

Eugénie de Guérin

Martin Robertson

She hung out of her window to watch the stars.
They hustled her back to bed with cries and prayers
and nailed the window shut.
A man in the woven hanging reached for a nest.
Each morning when she woke she could bear it less
—found scissors and cut
the offending hand away. More punishment.
They loved her though (as she loved them) and meant
well. She grew up *dévoté*
but kind and wise, with the wisdom of innocence,
total faith in an ordered universe
breathed from the will of God
which set the peasant to labour and not question
and her to tread, and equally not question,
her narrow barren road.

Loves children, could have been a loving wife.
Would have been bride, with greater love, of Christ,
but stays with her father
who needs her, loves her, whom she loves too; stays
with sister and brother she loves too in their ways
but not with the brother
she loves above all the world, though not above
God—God for her is truly Love—
but above all others:
the baby brother she first was jealous of,
but they were knitted together in lasting love
before their mother
died, when he was eight, she was thirteen.
And now the loved brother lives in Babylon,
Paris, leagues away. And further.

He has left the walled garden of Faith, walks
anywhere wilful thought may lead. She looks
out from the green shade
passionately fearing for his soul's health (fearing
for his body's too, mortally sick) yet sharing
still with warm loving pride
his thoughts and hopes, sharing with him her hopes
(few in this world), her thoughts, giving them shape
in clear, beautiful words.
For this they share, as well as their love: love
of the expressive, the living word, of
poetry. She made
—of sewing, cooking, correspondence, the road to the mill
with its flowers, birds in the garden—made her journal
a sampler that does not fade.