

Mending My Black Sweater

Mending My Black Sweater

and other poems by

Mary Ann Sullivan

The logo for E·RATIO, featuring the text "E·RATIO" in a serif font, centered within an orange rectangular background.

E·RATIO

Mending My Black Sweater

E·ratio Editions

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Mending My Black Sweater

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and other poems

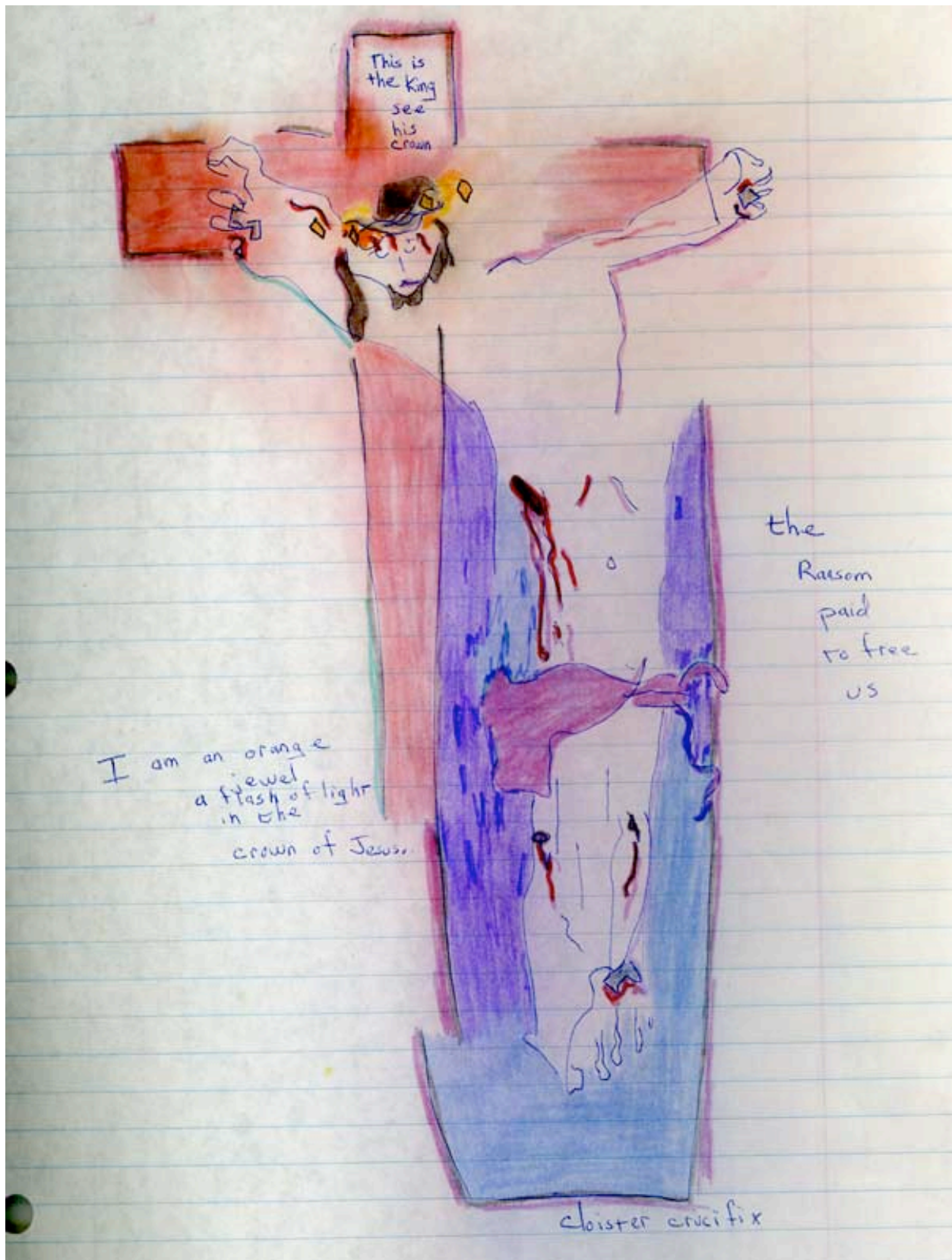
Mending My Black Sweater

For my mother, Clara
For my father, John

Mending My Black Sweater

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Mending My Black Sweater



Mending My Black Sweater

I have come after them and made repair

—from “Mending Wall” by Robert Frost

My sweater unraveled

day after day
it frayed

yarn dangled in my plate
and tickled my palm

Until
In silence
I prepared
needle and thread

In a room alone
sitting, quiet,
I pulled the fiber
and pulled myself
until every hole
was nearly closed

Then
notions returned
to the sewing box

with my fingers
I tidied the spools

The Brave Are Gone

Deirdre's Last Song

The brave are gone
alone I weep
prepare my grave
dig deep

Loud my sorrow
the world shall hear
its echo years to pass.

