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Constance Hunting Correspondence

Constance Hunting 1925-2006

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HUNTING, CONSTANCE

Place of birth: PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

Date of birth: OCT. 15, 1925

Home address: 76 MAIN ST., ORONO, MAINE

Publications: AFTER THE STRAVINSKY CONCERT
CIMMERIAN
BEYOND THE SUMMERHOUSE } poetry collections

numerous poems, stories, & articles in literary magazines

Biographical information

PUBLISHER/EDITOR PUCKERBRUSH PRESS
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POETRY

Polished To Near Perfection

AFTER THE STRAVINSKY CONCERT,
by Constance Hunting (Scribners, \$4.50)

THIS IS a first book of poems by the wife of the head of the University of Maine's English department. It shows Constance Hunting to be a meticulous craftsman with an imaginative eye for the object - metaphor, the best of which is the cracked pier glass of the title poem, which has "long since been carried to the lumber-room, leaving us nothing to reflect upon."

In the shorter piece "Bird in Hand," reprinted here, a simple boiled egg is used as a perfectly integrated, completely open-ended metaphor for poetic creativity.

Although she delights in sensuous description of everyday objects, Mrs. Hunting never allows this love of things to deflect her images into mere cataloguery. Her snippets of observation are always true to the poem's objectives. In two of her most successful longer

burning fall, pyres were lit all up and down the streets."

Although she has obviously read widely and profitably a great many contemporary poets, Mrs. Hunting often seems, if not the daughter, at least the spiritual niece of Theodore Roethke. One even wishes for more of the Roethke-like willingness to recall the savagery of childhood in lines like "She shows me how my thumb can pop- the pit out neat as an eyeball. Charmed, - I set to work, we set to work. . ." in "The Gathering."

Sometimes, however, there may be a lesson too - well learned from Roethke; images like "the chill will shake me open so I'll spill like birdseed" and the aunts whose "heads like weedy flowers nod- emphatically across me on their stems" are good, but lack the central, controlling metaphor that is his.

Technically, the poems are near-perfect. There is a feeling that they have been thoroughly polished, re-examined, the superfluous mercilessly snipped away. Yet the form is never "perfect" in a technician's relentless fashion; there is breathing-space for passion.

K. L.

Portland Poet



CONSTANCE HUNTING

BIRD IN HAND

The way the poet eats the hard-boiled egg is this: he first chips delicately all round the thin resistance of the shell of fact which falls like flakes (if alabaster melted so it would before his beaming eye) as flicked by his dactylic finger, to reveal the gleaming nacreous shape like a monstrous pearl — he bites, good appetite, the simile in two and sinks his teeth in muse's pollen, golden, dusty, the real thing that might once spring a phoenix to confound the ovoid shape of his astonished stare.

pieces, "Revenant" and "The Gathering," objects serve as keys and encapsulated life histories of various family members and their inter-relationships.

At her most enjoyable, the poet has the knack — which could descend to mere cleverness, but never does — of forcing one word or image to stand for another. A good example of this is in "City Park: Spring," in which the word "stalk" in "and sailors- stealthily detach themselves from chewing gum- and start the stalk and all the leaves- are green again" works both as an image of spring and of wooing.

The first two lines of "Revenant" work the same way; "The day my father died in