
waarin niet meer
jouw leven, maar het mijne
in alle schamelheid
te prijken staat.
Ontferm je over mij, mens.
One's Own Sin
First Week, Second Day

The key words penned by Ignatius for this meditation are *proceso* (the unfolding of one’s sin), and *ponderar* (weighing their evil), and *quien soy yo* (“Who the heck am I to act this way?”), and *exclamación* (an outcry of surprise that the earth still holds me).

Priest Remembers Heroin

Eric Zuckerman

I touched the former spot
I used where purple vein
is nicely plumped

and slid a phantom needle
in and drew up phantom
blood. Recalling how

the drug could change
a hand-towel into filigree,
I pressed the phantom

plunger like a method actor
dies. I caught myself the way
a snore wakes up a train

commuter, and when I cracked
my breviary the psalm displayed
was one of praise.
Talisman
Daniel Berrigan

I wear
for sign of debt
a silver medal of Christ
sterile of flower or word,
itsel time’s flower
molten and hard; face incised
in the year’s acid,
a savior’s eye
sleepless, surviving man.

I wear it, a weakling
who kisses the knees of the strong man he fears
and in the dust, may yet
arise to love.

The face turns full profile away—
from time’s stinking silver, Judas’s kiss?

But a chain swings the rabbi full about.
The face is become a
a savior’s change of heart.
He turns to me.
I may yet
if silver outlast flesh

die unhanged in bed,
bought, sold for silver.
Closing Prayer
First Week, Second Exercise

“End with a colloquy of mercy, reasoning and giving thanks to God our Lord for having given me life up to now, proposing amendment for the future, by his grace.”

“Show Me Your Face, O God”
(Psalm 61)
Daniel Berrigan

At land’s end, end of tether
where the sea turns in sleep
ponderous, menacing
and my spirit fails and runs
landward, seaward, askelter

I pray you
make new
this hireling heart
O
turn your face to me
—winged, majestic, angelic—

tireless,
a tide
my prayer goes up—
show me your face, O God!
SECOND WEEK

The Call of the King

Second Week, Start

Ignatius wants us to remember how loyalty, enthusiasm, and readiness to sacrifice can be galvanized by someone leading a crusade. The goal is far-reaching; the leader will be as close as the reach of his voice. So any shirker should be ashamed. A commitment has to follow.

The Word Clamors

(A condensed version of a longer poem, "Clamor de la palabra")

Emilio del Rio

Call, kingdom and king—all one.
Collector of stupendous sums,
caster of nets, what gaze,
what tone of voice brought to your face
the invitation you took up at once?
The Word was passing through, for the nonce,
the sea was calm, and on the sand,
as always; children played and ran.
Jesus, your lips, human, expressed
your very being, into words amassed.
You spoke in a voice entwining
flowers and green leaves, a voice filling
with light, and snatching at us, urgent,
firm. You on the mountain, ardent,
alone, elected whom to call by name.
We in your hands today affirm
that this calling keeps on, alive.
Word of the Father’s realm of love,
you touch me to the fire and light
my mortal wick, so all may contemplate
the presence shown in me by you.
You, out of view, I can hear, touch, know
in all the trembling of this life of mine,
thanks to your Word in me, your stride
over the new sand upon my shore—you,
a gaze into the sphere of sea
ending in no shore but in the deep
where the Father sees in you his shape.
The Incarnation
Second Week, First Contemplation

We are to visualize here the condition of the world, its moral entropy or downhill dynamics in an unredeemed state. We are also to visualize God’s taking stock, and the drastic step decided on to save the world—the Word’s becoming flesh.

Nacimiento
Osvaldo Pol

History had not happened, but held tight
to a blind circle, and with no way out.
Our doleful steps kept going round about,
directionless. . . . Meanwhile, from a height,

God’s gaze was on us, a lover whose delight
was our humanity. He took the route,
how daring! of the weak and the left without,
Child in a manger and with love bright.

Such a recovery of time and blaze of sun!
What pathways stemming from the old wound
and leading ever to the Beloved One

in a communion joyful and consumed!
Happy the Mother through whom this was done—
the flesh of God to our own flesh attuned.

The original Spanish text:

La Historia no era tal y se enredaba
en un círculo ciego y sin salida.
Los pasos desandaban la dolida
caravana sin rumbo. . . . Nos miraba

desde la altura Dios. Y desposado
con nuestra humanidad, tomó la ardida
senda del pobre, débil, sin guarida,
Niño en pesebre y por amor marcado.
¡Oh cuánta luz! ¡Oh tiempo recobrado!
¡Oh caminos que parten de la herida
y para siempre llevan al Amado
en comunión gozosa y poseida!
¡Oh la Madre feliz que nos ha dado
carne de Dios a nuestra carne asida!

**Salvation History**

**Michael F. Suarez**

With no water from the Roman rock,
They lived like salt fish in a brittle wind,
They drank only dryness from dusty rivers,
And cried to God, we are not satisfied.

When Love saw the desert nation,
The empty wells, the Roman legion,
God said to himself let me go there,
Let me give myself to the crush;

Send me into the winepress,
Perhaps I could be enough.

