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Mid Evil. Maryann Corbett. Evansville, IN: University of Evansville Press, 2014. Pp. 74.

Gold. Barbara Crooker. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2013. Pp. 70.

Departures. Philip C. Kolin. Mobile, AL: Negative Capability Press, 2014. Pp. 94.

*Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower:
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf.
So Eden sank to grief,
So dawn goes down to day.
Nothing gold can stay.*

—Robert Frost

*Sen he has all my brether tane,
He will naught let me live alane;
Of force I man his next prey be:—
Timor Mortis conturbat me.*

*Since for the Death remeid is none,
Best is that we for Death dispone,
After our death that live may we:—
Timor Mortis conturbat me.*

—William Dunbar

Poets Frost and Dunbar, writing 400 years apart, speak truths that we, their readers and descendants, know all too well. Time flies, beauty fades, all things must pass, death awaits each of us. None of this is news.

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Why, then, do these lines strike us so quick in a way that my prosaic formulations of their themes do not? What is it about poetry that packs the gut punch appropriate to this terrifying subject, provokes the “oomph” that involuntarily escapes us when we hear the lines recited, and haunts our memories like grim incantations we couldn’t get rid of if we tried? Surely part of their power comes from rhyme and meter, each driving the poem forward as we, doomed thralls of enchantment, irresistibly follow. And surely the precision of the language, the concreteness of the scenarios, and the arc of the narrative that drives each poem all conspire to enmesh the reader and listener. But the primary reason we sit up and take notice is because we find pleasure in the poetry. Poetry brings us to ourselves, awakens us to the present moment, and provokes us into inhabiting our human condition in a deep and visceral way. Despite their dark themes and their dread warnings, “Nothing Gold Can Stay” and “Lament for the Makers” make us strangely glad to be human and alive.

Three recent books of poems follow in the footsteps of these poetic masters, creating collections that engage these human truths in diverse ways, each particular to the vision and voice of the poet. Maryann Corbett’s *Mid Evil* offers carefully crafted poems, many of which explore the relationship between poets of the past and her own role in the here and now as one of those Makers Dunbar laments. Barbara Crooker’s *Gold* acknowledges her debt to Frost in her title and her epigraph (“Nothing gold can stay”), announcing her collection as both a celebration of the daily joys of life (including the people she most loves) and an elegy for their inevitable loss. Philip Kolin’s *Departures* initiates the reader into a world of both private and communal memory as he explores the life of New Orleans and the Mississippi Delta – a place he has lived for four decades – offering poems that probe the rich and sometimes hidden history of the storied place he calls home. Each of these collections engages the past as if it were still present, and the present even as it is rapidly passing away, enabling the reader to witness the merciless crush of time without being subject to it. Corbett, Crooker, and Kolin stop the endless succession of seconds long enough for us to enter their respective imaginative worlds, hear their inimitable songs, and emerge with them still singing in our ears. The means of this not-so-minor miracle is, of course, the pen—the ancient and enduring technology of writing—that enables the poet to communicate her ideas to readers and to leave behind some record of her own thoughts long after she is gone, accomplishing, in at least one sense, poet William Dunbar’s stated aim, “*After our death that live may we.*”

Mid Evil

Maryann Corbett’s *Mid Evil*, her third collection and recipient of the 2014 Richard Wilbur Award, sounds this theme in the first poem of the volume, “Hand.” A scholar of medieval literature, the poet finds herself in the library’s rare book room,

poring over a Middle English manuscript, carefully noting the characteristics of the handwriting:

Though faded, the pen strokes have the ebb and flow
of a bending quill tip in a moving hand.
The heavy paper still shows peaks and troughs
that speak to the moving pen. My own right hand
knows pens and writing, and it feels these moves,
knows in its bones another hand was here.

The poet's sympathy for the anonymous writer is sensual, physical as she feels the presence of the long-dead writer, despite the centuries that separate them. They are brought close in their common possession of this remarkable appendage, the hand—so complex and capable, and yet so vulnerable to time and injury—and their common venture of poetry. And then, to the poet's (and the reader's) surprise, that connection becomes even more intimate:

... I don't know how long
I've worked like this when I come to the colophon.
The words are, *Pray for him that made this book.*
...
and in my cradle-Catholic head, the prayer
has said itself before the doubt could speak.