I am Deirdre, unhappy
lived through my prime

Lower than death,
a life without the brave.

Deirdre of the Sorrows is an Irish myth. An old king wants to marry Deirdre, but she falls in love with Naois, a young knight; the two leave Ireland to marry and live together. The jealous king tricks Naois into returning and murders Naois as well as many other brave knights who try to protect their friend. Alone, Deirdre commits suicide.

The Blessing of Joseph

My son of many colors
full of the sky blue
deep of the earth brown
green by yellow sprouts
from one pink womb.

A curly Joseph
sold by your brothers
“You are a faithful creeper near the spring.”
who bears the roundest, deepest
colored fruit
and curls gently over the walls
your brothers build
to give them your fruit
feed them your love.

For this you are favored
by God,
by Jacob
by Pharaoh
full of the sky blue
color
deep of the earth brown
blessed.

Hermit Day

Sometimes I'm a wild hermit
and I go deep into the woods
for hours
and I eat my lunch there
with insects
and animals all around
and I pray brown
like one submerged in the roots
of an old tree
or I pray silver and brilliant
like micha on a stone in the brook.

And other times, I'm a civilized hermit
and wear a straw hat
and sit in a lawn chair beneath a pine tree
surrounded by trim grass, and azalias
and lilies of culture
and then I pray
the pink and green of Monet.

Fasting in New England

I love fasting
during Lent
in New England

because it makes me light!
and I can run like a leaf
through the woods
in the snow
where no one else goes.

and I can swing on the birches
and lick the young branches
and hold ice from the brook
to the sun
as it drips on my face

and watch one orange sparkle
until it seems forever
an *ave*
will pulse
in my heart

and with fingertips
in pure white sacrament snow
write words! words!
that only God knows.

Lectio

for Emily Dickinson

the word
comes in at first
a guest

then
like the morning sound
of first bird's note

turns the soul
to wing and breast

Yellow Leaf

Yellow leaf
floating on quiet water
catch this summer
for me,
hold it
like you hold the sunlight
innocent and still.

Begging for Water

Full of the woods
she returns to the cloister
through corridors

a wild one apart
wood in her bones
bird calls under her nails
a growling animal soul

in chapel
on her knees
she is the swoop of big-winged birds
the fox dens of earth

begging
for a tame web
that stretches from young tree
to young tree
and sparkles in light

begging
for water
tame water

Genesis

A Writer's Metanoia

1.

In the beginning was the word
and the word created
the deep in me
a formless void
dark covered
with darkness
only the word was there,
in black shadow hovering.

Then there was light in me,
which the darkness vied
but could not overpower.

And I saw the light was good,

And I watched the word
divide darkness from light
and name them.

So it came, my first day.

2.

In shadow and light
I flowed endlessly
until the word
vaulted and clove me
into two parts:
 the depths
 the heights
the second day.

3.

Then the word established
land in me.
firma terra
earth on which to settle and be constant
and in my stable ground,
the word shaped trees
that bore fruit
with seeds in their very middles
and plants and flowers sprung up,
red, yellow, green, blue
all with seeds, seeds!

Ground and life
the third day.

4.

Then the word said,
“I will conceal infinity from you.”
It made separate lights,
one hot orb for day
and at night a moveable circle
which grew like a white thought,
then faded to silence.

And stars were made
to sparkle me,
reminding me,
“There’s a festival today!”
They made me forget the boundless.

Steady the sun, the moon,
the stars, beat their rhythm,
the fourth day.

5.

Then the word created
birds in me
some that hung on wind
some that closed their wings
to dive for prey
And it made creatures that moved
in my depths:
leviathan, and clawed shells
that crept on the bottom
and simple swimmers
wearing flesh of gold
and green and grey.
They multiplied
And I was afraid
the fifth day.

6.

But, the word would not stop.
It pulled from my deep, black core
hooved creatures, serpents
and beasts
howling and digging.

Trembling, I ran through
this creation and cried out
like a poet in a stone tower,

*“What hurts the soul
My soul adores.
No better than a beast
upon all fours.”*

And, desolate, I crawled into
a cave of earth.

But, the word found me
it said, “What are you doing here?”

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It took me into the world again
and formed me into the shape
of itself.

Yet, I was the dust of
a soft pencil
Thin, frail letters on a page

Until the word blew gently
on the edges of my letters,
my symbols,
my signs.

I was a word holding creation

I did not cover my face like Elijah
I called out like Tieresias,
like John from water:

the sixth day.