**Fiat**

**Michael F. Suarez**

Spirit muse, make me the gravid man.
Seed me; great me that all will be
Gestation and the bringing forth.
Take me and let your desire
Be mine. Fill me with your will,
O Lord; abide with me in darkness
And I shall sing of your light.
Husband me that I in your
Image and likeness might carry
Your tribe. Though man, I am your maid
And this makes me more; let it be
Done unto me that all will be
Gestation and the bringing forth.
Knowledge
Daniel Berrigan

Everything known beforehand except the hand from a cloud releasing the rain’s largesse, binding rain like sheaves,

Except the hand from the ark freeing a dove in air
except the dove blind, affrighted, tossed on the watery void

except you lodged there, living, secret, the world’s nest egg

from whose birth rises our only hand ark dove
The Nativity
Second Week, Second Day

The Spanish text of the *Ejercicios*, edited by Cándido de Dalmases, S.J., notes an insertion and a correction by Ignatius. Concerning our Lady almost nine months pregnant and seated on an ass, he adds, "as one may piously meditate." In the second prelude he changes "inn" (*el diversorio*) to "the place or cavern of birth." How important to him the envisioning of detail!

Mother and Child
James Torrens

She is a teen age mother
with an uninvited burden,
someone to wipe, soothe and feed
and bawling for her attention.

What a scowl she is met with.
Won’t this derail her education?

Still we can’t help applauding,
when so many are sent back.

She’s lucky, with a staff to lean on
and a star she can steer by.

This child, asking so much of her,
will better the world’s climate.

Shepherds to Shepherd
James Torrens

Shepherds to Shepherd come.
Wolf guards, wielders of the hooked staff
good for grasping the sheep’s neck through brush,
flock from the cold open field.
Weathered they fill this shelter.
What then was the sky’s song about?
An infant’s first sleepy stretch,
Lamb regathering the scattered.
Youth, you will get use from those spindly arms.
They will be pinned apart
but draw rustics like us on the glad run.

**Young Joseph’s Arms**

James Torrens

Young Joseph’s arms
clap tightly.
He fosters this small love
with untold words,
his eyes dark
with the boy’s own mystery,
and cheeks pouched in a smile
beatific as his.
The infant nesting there
is a sign of trust,
and he with his roughened hands
a sign of fathering.
Two Standards
Second Week, Fourth Day

One of these two flags is strutted about with fanfare, shiny and calculated to impress. The other has been through battle and does not look like much. We need the intercessors, starting with our Lady, to help us detect the true colors and enroll under that banner.

Two Standards
Francis J. Smith

Lady, clear-headed discerner of spirits,
I cannot see the fire and direful smoke in Babylon. Please, you have a meeting with Lucy and Gabriel to plot a program of therapy to change my eyes, teased by offers, glossy brochures and promises. When I look over there, I see my name in neon lights, lionized, courted, posh offices, perquisites of success, caddie deference, a telephone of power, Riviera hours with Campari and soda. Is there a way, short of a cannon ball, to make me choose the plain standard behind Him who walks in a dull desert?

The Lie
(La mentira)
Osvaldo Pol

Those whom the night does not disturb
nor wind put on the alert;
who go about like cats
in their dominions, indifferent,
through places we thought alien to them,
not bothering with compass
or horoscope,
and passing up the relief
of ruminating a mandala,
they are the strong ones,
the free ones,
the people who one day
begging for peace
will show us the lie
of their innocence.

The original Spanish text:
Aquellos a quienes la noche
no perturba,
ni el viento pone en sobreavisos;
que van como los gatos
paseando señores, indiferentes,
por territorios que les creíamos ajenos
y prescinden de brujulas
y horóscopos,
negándose al alivio
de ir rumiando mandalas,
son los fuertes,
los libres,
los que un día
mendigando la paz
nos mostrarán la mentira
de su inocencia.

A Meditation on Standards

Luke

Just after school yesterday when
the sun made parts of the house seem
like they were fading

Grandmama was in
the kitchen peeling potatoes and humming
about “something within I cannot explain”
I was working on my 5s and 6s

and Poppa was just looking
—like he mostly does now—

And the doorbell rang

It was two white boys in white
shirts and black pants

I told Poppa and he said, “hunh.”
I told Grandmama and she quick
checked the calendar (nothing was due
for another three days)

she slowed down

her peeling, some,

“see what they want.
From the porch, now. I ain’t in the mood,
today. You hear?” Poppa said, “hunh,” again.

They were from the college down by the river.
Were we interested in hearing about Jesus? Did
we need a program to help us?

I looked in the

kitchen. Poppa looked at me. Hard. “Well, well, well.”
I don’t know who said that. Maybe we all did.

And then, whispering like a match striking the side
of the box,

Poppa said, “Lucilla, He’s got the whole
world in his hands.”

I let them into the house.
Call of the Apostles
Second Week, Seventh Day

Ignatius, after his three points from the Gospels, adds the following: "Consider how the apostles were of a rude and base condition, and the dignity to which they were so sweetly called, and the gifts and graces elevating them above all fathers of the New and Old Testament."