The poem of the long-dead poet has spoken to the living one, asks for her prayers, and she, steeped in a tradition wherein the living pray for the dead, instinctively obliges. Transcending the professional, scholarly relationship to the poem and the poet, the speaker in Corbett's poem makes an imaginative leap, recognizes the Middle English poet as brother and as fellow member of the Communion of Saints and the Body of Christ, to which she belongs. Poetry, thus, serves not only as historical and literary artifact, not only as an arrangement of words that tells a story and sings a song, but as a species of language that performs a sacred function. So linked is she with her dead poet, the speaker imagines his grave even after she leaves the library to make her way home, wondering "how long the bones of a hand would last." Thus, the two poets are finally brought together in their common mortality, as well as in their common immortality.

As is evident in "Hand," Corbett's is a deeply Catholic sensibility. Despite the doubts the speaker of these poems expresses, her vision is incarnational, sacramental, and theologically informed by her faith formation and tradition. This incarnational quality is evident in nearly every poem. (This includes the fine translations that appear in the volume, whether they be spoken by an Old English bard or a Medieval Frenchwoman.) In "Flourish," for instance, the speaker revels in the

physical pleasure of the act of writing—and we again hear the theme of the powerful pen in the hand:

In the first days, your fingers cramped. You practiced:
the patterns *OOOOO*, the joinings *mmmmm*, the moves,
right arm adapting to its rigid pose,

shapes unshifting. You bore it, buckling down—
until the day you boggled. And there it was:
a backward slung at the slow familial Z.

The speaker's pleasure here is so intensely tactile it approaches pain, becoming nearly gustatory in the recitation of the "O" and "m" sounds, bringing yet a third (sound) as well as the implied fourth sense (sight) to bear on the experience. Indeed, the only one missing is smell. After praising that "breakaway," that moment of revelation achieved the first time one writes one's name, the speaker acknowledges the pleasure/pain of other modes of writing in language that is just as sensual:

Sure, there are other methods

of wrist-rest, mouse pad, ergonomic chair,
the insect-walk of digits on a keyboard
plinking dead-dry symbols onto a screen.

Yet in the end, you swipe this primal marking:
the nib's pressure, the juicing-up of ink,
the gliss, the glide, the flow, the old smooth moves.

Corbett's mastery of meter, characteristic of her verse, is particularly evident in this poem as she carefully controls the cadence, enabling the lines to mime the hand's movements. She also emphasizes the ritual elements of writing, the need for the right instruments (fingers, arm, nib, ink) to accomplish the act, a transformation of reality we learn early and young. In the poet's account, writing becomes a kind of sacrament—a rite wherein human beings use physical materials to gesture beyond the physical world, to transcend time (as does the medieval writer in "Hand") and converse with eternity.

The theological grounding (as well as the wit) of Corbett's book is evident from the title onward. The term, "Mid Evil" is both an inspired error made by an unhappy (and not very literate) student on his final exam in a long-ago course the poet taught in Literature of the Middle Ages, and also an apt description of the human condition. Born into a fallen world, full of flawed and fraught human beings, we live amid evils of every kind. Corbett's book dutifully catalogues these, often in fine detail. In "Teacup," a poem that is a virtuoso performance, the speaker traces some of the evils that have conspired to create her morning cup of tea. The

imprisonment and death of the inventor of porcelain, the desecration of rainforests cleared for the mining of the gold that gilds her cup, the death of the child artist who decorated the cup from her poisonous pigments, and the sugar once harvested by slaves working in inhuman conditions create a chain of dreadful events that issue, at last, “in this morning cup, decorous, fragrant.” That such horrors can yield such beauty and delicacy comes as no surprise to the speaker. It is a truth she—and all of us—must acknowledge and, finally, embrace. In the end, she confesses, “I raise all this to my lips.” This final image is one of rueful acceptance of the fact of evil, yes, but it is also eucharistic. The cup the speaker drinks is akin to the cup of blood Christ drank from and offered to his disciples, the cup she herself drinks from at the consecration on the altar. The cup contains death—Christ’s death, all human death, including her own—but since the eucharistic meal is the necessary prelude to the resurrection, it also promises life. The act of drinking, whether in church or at the breakfast table, becomes a means of redemption and signifies the presence of grace, even in the disordered world the speaker is forced to recognize and even love. In Corbett’s poems, a cup is never just a cup, a gesture never just a gesture—everything means, and it means intensely—and this is the essence of the sacramental vision.