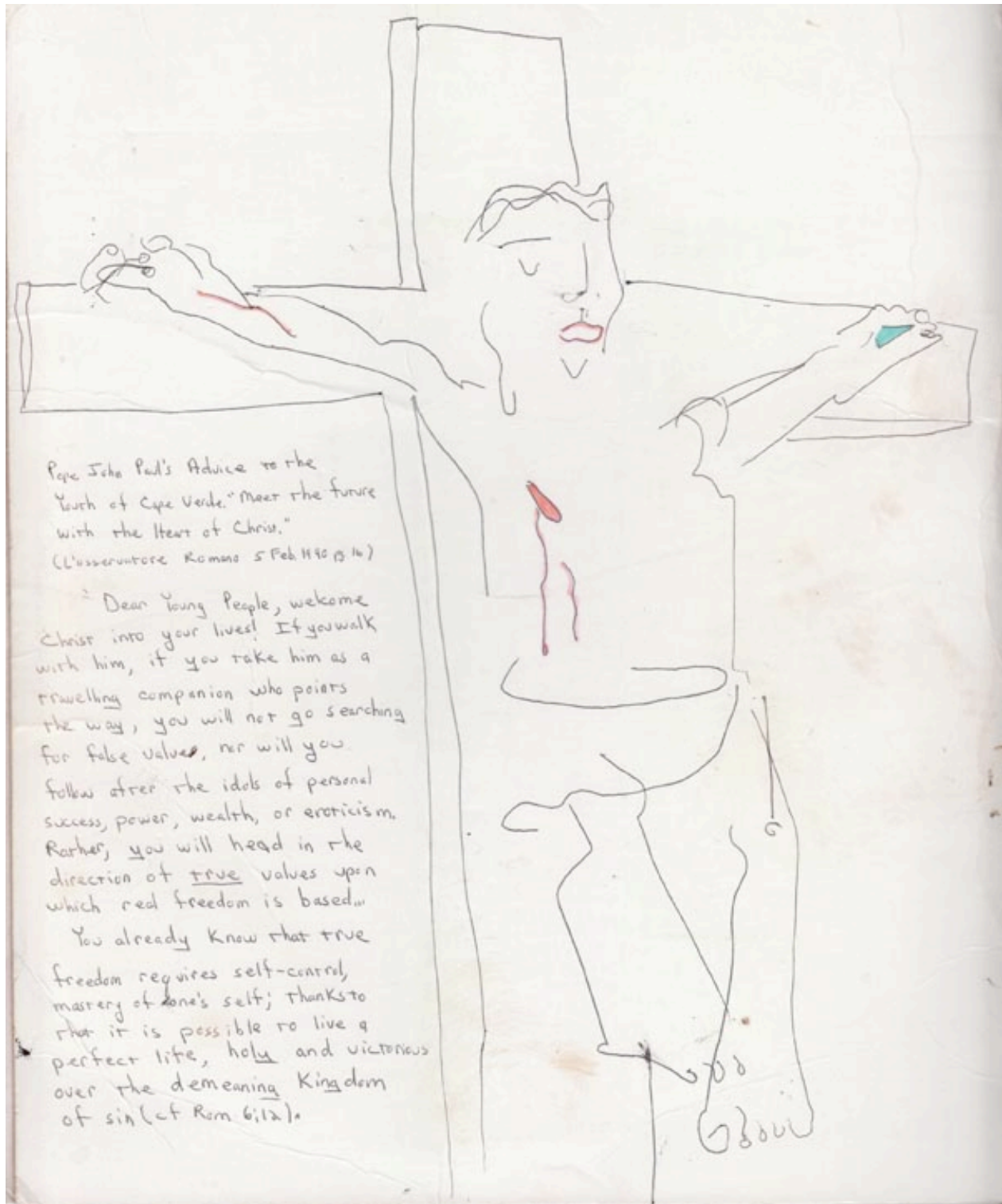
7.

On the seventh day
The word rested in me
and blessed me

I would be a master crafter
delighting in the word;
day after day
at play in its presence
at play everywhere in its world.

What hurts the soul from “The Lady’s First Song” by W.B. Yeats

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Heart

If you want my heart
I shall open my center
before you, here in the dark, alone.

See,
my red flesh
beats human
and opens

revealing the swollen marks
where jealousy crawled
like a wild spider

See deeper in
holes burrowed by a small, frightened creature
who sought a place to hide from truth.

Here I am in my white robes
poisoned, bitten, furrowed.

“Come here,” you say and pull me close.

I cling to you
we share your heart

I must stay close
skin to skin
mortal to divine

for if I pull away
I shall be empty

Shaking the Spiders Out

It started one morning
when a spider crawled
out of my shoe.

an ugly, unexpected appearance
that made my eyes widen

It's the price I pay for writing
in untamed places

Spiders emerge from the corners
the dark spaces

We face off
confront one another
stare to stare
stand to stand

Yikes!