Dom Lawton
In Memory of Abbot Bernard McVeigh

Eric Zuckerman

As a boy he crossed each summer
on the Ile de France, stayed with
English lords, knew what went
with Bordelaise, and ordered
Ris de Veau. Then a misting
came, as when Bernard of Clairvaux
lured away the high-born boys,
their mothers aproning the smitten
sons. Though Vivien's words
on the eve of his departure:

"Really, Lawton, growing cabbages with old men . . ."

So the consequence took many years to settle,
James and Vivien motoring up each summer,
chauffeur at rest by the guest house gate, while
cowl-draped Lawton—full monastic crown—
would lead them by the hay-thick Trappist fields.

Sometimes at lunch at "21" she thought of Lawton's
whereabouts, that sterile dorm he slept in
with his robes on. It was all simply too much. . .

And James and Vivien died
a year or so apart,
their final home the Essex House hotel.

And Lawton
signed the papers that dissolved him
of inheritance, then walked to choir
weaving
from the oscillating spell.

C. J. McNaspy, S.J.

(who died listening to Mozart)

Daniel Berrigan

And the light
puts out your eyes.

I don’t mean catastrophe
far from it.
Excess of soul
rising like yeast, zest—
(obedient
to sweet exuberance)

is nearer—
the point being,
light.

My notion
leans to a last day, yes
a last breath
a Jesuit death

unexpected, beckoned by
Mozart’s right hand
zestful, raising
a signal,

a movement advertent,
birds
rising from earth
as from a dark throat—
your cry
YES  YES

and the light
puts out your eyes.
To Better Distinguish Movements of the Soul
Second Week, Rules for Discernment

The Illuminative Way helps us see that appearance is not always reality. By the semblance of good "the enemy of human nature" may be leading us astray. In pain, weakness, failure, the good angel may be touching us softly, as water does a sponge.

Diving into the Wreck
Edward Ingebretsen

Diving into the wreck
as the poet says—
so the digging goes on
in the basements of my heart.

Is it a well
or a mine?
Down is the direction
either way.

Shall water flow
or coal shine?
The chemistry
only confuses me.

Dig me deep.
Dig through the shallows
and blinds
to the God
who is in me
like a small steel heart
or an endless stomach
keeping me hungry.

Dig me deep.
Lord of brokenness
I shall have nothing else—
rich as I am still
in this:
my major vacancy.

By its title and content, this poem meditates upon a poem of the same name by Adrienne Rich—Ed.
Jesus in His Public Life
Second Week, Later Days

When reading the gospel accounts of Jesus preaching and healing, we understand and even stage them according to the times in which we live. The medievals did that vividly. The mysteries of the life of Christ have their mode of presence in our milieu, with our participation.

New Testament Scene
James Torrens

Then the Lord turned from Kingsley onto Division Street (the disciples bossy in suit and tie) and in the din one mumbled, "Lord, for pete’s sake, have mercy,"
jealous of beggars pushing through,
when the Lord’s eye fixes him,
stilling the rabbit heart.
Then Jesus winked. What could that mean but
“Some mess, the lot of you.
I was an innocent. I had no idea.”
And the poor man got it, a word passes into him: Your wound shall be a scar, the scar turn bright, patience. At his breast the Lord then raises his bright hand in the fear not gesture.
Ignatius in the Holy Land
(a song)

William Hewett

At last I kissed the holy ground;
I walked where he walked his winding way;
At last the holy city shone
In bright late sunshine, in evening’s calm.
Holy the land where he lived, where he trod;
Holy the ground he touched—
Lord let me walk in your winding way;
Let me Lord Jesus walk your way.

Let me touch each tree and rock
Where Jesus walked once, where Jesus prayed.
Let me climb each mountainside
Where Jesus spoke once, where Jesus trod.
Holy the land where he died, where he rose;
Holy the tree he touched—
Lord, let me linger, Lord, let me stay;
Let me Lord Jesus live your way.
The Jesus Prayer, I and II
Edward Ingebretsen

I

Jesus
went to the stones first:
to the voiceless lakeside
to the urging crowd
hungry-tongued as fire.
He scattered himself
in that burning sea.

The great Jesus
hung adrift
in the slow afternoon.
He was no stranger
to what we ourselves
find so increasingly strange.

He took death
as it came
piecemeal, winningly
small
one flesh at a time;
he welcomed it as the first fruit,
his first born.

II

Jesus taught in parables
and made geography
our greatest—
the precise placing of God
astride the master boat
disarming the wind
riding the road into rock
shaping the one word
needed to free death.

In parables
of ropes, nets and fish,
in the tangle of catching
and feeding, in sowing,
in graces of going
to hear stones sing
lakeside—here
Jesus took our name
and wore it
like a fine love.
This, his
major parable.
Marriage Feast of Cana
Second Week, Mysteries of the Life of Christ

According to St. John, and thus also to the *Spiritual Exercises*, this was the first miracle that Jesus performed. We find here the transformation of an earthly substance, to bless that radical change of orientation that we know as marriage. Jesus here begins to show his glory and gives us a sign of the everlasting banquet, at his mother’s initiative.