Yet for all of its embedded theology, Corbett’s book is not one of easy belief. Plenty of these poems are dark and doubtful. The speaker has difficulty seeing Christ in the beggar who confronts her in “The Panhandler’s Tale,” though she knows she is supposed to, deciding finally to “yield . . . to the tale of wonder” and practice “the willing suspension of disbelief” along with her charity. In her version of the romantic tale of Abelard and Eloise, Abelard coldly engages in deception, as he carries on his heated love affair, in order to keep his job as monk and his good reputation. And, most movingly of all, in “A Paid Engagement,” the speaker tells the tale of singing at a funeral—a function she performs often as cantor at her parish—but on this particular occasion she realizes the liturgically approved songs do not speak the truth the bereft know. Objecting to the (seemingly) saccharine vision of the twenty-third psalm, she asks God, “Why not the Twenty-second psalm?”

*I am poured out like water. See,
my bones are dust. My heart is wax
melted within. Wild dogs, hungry,
circle, Thugs close in, in packs . . .
The real song for the shadow-valley:
Eli, lama sabachthani?*

Despite her doubts, she dutifully pours out “the balmy Twenty-third” into the “open sore” of sorrow, and then the ninety-first, with its false promise, “You shall not fear.” But she is unable to keep up the ruse. As the old widow, bent with age and grief, looks up to her and mouths the words of consolation, “her face / utterly open, raw, the speaker confesses, ‘My note / wobbles. Grace sticks in my throat.’”

In Corbett’s poems, as in the world, doubt co-exists with faith, light with darkness, good with evil, all of them inextricably bound up. The poems of *Mid Evil* give

expression to this double-mindedness, and, the pleasure of the poetry, for both writer and reader, provides some solace.

Gold

Solace is also a key theme in Barbara Crooker's poignant collection of poems, *Gold*. Her fourth book, published in the handsome Poema Poetry Series, dedicated to presenting "the work of gifted poets who take Christian faith seriously," *Gold* offers a series of lyric celebrations and elegies. These are distinctly mid-life poems, a fact evident from the very first poem in the volume, "Invoice":

The moon lays down white covers on the bed,
 some small hedge against the long night.
 A great horned owl's call sends dread
 up and down small spines. Turn out the light,
 pull up the wool blanket, shut the window,
 because one day too soon I'll sleep alone. Tonight
 the moon's a sliver of lemon in a cup of espresso,
 and I'm too jittery to sleep. I count my breaths,
 their rise and fall, by the alarm clock's digital glow . . .

Crooker's *terza rima* sounds the keynote of the book, reminding us inevitably of Dante, who confesses at the start of his *Inferno*,

Midway in our life's journey, I went astray
 from the straight road and woke to find myself
 alone in a dark wood. (*Inferno*, Canto I, ll. 1–3)

The poet, like the master before her, is lost, oppressed by time, confounded by mortality, mystified by the meaning of life, the old true questions that haunt us all. Though the language is more contemporary than Dante's, and the images domestic rather than infernal, the spiritual torpor she suffers from is the same:

October day begins. Sometimes there's so much death—
 the year, the leaves, old friends—it's hard to hold on
 to what anchors us to everyday stuff:
 coffee in a mug, buttered toast, the same old sun . . .

And yet, despite her bout of doubt, the speaker vows to choose hope over despair: "What Choice / when the world burns to ash, to gold?" As surely as Dante's comedy moves from *Inferno* to *Paradiso*, Crooker's book leads the reader through death and darkness toward life and light. As the title adumbrates, what follows is a

paean to all that gold, the beauty that emerges from this human existence, this world, this crucible of pain.

The sources of grief Crooker catalogues are multiple, but the central loss she struggles to sustain is the death of her mother. In “Late Prayer,” the eighth poem, the speaker ponders her “wild longing” for more, despite her rich and full life, and wonders “Will I be strong / enough to row across the ocean of loss / when my turn comes to take the oars?” These moving lines conclude the poem, sounding a warning bell, as the next poem, “Plenitude,” begins the narrative of her mother’s illness, diagnosis, gradual decline, and eventual passing that will dominate the volume. These poems lend shape to the collection and also serve as ballast (to mix a metaphor), the gravitas of the subject grounding the poet and reader in the reality of the human condition. Crooker faithfully chronicles her mother’s suffering (as in “My mother’s Body Knits Itself into a Nest of Pain”), the horror of cancer (“the clusters of nebulae, / and the black hole where cancer’s random / toss planted its seed”), the agony of having to release her ashes into the sea (“How could I have let her sift out of my fingers, / grain by grain?”). These are circumstances particular to the poet’s experience, but also ones that will resonate (sadly) for many of her readers. *We all will know sickness*, these poems remind us, *we all will know loss—and this is what it looks like, feels like, smells like, tastes like*.