Those little annoyances
that hide inside writers' dreams

Those black thin leggy things
that scurry through sentences

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Those shadowy apprehensions
that crawl into the curves of letters

Force me to steel my jaw
tighten my skin
grasp wild words
firmly, unafraid
and shake the spiders out
shake em
shake em good

Like fine editors taught me.

David and Goliath

I will take one small stone
and I will stand before the giant
who threatened so many

and while the crowd screams,
goads on
mocks

with experience gained alone
at my leisure
with a solitary sling

I will in a short moment
To the forehead
Send a stone
Direct

There

And then
And then

Having felled the glumox

Continue
at my leisure

to right
to writing
write
right

The Poet's Way Out of Hell

There!
Beyond!

An opening.

Sky!
Warmth!

In the circle of
an "o"
an "a"

There!

At the very bottom of a
b

be.

Gathering South Asia Through Our Eyes

for Maggie

Of water won and wonder woo
And water lost and arbor under
Sat and yellow pink and yellow
seat and granite bench and there
we sat

Ever long the last and last

Walks and through and arch and long
The arms and robes of Muslims
forward walk and
Wind and blown
We talked

And sat and yellow pink and yellow
seat and granite bench and there
we sat

the scarfs of Pakistani men were long
and on the shoulder down
and robes of Islam longer

the women Pakistani soft
and gentle tender
south and south of Asia
south
for once and first Kashmiris known

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and gather motion gather words
through eye and eye and
pulled in mind and held
in mind like camera
'neath an arbor

with gathered under
pink and pink and yellow
share and share

and rides and car and parked on brick
for mom, and mum, and mom
and green

Gathering south Asia through our eyes
Gathering pink and pink and pink
with dearest, dearest pink.

And sprinkling down south Asia
piece and piece and gently falling
Piece of dearest pink and pink and yellow

Nous

With thanks to Maggie Moore-West for having taught me Plato

1.

Through like a conduit
into up beyond
to reach and passing
up through there
up at the tower's top

I could stretch
and almost through
would go through there
to unknown
stars and worlds

no one can teach me how
to go before

no one before
has been
but, maybe, if existing,
god

and if
I go
and if I go

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the place where I am going

alone

I risk
the chance
and strong

some gravity if
greater than
this passage
this conduit

pulls me
from this place

could I with arms
then swim, flap, fly, struggle back
to this familiar place, this tower

in a dream
in a yearning
in a longing
for more

beyond
just there

and if
and if

I cannot bear that place
beyond
alone

Would I
like Robert Frost
and write
and call
and call
and call
like singing bird in morning
“you come too!”
“come too!”
“come too!”

2.

Peal away the words
from Thomas More
the saint
Peal away the
safety of the law
and find
beyond the stones that held him
pending
suspending
through

beyond
alone

nous

3.

Peal away the tower
that held St. Joan of Arc

prisoner

Peal away the armor,
the people loving
her
the voices heard

and left remaining
only she

before
the infinite

nous

4.

Peal away the walls
that hid our Blessed Margaret
of Castello
immured alive

blind, crippled, hunchbacked darling girl

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her mother,
her father,
refused her love
for shame

alone

but not despaired Antigone,
she

within those narrow walls
to listen

birds outside the bars
like singing birds in morning
tasting
God upon their tongue

the words that passing through
her mouth
and ears
the sound
of words perceived

beyond

those walls to
silence, silent

nous

5.

David Tower
Too and through

vertical and
up

beyond
through corpus
conduit
up up there

and floating, flying
up and through
beyond

“come too.”
“come too.”
“come too.”

nûs.

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Poetry North Review for “The Brave Are Gone”

Ruminate, Muscadine Lines: A Southern Journal, Lost Beat Poetry, Haggard and Halloo, Munyori Poetry Journal, Language and Culture, Green Muse, poeticdiversity and *E·ratio* for “Gathering South Asia Through Our Eyes”

Dominican Monastic Search and *E·ratio* for “Genesis”

Sisters Today for “Hermit Day”

BBC Arts Online Poetry for “Shaking the Spiders Out”

Poet and novelist **Mary Ann Sullivan** is working toward a Doctor of Arts degree at Franklin Pierce University, where her dissertation explores “Digital Poetry and the Greek Notion of Nûs.” Her first novel, *Child of War*, set in Belfast, Northern Ireland, was named a Notable Book in Social Studies and was favorably reviewed by *The New York Times*. Her feature articles are widely published in national and international Catholic newspapers and magazines, and her poetry has been featured by the BBC Arts Online Poetry program. She earned an MFA in Writing from Vermont College after which she spent many years as a cloistered Dominican nun in Fatima, Portugal.

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taxis de pasa logos