Cana
Peter Steele

It might have been a neurotic’s paradise,
With all that water there for endless washing,
The catering shaky, and most of us wondering
What sort of promise such a beginning held
For the couple’s days and years. And then the wine
Ran out, clean out. What do you say—“One always
Likes to be moderate at these affairs”?—
When what you mean is, “There’s more need than they
Can possibly provide for.” Anyhow,
After a while they gave us wine in flagons,
The kind of thing it was a privilege
To drink, or think about. I still don’t know
Where they had found it, how they bought it, why
They kept it until then. I do remember,
Late in the piece, a man who made some toasts
And drank as if he meant them, and then left,
His mother looking thoughtful: that, and the jars
For water, and the way they seemed to glow.
THIRD WEEK

The Agony in the Garden

Third Week, Second Day

Here, as "his hour" arrives, we find Jesus plunged into the darkest, most sinister and most repugnant element. The whole of his humanity flinches, crying out to be spared. The orientation to his Father's will, the arrow of his spirit, alone can direct him.

The Agony in the Garden

Francis J. Smith

There are no angels here tonight.
Not a garden with moonlight odors
but a canyon under spidery clouds.
The olive trees are strange with eyes.
If only I could say "peace"
to my shaking hands and still
the pounding of this heart.
This is what it is to wait, bound,
for the sound of a shot,
to sit the night in solitary,
quite divorced, helpless in fear.
I am all men and women left
to their own nightmares. Tomorrow's absurd Ergo condemns all spirits
cased in this amazed flesh.
Father, we must be prodigal.
Way of the Cross  
Third Week, Fifth Day  

Is this not culturally difficult for us, despite all our violent programming—to accompany Jesus through his sufferings the way St. Catherine of Siena did, St. Rose of Lima, St. Peter Claver, St. Aloysius, St. Jean de Brebeuf, vividly and with tears? Ignatius would have us ask it.

Station IV—Jesus Meets  
His Mother  
(For Witnesses’ Voices)  

Francis P. Sullivan

You can’t stop it.  
You can’t block it out.  
You know who it is.  
You can strangle shouting no.  
You can kill yourself with frenzy.  
You can die right there.  
You can’t stop it.  
You can’t touch anyone.  
You know them all.  
You know how far they go.  
He is not finished yet.  
He can take some more.  
He can still breathe and see.  
He has his bones intact.  
He still responds to orders.  
He can tell who gives them.  
He knows this road.  
He knows where it goes.  
He knows who you are.  
He dies when he sees you.  
You are now the bitter wind.  
You know what it is.  
You are now ferocious mercy.  
You are tenderness inflamed.
The Death of Jesus
Third Week, Fifth Day

This is a central moment in our piety, the moment of awe. Each Good Friday brings our life to a stop, in solemnity, for gratitude, for kissing the cross. To enter this darkness, the death of Jesus Christ and the apparent triumph of evil, a great love and trust are necessary.

The Primal Silence
Vernon Ruland

Lovers incommunicado,
slack breath of a child asleep,

humid eye of a hurricane,
stillness of secret wells

and stark tundras, the instant
between finale and applause.

Long ago Christ cried out dying
and tore open our silences.

Not whirlwind but a whisper,
the deafening quiet of God.

The Inmost Meaning of Certain Sacred and Neglected Words
Daniel Berrigan

Let there be man is one thing—but
let there be this, my hangman? Yes,
no turning aside of nails. I
appoint you to my flesh.

The hard fast rule, cried nails in Him, is love.
Climb me, taste me, cried the tree.
I am heavy, crown to limb
with harvest Him.
In a Class of Moral Theology

Francis Sweeney

This was the fire that ran in the wake of the promise
Like bird-prattle as morning stormed hill after hill.
We have learned too well the ultimate craft
Ten thousand times more ready than the crossbow
or the mace,
And torn up distance like a madman’s letter.
But still the swallows nest as once in Ur and Ascalon
And still our hearts go the same road under the earth.

Cain bludgeoned down his brother in a field
Last week in Georgia,
(And Abel, being black, went unavenged).
The girl who saunters in the evening streets
Was booty to an Assyrian conqueror;
Came in a troop of yellow-haired German harlots
To Venice on a Renaissance April.

Far off the insensible hammers ring the noon’s long chime,
Hammers rapping clear and small like the ticking of a watch,
Pounding together and then one insensible hammer
beating on.
And we are wise as gods and know not what we do.
Cry mercy on us, brother with the briar Garland,
My mock laureate, my minstrel hanged for a thief,
My weary Christ deaddrooping on the nails.

The Heart Lies Open

(Selected lines from “Abierto corazón”)

Emilio del Rio

I look now at your face, abandoned
to blood, saliva, shadow,
and, though you are stone dead, at water,
blood, that from a burst heart flow.
I taste the water of a salt sea,
the world’s denial, its hollow shout
of blind rebuff, knowing you sink
into that tide to seek us out.

Son in your Father’s arms,
you aim to free us from the grip
of death, giving us birth, shaping us,
via your death, to life.