And yet, even in the midst of her mourning, the poet finds reason to praise. Her fine poem, “In Praise of Dying,” lists a litany of things she is grateful for. These include the opportunity to read to her mother, to indulge her sweet tooth by bringing her doughnuts, “for letting me be / her legs” when she could no longer walk, and, finally,

For letting her
go out as quietly as a candle
that has used up all its wax.

For letting me be there
for her last breath
that fluttered out like a moth.

The poet’s prayer, like so many of the praise poems in the book, may be directed at God, or perhaps it is directed at the universe—the poet doesn’t say. What is striking about these poems is not so much their religiosity or even their faith as it is the attitude of gratitude that pervades them, the paradox that a human being can be grateful for everything, even death, when it brings with it such love, such beauty.

This theme also haunts the volume, evident in poems such as “Owl Hour,” wherein the poet takes up the scenario introduced in the first poem and develops it:

we arrange ourselves like a nest
of measuring cups. Some of our friends
now sleep alone, half the set missing.

I've told you, *you're not allowed to die first;*
I don't do numbers—checkbook, taxes, bills.
 My breasts press into your back; my hand
 with the numb fingers stretches
 over your heart. How lucky we are
 to have found each other . . .

The scene here is poignant as it is common—a middle-aged couple retiring for the night, enjoying the familiar comfort of one another's (admittedly worn) bodies. But the pleasure of the beloved's presence becomes even greater with the speaker's recognition of certain loss, the knowledge that things will not always be thus. This is a tried-and-true theme, surely; one can't help but think of Shakespeare's famous couplet, "This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong / to love that well which thou must leave ere long." Crooker's poem takes the tried-and-true and speaks it in a modern setting, clothes it in contemporary language, and makes it immediately accessible.

The vehicle of communication of these human truths is, of course, poetry, so it seems fitting that poems celebrating the power of the pen should appear in Crooker's book. "Weather Report" is a charming example of the genre:

All this time on the planet, and still I am not wiser
 than I was thirty years ago when I began to write,
 scratching on a yellow pad while the voices in my head
 screeched *not good enough*. They're still shrieking
 their shrill words in my left ear, just above the migraine
 that's singing a high E sharp from its perch in my brain.

Formidable as that inner voice of discouragement and that migraine's song may be, these sources of suffering and potential despair cannot compete with the poet's pleasure in the world—the sky playing "that low blue note that comes after a storm," the locust "sending out round green messages / as it bobs and weaves in the wind," the "flock / of cedar waxwings in the sumac, wearing / their little black masks"—and with the poet's instinctive urge (in the words of Czeslaw Milosz) "to glorify things just because they are."

The light streams in from the west, still I wrestle
 with my old friends faith and doubt. A thin scribble
 of clouds floats by, obscuring the sky, and all the words
 are hiding, elusive as that bird over there, the one
 that's singing its heart out, just out of sight.

The poet acknowledges the presence of doubt, but also knows him to be an old friend, a source of annoyance, yes, but a familiar one, no more threatening than the migraines that have come and gone these thirty years. More potent than

doubt—and more arresting—is the song of that bird, the one that is singing (as the poet is singing, despite herself), who is her kin and kind. From the title onward, the spirit of Frost haunts this collection, and he is evident here as well. His poem “Ovenbird” also celebrates a bird, “a singer everyone has heard” but rarely seen, so deep in the woods is his home. Frost’s bird, too, sings in the midst of loss, as time passes, summer fades, and the chill of autumn approaches. His theme is the same as that of Crooker’s bird, “What to make of a diminished thing?”—a question that might serve as a second epigraph to the book. *Gold* offers a powerful testimony of the human ability not only to weather the most difficult circumstances of life, but to make something beautiful from them.

