

Poetry Porch: Poetry

Unsigned Memorials to Mary

By Joyce Wilson

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The unpaved path wound slowly down the hill
Until I passed the Virgin Mary's form,
Her hands extended from a plaster cape,
Or clamshell, ready to envelope any
Passerby and listen to her tale.
Clichéd and real, she stood, nearly life-sized,
Below her on the ground, a chicken bustled
Near a cage, the little door ajar,
The hen attached, its tether loosely tied.

I took a photograph, and then I turned
To see the several people standing there
Assembled on the tiny cottage porch.
The older ones were not around, and by
The look of one young handsome boy, I saw
that I was caught up in a holy day
That was engaged. I put the camera down.
Not knowing what to do, I bowed, at least,
The way the Japanese bow from the waist.

Thinking back, I came to understand:
My path had cut right through their property.
The busy chicken that distracted me—
The way at home we have pets to distract
Us from the harshness of our busy lives—
Was not a pet, was being kept, not for
The present, nor the past, but the future,

The site undoubtedly memorial
To one who gave his life during the war.

Transported through the city in a car,
I watched the buildings pass me in a blur,
Where statues of the Blessed Virgin stood
At lamp posts with flowers, tenderly arranged;
On traffic islands, Mary blue and white;
In a courtyard, Mary waiting open-armed.
Everywhere, in this part of the town,
Memorials to Mary floated on
The river of the city's dark renown.