A world recovers at the Spirit’s kiss
from you, hearth where I lay my head,
heavy with guilt and grief for the world
that, torpid, scorns the life you bled.

*The original Spanish text:*

Mientras miro tu Rostro abandonado
en sangre y en saliva y en tinieblas,
y Agua y Sangre fluyendo todavía
del roto Corazón, muerto de muertos,
siento el agua de mar que amarga llega,
la Negación del mundo, suficiente y vacío,
la Repulsión más ciega. Y sé que Te hundes
dentro de todas ellas a buscarnos,
a liberarnos para el Padre, muertos,
que nacemos de Ti, a configurarnos
a través de tu muerte con la Vida.
Hijo en brazos del Padre, dando el Beso
del Espíritu al mundo recobrado.
Hogar donde reclino mi cabeza
culpable y dolorosa por el mundo
de tanto muerto que no quiere Vida.
FOURTH WEEK

Resurrection

Recent studies of the resurrection in the four Gospels emphasize confused amazement among the first witnesses hardly daring to believe for joy. The swing is from “we had hoped” to “were not our hearts burning within us?” Brightness is the visual effect.

Spirit All Around

(selected lines)

George McCauley

Like a morning stillness hung
on rooftops streaked
by the new sun, like a spire
framed against the surging sky,
like a sense of something missing
before the first breeze stirs
or greenness grows bright on the trees—
Jesus lay there in the tomb.
And the Spirit, Tongue of Fire,
placed a reverent kiss upon his lips—
 eternal gratitude, unfeigned concern, yes,
respiration, tendering.
No force could hold the Spirit back.
And like it dawned suddenly
upon a drowsy man his children
planned a picnic for that very day—
Jesus jumped up.
Easter Morning
(Paasmorgen)
Paul Begheyn

Here’s how life looks sometimes:
a night, closed down, dead.
Here’s how the question can sound:
“Who will roll the stone from the tomb?”

And then the unexpected:
discovering it’s been rolled away,
hearing someone say:
“Don’t be afraid.”

Then, not to spend the night lying down,
you go outside walking,
going on and on, telling it:
“He has risen.”

The original Dutch text:

Zo ziet het leven er soms uit:
nacht, dicht, dood.
Zo luidt soms de vraag:
“Wie zal de steen voor het graf wegrollen?”

En dan het onverwachte:
in eens zien dat de steen al weggerold is.
Iemand horen zeggen:
“Niet bang zijn.”

En dan niet blijven liggen in de nacht,
maar naar buiten lopen,
verder gaan, vertellen:
“He is opgestaan.”
Veneration

Michael F. Suarez

Fresh from bed, I come to you and laugh
to think that you could ever live
in this enormous room, or locked
in a golden box for the comfort
of my veneration.
For the life of me, I could never tell
how you spend your life; my eyes never
get used to you, nor ever understand
the ways that you move.

I kiss no wife, no child; I hold no one in the night;
I swim with no lifejacket against the rising tide
of my own finitude that takes me to you.
There are times when I am terrified,
reading your good news,
though you are the truth that leads me from the tomb,
your disfigured body the beauty that lets me
broken be disfigured in you.
Atmosphere of Joy
Fourth Week, Additions

Ignatius notes for this week: “Bring to mind and think on matters pleasing, happy, full of spiritual joy, such as God’s glory. Profit from the day’s brightness or from seasonal freshness—whatever will help you rejoice in our Creator and Redeemer.”

Solitude
(Soledad)
Luis Carlos Herrera

The breeze does not shake the palm trees,
the pulsing of the sea upon the shore
sweetens the sands.

There’s a feeling of boundless peace.
Heron are pointing me
to the north, the absolute.

Nothing petty has place in your confines.
The bronze of light upon the waves
works at sculpting my dreams.

Upon your horizon
my hopes rise and rise.

And beyond the evening wind,
beyond sea and cloud,
immensity arises.

And my thought swells:
O immense solitude . . .
Today you will be my witness.
This is no empty feeling.
I am not in tears,
Your waves spatter me, immense sea.
The original Spanish text:

La brisa no sacude las palmeras,
el palpitar del mar sobre las playas
suaviza las arenas.

Hay una sensación de paz sin limites.
Las garzas me señalan
el norte, el absoluto.

La pequeñez no cabe en tus confines.
El bronce de la luz, sobre las olas
moldea
la estatua de mis sueños.

Sobre tus horizontes,
mis esperanzas
van surgiendo.

Y más allá del viento vespertino
y más allá del mar y de la nube
surge la inmensidad.

Y se agiganta
mi pensamiento:
Oh inmensa soledad . . .
Hoy sereas mi testigo
No es vano sentimiento.
Yo no lloro,
me salpican tus olas, mar inmenso.

Enamored Dust
Luis Carlos Herrera

Sister Death,
who walk with me
in the silence of my bones,
in the harmony of a beat
due to cease one day.
Dear heart, my heart,
carrying within you
life’s rhythm:
one day you will go silent.

Dear heart, my heart,
to stay mute forever?
to be dust, no more?