Departures

Philip Kolin’s *Departures*, his seventh collection, also offers poems of personal loss, though these are mostly confined to the book’s first section, entitled “Childhood Encores.” His rich, atmospheric depictions of childhood memories, full of longing and regret, are redolent with the smell and taste and touch of a long-gone time and long-lost places. In “A Delta Christmas,” the speaker pieces together details, giving us quick glimpses into the pleasures of a Child’s Christmas spent in the sensual South:

Divinity in the Delta
Falling sugar, falling

Sugarcane hosts
Children catch them

On their tongues—
Runways for doves

Temple gifts for a birth
In the sweetgum night air.

Kolin’s Catholic sensibility pervades this scene (as well as the poems in the rest of the book), demonstrating the child’s conviction of the holiness of the world and of his own body. Sugar becomes a form of Eucharist and the children’s tongues potential instruments of the Holy Spirit (an idea expressed in a highly compressed Pentecostal image). All the earth offers up its plenty in anticipation of the Christ child:

Grandma Anna is praying late,
Stirring up Christmas

Hominy and incense—
A large smoking hog

Cracking earth’s fat
Drifting pleasingly toward

The clapboard sanctuary
 Quilted white

Welcoming chilly angels
 To this world's weathers.

In the child's memory, the world of sensation (hogs and hominy) and the invisible world (inhabited by angels), the world of time and timelessness, merge and meet in the home, that "clapboard sanctuary" that miraculously contains all things human and divine.

And yet, in keeping with his faith's theology, that good world that Kolin believes in is not without its attendant evils. In "The Taxi Ride," the speaker recollects the night his father arrived at his mother's house in a yellow taxi. Told from the child's perspective, the boy anticipates the visit he has been looking forward to, "The sunshine was at stake for me." He recalls his duffle bag "full of my unworn clothes" and, in a particularly eerie image of foreshadowing, "my toothbrush was still / in its plastic coffin." The parents' fight is not described in detail—this is the boy's poem, not theirs—and he concludes the story with the final, matter-of-fact image of his father getting into the yellow cab and driving away. Kolin is able to imply the adults' rancor, the habitual nature of it, and the child's chronic disappointment with a minimum of words and images, the reticence of the poem speaking volumes about the void at the center of the boy's life. Thus Kolin in this poem, as well as in his other poems about childhood, avoids the traps of both sentimentality and self-pity, offering the reader a series of narratives firmly grounded in reality, for better or for worse.

In subsequent sections of *Departures*, Kolin takes a very different tack. The focus shifts from the poet's personal memories, moving from a narrative mode to a more dramatic one wherein he imaginatively engages the lives of others. The portraits he offers range from lost family members (including a moving elegy, "For My Cousin Killed in Luxembourg, 1945") to artists and writers (such as Katherine Hepburn, Wallace Stevens, and Sylvia Plath), to historical figures (including FDR's mistress, Enrico Fermi's accidental protégé, and, in the tour de force "Passover in the Camps," the unnamed dead lost in the Holocaust). In many of these poems, Kolin demonstrates his remarkable ability to inhabit other times, other places, and other ways of being in the world, the "negative capability" Keats so highly prized in poets.

Among the most ambitious of these pieces is "Odessa," a poem in 13 movements telling the story of "an 18-year-old woman of color living in New Orleans, circa 1939" and concluding with a lyric wherein Odessa speaks. In the racially charged world of the Jim Crow South, Odessa tries to crack the unspoken code, to discover what skin color means:

Odessa could never fathom
 why blacks seemed invisible
 while whites strutted about like high noon.

Slowly, she learns the hard lessons of what it means to be black in a white world—a world wherein being white means prosperity and freedom and being black means poverty and lack of autonomy, for herself as well as her children, since “white boys can’t give you white babies. / They will come out black no matter how / fair their faces or straight their hair.” Since light-skinned Odessa belongs to both races, she chooses to “pass for white” with sorrowful results. Kolin provides brief glimpses into her life, a woman “living between two worlds,” disdained by whites, outcast from the black community, a woman who never really belonged. These episodes gradually build in intensity as Kolin uses Odessa’s story to interrogate and expose the cruelty and injustice of the segregated society she suffered from—one whose vestiges are still visible in American culture, even 75 years into the future. Thus, Odessa’s story becomes our story, her fate one we bear responsibility for.