To be dust, no doubt,
a sap feeding into
the desert flowers . . .
But to stay quiet, no.
What is for sure: Dust
you will be, enamored dust.
Dust you will be, enamored dust.

The original Spanish text:

Hermana muerte,
la que vas conmigo
en el silencio de mis huesos
en la armonía del latido
que un día cesara.

Corazón, corazón
que llevas dentro
el ritmo de la vida:
un día callaras!

Corazón, corazón
¿te quedarás eternamente mudo?
¿Serás polvo no más?

Serás polvo sin duda
y alentará tu savia
las flores del desierto. . .
Mas no estarás callado,
esto es lo cierto:
“Polvo seras,” mas “polvo enamorado!”
Responding to God in All Things
Contemplation for Obtaining Love

Ignatius, who had “the eyes of his understanding” opened along the Cardoner River, points us toward the breadth of vision he was granted. Recognizing the tangible effects, the labor, the presence and overflow of God’s love wherever we look, we are impelled to wonder and thanks.

To Attain the Love of Beauty

Excerpts from a ghazal (Persian and Arabic form)

Gerry Graham

All our bodies want, ever, is to love beauty.
Loving what touches us, we make love to beauty.

A white linen hem, embroidered with gold crosses,
Skims just above the floor in its prayer of beauty.

A river floods blue, cresting level with green fields;
Cows digest this complex thrill by grazing beauty.

A man was his guitar for the length of a song;
His fingers were moved strings; music played him beauty.

While Jesus died, soldiers who’d just crucified him
Knelt and rolled dice for his garment’s seamless beauty.

The three hundred pound man sat in my kitchen chair
Reading Plato’s Greek: sheer, original beauty!

Those 60’s blond bee hives at Mustang Sally’s! still
How ranch ladies dressing up on farms style beauty.

A waitress at rest: bent over a tiny diner’s bar,
Particular face lost in brief coffee break beauty.

Grandma felt Iowa was warm enough for corn
By touch of bare butt to earth—beauty to beauty.
That boy's casket looked too short to bear without poised
Gold, open-winged angels attached for just beauty.

With casual hand she brushed away blond bangs
As if no hairdresser had planned ornate, curved beauty.

As chants left lacquered choir stalls, a candle's tongue
Soundless consumed its own blue wax beauty.

As It Is
Michael F. Suarez

1

The giver is the gift
Again the gift is present, undiminished.

The giver is without limits,
love universal, but specific,

prizing everything precious,
as it is.

2

Disbuild the tower you have raised
scatter the treasure you have saved

forget the points you'd thought you'd earned
for good behavior.

The giver is the gift of worth:
you do not get what you deserve.
Because

Daniel Berrigan

On the Don Diego
the dugouts assemble
like a sublime children’s charade:
“By River, Indians and Jesuits Enter the Mission.”
In my hands
a leather-bound volume:
“Summa Theologica, Venice, 1773.”
I sit awash.
The vast tome opens like the throat of a sage
to “Article Eighty-four:
Wherein Are Adduced Five Reasons
Why God Is Named Love.”
(In quaint Latin) “Because God is source
of love, because
God creates for love, because
God would have us love as we are loved,
because”—I raise my eyes,
the multifarious jungle leaves astir—
an open volume
grown voluble, uttering
reasons beyond number, for
love beyond reason.
Contemplation for Obtaining Love

The Suscipe

The ever-practical Ignatius says, Don’t just talk of your gratitude for God’s immense creative goodness; give back with your very best. The old chevalier Ignatius gives all—todo—in knightly commitment. The aspiring and mystical Ignatius casts his response as a great love.

The Monk to His Lord

Francis Sweeney

No, no, I will never regret that other season.

Broken on the wheel, the mind bludgeoned,
In the deep dark when those with eyes are asleep
And the day’s clothing hollow and folded beside my bed,
When all my sins come clamoring, almost precious,
There is never a time I would not swear what I have sworn.

The Host for notary, my brothers listening and breathing,
I spoke the bond, knowing the words, their meaning,
Knowing the kind King-Brother would come in a moment
God-sweet to my opened mouth.

But Christ, be with me when the battle is toward,
The skies aflash with armies, the heart in mail.
Be near me then, O King, Your hands on the bones of my shoulders,
When the spirit has lost its logic to confound
The rhetoric of the flesh,
When all the charms they taught me cannot quench
The omnipotent laughter of my body.
The Election
for a Day of Vows, 1997

Luke

After an hour’s climb
we follow the road’s sharp turn
into nothing but the sky

arrested breath /
    heart filling
stillness
    Oh, the sky
holding clouds close enough
to hide us
    blood allows
a foolish pulse to doubt
the saving grace of flight
(no, descend)
no more than a blink
of sun shielding
    to turn
again when our lungs have
had their fill
    (climb down)
the heart says yes
    (no.)
the eyes say
    now
    (test the air)

And the earth
    (Oh, the earth)

The power of an assent
to the ascent
    Bow before
the shouted “yes”

The world connects

finally

And we are whole
holy yes—
Afterword

S. Eliot, in his lecture and essay “What Is Minor Poetry?” (1944; by “minor poetry” he means poetry just a step below the greats), gives a pleasing estimate of anthologies, which I hope applies to this one.

Just as in a well arranged dinner, what one enjoys is not a number of dishes by themselves but the combination of good things, so there are pleasures of poetry to be taken in the same way; and several very different poems, by authors of different temperaments and different ages, when read together, may each bring out the peculiar savour of each other, each having something that the others lack.¹

In the next essay in the same collection, “What is a Classic?” Eliot proposes some criteria for greatness, in particular that a work be comprehensive. Can religious poetry—what is pejoratively called “devotional poetry”—really be comprehensive? Doesn’t it confine itself to a narrow, if intense, band and leave out the broad range of human experience, the political and social as well as the sexual, romantic, and affective? One can immediately think of mystical poetry with an erotic frame of reference, as “La noche oscura” and “Llama de amor viva” by St. John of the Cross, and of poetry which, while religious, has a political cast, for instance much by W. H. Auden. But let the question stand.

I bring this up because of what Jean Mambrino expressed to me by letter as his decision against writing “poetry that is directly religious, confessional,” a decision he took so as “to reach a wide variety of spirits, believers of all the spiritual traditions or agnostics turned toward ‘the unknown god.’” There is a broad spectrum of human and spiritual themes to be touched on, Mambrino says, without having to be palpably religious or Jesuit. Agreed. That, paradoxically, is very Jesuit—finding the sacred in the secular, directing ourselves intently to those outside the pale and to whatever God has looked on and found good. A number of poets and poems in this collection—to name only Vernon Ruland, William Rewak, Gerry Graham, George McCauley—actually tend in Mambrino’s direction.

I will admit too that religious poetry is devilishly hard to write without fudging insights or rhymes and without treacle. The English Breviary, which contains some fine texts of hymns, could also well endure a thinning out of the weak ones. When the ten members of this seminar, at quarterly meetings, recite Morning and Evening Prayer, the leader often leaves out the hymn. I have to suspect the same happens in private reading.

¹ On Poetry and Poets, 40.
That is a commentary of some sort. On the other hand, the very staple of the hours is poetic, the psalms.

The artistic spirit, to restate the obvious, leads one person one way and another person another, and in fact can lead the same person quite diversely from moment to moment. When Daniel Berrigan’s collected poems appear, as they should soon, under the title *The Risen Bread* (Fordham University Press, John Dear editor), we will see what an amazing spectrum of subjects he touches, tones he takes, and how tightly the secular is wound to the sacred.

What a gift the imagination is, whether at work on words, images, colors, sounds, or some other class of material! The product does not have to be “Hurrahing in Harvest” to lead us to God. A piece of finely stitched fabric can do so equally. The one requirement is that the work be done well, as Maritain kept saying in *Art and Scholasticism*. T. S. Eliot said that what he looked for in the work of any living poet when I met it for the first time, is whether this is genuine poetry or not. Has the poet something to say, a little different from what anyone has said before, and has he found, not only a different way of saying it, but the different way of saying it which expresses the difference in what he is saying?²

I have picked the poems in this collection by my brother Jesuits, first of all, of course, because they link in some way to the *Spiritual Exercises*, they open up vistas, but also because of how well they are made, how genuine. Reader, I hope you agree.

² “What is Minor Poetry?”
Authors
(and the Jesuit provinces of which they are members)

Begheyen, Paul (Netherlands). He is a staff member of the Ignatiushuis, Center for Spirituality and Adult Education, in Amsterdam, and editor of the Dutch-Flemish monthly journals De heraut and Streven. A collection of his poems and liturgical songs, Onvermoeibaar Licht, will be published in April, 1998.


del Rio, Emilio (Castille). After years of teaching and chaplaincy in the Colegio San José, Valladolid, he is temporarily in parish work in Gijón, Asturias. He has published six volumes of poetry, the most recent being Arte de la fuga, honored with the Premio Medialuna, Pamplona, 1991.

Graham, Jerry (Oregon). In 1996 he completed a Master’s degree in creative writing at the University of Alaska. Currently he is in theological studies at Weston Jesuit School of Theology, Cambridge. He tells us of this selection, from a 100-couplet-long ghazal: “A ‘ghazal’ is a classic Persian and Arabic form made up of autonomous and unrelated couplets—one may be sad, another joyous, another religious, another romantic—held together by the repetition of the rhyme word.”

Herrera, Luis Carlos (Colombia). He is a professor in the School of Social Sciences, Universidad Javeriana, Bogotá, and pastoral minister in the university. His poems in the collection Mas allá del viento vespertino are, he says, “a fruit of the search for God in the United States, as well as of the Contemplation for Obtaining Love.”

Hewett, William (Britain). He is director of the Iñigo International Centre, London, and has composed a script of narrative and song about St. Ignatius based principally on the autobiography of the founder. The story and songs are available in Iñigo: Full Text.