Kolin’s book is very much grounded in New Orleans, a place he has deep affection for, yet one whose faults run deep. In the opening lines of “Postcards from New Orleans,” he acknowledges its dual identity: “Everything in the city is connected / through sin or salvation.” The sins run the usual gamut, illicit sex (“this lost paradise of the flesh”), violence, poverty, racism, the legacy of slavery. The sources of salvation flow from the dome of the basilica and the many churches that fill the city; from the numerous religious orders who care for the poor, visit the sick, and educate the children, among them “The black Sisters of the Precious Blood” who “prayed to protect new Orleans from hurricanes, / floods, and fires.” Even the dead, who are “never far away,” provide witness to the certainty of resurrection:

They sleep above ground but
often call upon each other through
the river and visit its underground
cafes, sipping black, mud-brewed brutot,
skimming watery obituaries, waiting
for the next of kin and friends
to join them for their morning call.

In Kolin’s world, the dead are still very much alive, though under a different dispensation, as they await the coming of another life. His vision is capacious, encompassing the natural and the supernatural, certain the two worlds are connected and made evident daily in the city he knows so well.

This daily-ness is one of the collection’s great strengths. *Departures* is faithful to the apocalyptic and cataclysmic realities of existence (his poems about Katrina, such as “The Slaver Superdome,” are equal to the task), but he is also faithful to the little epiphanies that come to us in the course of ordinary life. The aptly titled “At the Sack and Save” tells a story familiar to every reader: the speaker, pressed for time, goes to the super market, races through

the store to collect his purchases, only to find himself stopped dead in the checkout line:

The old man ahead of me is
My cross; he is too slow . . .

He looks like what he buys—wrinkled,
Pocked cans at reduced prices, bread too old
To sell for today's hurried mouths.
Tassels grow out of his scalp
Like frayed skirt covers on the couch, sagging
At the Salvation Army mission.

It takes him an eternity to get it all.

In his hurry, the speaker (obviously a praying man) has forgotten what it means to be Christian. He refers to the old man as his “cross,” using the term lightly and loosely, as if he has no understanding of the vast gulf that separates the petty annoyance he feels from the suffering of the crucified Christ. His cruel inventory of the man's appearance (as well as his discount-aisle purchases) demonstrates his detachment, his lack of compassion, and any sense of the man's humanity or integrity. It's as if he's never heard the words “Blessed are the poor.” Finally, he has lost all concept of time. It does not take the old man “an eternity” to purchase his food, but given the little Hell the speaker has doomed himself to, it feels like one.

And yet. Despite himself, the speaker seems to sense this man's purpose—that he has been sent to the “Sack and Save” to save the speaker from himself. Even the absurd tassels on the old man's scalp remind the speaker of salvation. Outside the store, the speaker's unconscious expectations are more than met:

As I load my trunk,
There he is, pushing his cart
And smiling at me as if I were his son.

His voice kisses me as he wraps me in his words,
“God bless you and your family.”

And so he meets God in the parking lot, sees Christ (at last) in the face of the poor, and finds his unkindness met with forgiveness—all in the course of a typical day.

Philip Kolin manages, both in the brief space of this charming poem and throughout *Departures*, to convey the ways in which holiness lives in our midst even when we are too blind or distracted to recognize it. This is a theme common to all three of these fine collections. Though we live amid evil, as Maryann Corbett's *Mid Evil* reminds us, though we live our lives at the mercy of time, as Barbara Crooker's *Gold* demonstrates, it is a blessing to be a human being. All three poets,

along with the poets who came before them, tell us the truths we need to know—time flies, beauty fades, all things must pass, death awaits each of us. And their poems make us strangely glad to be human and alive.

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Angela Alaimo O'Donnell, teaches English and Creative Writing at Fordham University, where she also serves as Associate Director of the Curran Center for American Catholic Studies. Her publications include two poetry chapbooks *Mine* (2007) and *Waiting for Ecstasy* (2009), and four full-length collections of poems, *Moving House* (2009), *Saint Sinatra* (2011), *Waking My Mother* (2013), and *Lovers' Almanac* (2015). In addition, she is the author of *The Province of Joy* (2012) a book of hours based on the prayer practice of Flannery O'Connor; *Mortal Blessings* (2014), a memoir/meditation on everyday sacraments; and *Fiction Fired by Faith* (2015), a biography of Flannery O'Connor. Readers may visit her homepage on the web at <http://angelaalaimoodonnell.com/>.