Ingebretsen, Edward (California). He is a professor of English at Georgetown University, author of a critical study of Robert Frost and of Maps of Heaven, Maps of Hell: Religious Terror as Memory from the Puritans to Steven King, as well as of two collections of poetry, Psalms of the Still Country and To Keep from Singing (San Jose, Cal.: Resource Publications, 1982 and 1985 respectively).
Luke (Wisconsin). Luke is the poetic name adopted early by Joseph Brown. Brown, who earned a Master’s in creative writing at Johns Hopkins University, has taught at Creighton University, the University of Virginia, and Xavier of New Orleans, and is presently the director of the Black American Studies Program at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. His volume of poetry, Accidental Grace (1986), was a part of the Callaloo Poetry Series. He has just published To Stand on the Rock: Meditations on Black Catholic Identity (Orbis Books).

Mambrino, Jean (France). He has for decades been theater reviewer and occasional film and book critic for the Jesuit monthly, Études (Paris). In 1973 he produced the anthology La Poésie mystique française. He has published fifteen books of poetry since 1965, extensively reviewed, with others in preparation. Volumes in English translation by Jonathan Griffin include Glade (Clairière) (1986) and Password (Le Mot de passe), ready to appear.

McCauley, George (New York). He has published his books of poetry through Something More Publications, New York City: No Bright Shield (1989), Night Air Dancing (1990), and Aces (1991), with musical scoring (jazz) for the title poem. Long associated with Fordham University, he is now staff writer for Medical Mission News of the Catholic Medical Mission Board.

Pol, Osvaldo (Argentina). He has for thirty years been a professor of theology, philosophy, and aesthetics at the Catholic University of his native Córdoba, as well as at a Catholic institute for teacher formation in that city. Besides his anthology of poems from 1965 to 1990, Situación y criba, he has more recently published Las aves nos saben (1997). Lila Perren de Velasco has written a critical appreciation of his work, La poesía de Osvaldo Pol, tanto Dios, tanto hombre (Córdoba, 1997).

Rewak, William (California). Poetry as well as photography has been his outlet and expressive mode during many years of governance, in particular as president of Santa Clara University (1977–89) and of Spring Hill College (1989–97). His poems have appeared in numerous journals.

Smith, Francis J. (Detroit), a long-time professor of English at John Carroll University. His volumes of poetry include _First Prelude_, poems based on the _Spiritual Exercises_ (1981), _All Is a Prize_ (Cumberland, Iowa: Pterodactyl Press, 1989), and _Haiku Yearbook_ (Cleveland: Cobham and Hather- ton Press, 1991).

Steele, Peter (Australia). He has a personal chair at the University of Melbourne, Victoria; is a former Australian provincial; and has taught at Georgetown, Loyola Chicago, and elsewhere. His first book of poems was _Word from Lilliput_ (Melbourne: Hawthorn Press). He has written books on Jonathan Swift and on modern poetry, as well as an autobiogra- phy.

Suarez, Michael (New York). He is currently resident in Campion Hall and pursuing a degree in English literature at Oxford. His poems have appeared in a number of journals.

Sullivan, Francis (New England). He died of cancer in August 1996, after years as a professor of theology at the Gregorian University, Loyola University New Orleans, and Boston College. He has done some notable translating of the psalms: _Lyric Psalms: Half a Psalter and Tragic Psalms_ (Pastoral Press, 1983 and 1987 respectively). Sister Marnie Dilling, R.S.C.J., set a number of these to music. His poetry collections include _Table Talk with the Recent God_ (Paulist Press, 1974), _Spy Wednesday's Kind_ (Paulist Press, 1979), and _Credo and Other Poems_ (Sheed and Ward, 1995). See also his late-life work on Bartolomé de Las Casas: _The Only Way_ (Paulist Press, 1992) and _Indian Freedom: A Reader_ (Sheed and Ward, 1995).

Sweeney, Francis (New England). He has been a teacher of poetry for many years at Boston College, where he has conducted the Humanities Series since 1957. The Series has brought him friendships with such repeat visitors as Robert Frost, T. S. Eliot, Susan Sontag, and Seamus Heaney. Besides his four books, he has written numerous op-ed articles and book reviews for the _New York Times_. In prospect is his selected poems, _Morning Window, Evening Window_, and his memoirs.

Torrens, James (California). He is an associate editor of _America_ and was earlier a professor of English at Santa Clara University. He has produced two chapbooks of poetry, _Signs of Life_ (1971) and _Riding the Long Spine: Latin America in Poems_ (1992), as well as _Presenting Paradise_, translation and commentary of Dante’s “Paradiso” (Associated University Presses, 1993) and a collection of poems and essays, _Reaching Toward God_ (Sheed and Ward, 1997).

Zuckerman, Eric (Oregon). He is completing theology studies at the Jesuit School of Theology, Berkeley, and is in his ordination year.
Acknowledgements


Herrera, Luis Carlos. “Polvo enamorado” and “Soledad.” In Mas allá del viento vespertino.


Mambrino, Jean. “Un Seul Cyprés suffit” and “Un Matin monte des eaux calmes.” In Sainte lumière, as included in L’Oiseau-Coeur. Éditions Stock, 1979, all rights reserved.


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