

Jun-2002

## Poetry Review: A Wound on Stone

Phil Tabakow  
*Bridgewater State College*

---

### Recommended Citation

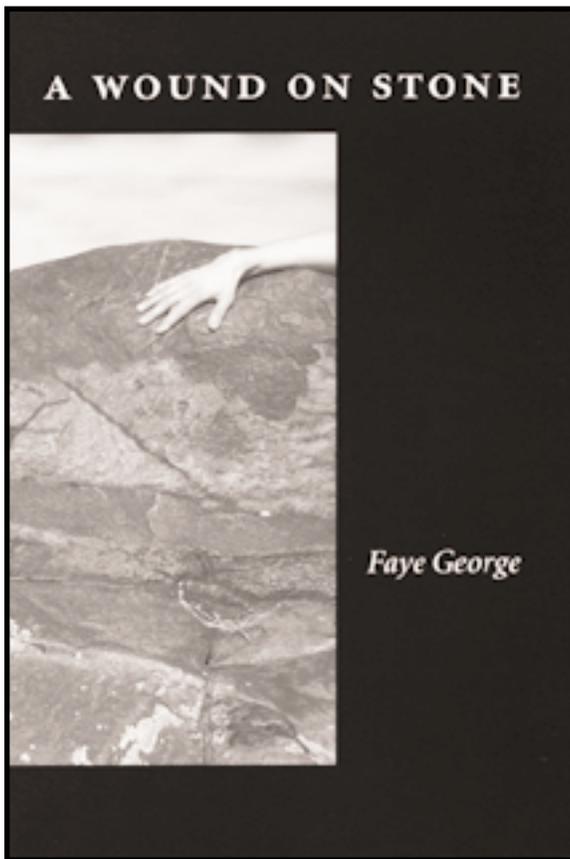
Tabakow, Phil (2002). Poetry Review: A Wound on Stone. *Bridgewater Review*, 21(1), 31-32.  
Available at: [http://vc.bridgew.edu/br\\_rev/vol21/iss1/13](http://vc.bridgew.edu/br_rev/vol21/iss1/13)

# Poetry Review

## A Wound on Stone

*Faye George*

by Phil Tabakow



In *The Necessary Angel*, his book of essays “intended to disclose definitions of poetry,” Wallace Stevens says that “a poem is a particular of life thought of for so long that one’s thought has become an inseparable part of it or a particular of life so intensely felt that the feeling has entered into it.” From the description in “Slugs and Opossums” of the garden slug of her book’s title, which “pours/ all its viscous flesh/upon the path it takes:/a wound on stone,” to the speaker of “The Sudden Tug of the Familiar,” who tells us that “The smooth plane of the coverlet/ defines my bed. It is single. /Naked as a needle I slide in, /sleep the sleep of a nun,” Faye George’s poems enact these particulars of thought and feeling with a singular precision and sculptural grace.

Notice both the structural tension of the lines and the incisive particularity of the details in the following stanzas of “What She looked Out Upon,” a meditation on aging and loneliness.

what she looked out upon  
through the small grille  
of the kitchen window  
was the exhausted clothesline

strung across the yard,  
its soft and sagging middle  
a hammocked emptiness  
that crossed her eyes’ rest

as a thin shadow  
of the depression  
she looked in upon  
thinking of what was to come:

These are the poems of a true New Englander; everything inessential has been pared away to reveal the underlying structure of hope and despair that holds the world together. A life of sorts has been coaxed and prodded from the thin soil of possibilities—but always contingently and always in a landscape where even our personal fates are dependent upon the vagaries of terrain and weather, both metaphorical and actual, as in “The Long Train,” printed in full on the following page:

This dream each has of being  
on the long train that takes us  
to the country of our fate

may fold in the circuit  
of a blown tire  
cast into bramble and sumac,

may crumble to furrows  
plowed but never planted—  
or planted

and the seed dried up,  
rains come too soon,  
a sudden late

and unforgiving frost—  
this dream that rides  
in ragweed and wild asters.

The persistence of life formed (or deformed) by an inhospitable environment is also the subject of "Birds Do Carry Seeds," where the narrator assures us that

There are explanations

for the way that living things  
will turn against the order  
and strive unnaturally

to grow from rock  
in cracks and shallow pans  
of earth between the ribs,

will put out roots and thrive,  
contorted, strained,  
yet stubbornly survive.

That dogged determination to survive and make connections amidst the landscapes of a fallen world constitutes the major theme of this book, as best exemplified, perhaps, in "On The Grounds of the Plymouth County Hospital" where, trespassing "at the home for the chronically ill, browsing/in the shadow of that house without/ hope," the two lovers

...pause  
kiss

and watch the moss fatten, listen to the wind snuffle  
in the barren apple, troubling the crippled  
sassafras with its passing  
caress.

The poems in *A Wound on Stone* are both beautifully crafted and emotionally satisfying. Faye George's poems neither force transcendence nor negate the possibility of epiphany. Compressed, concise, compassionate, and intensely realized, they show us, once again, how memorable poems can be wrought out of the most difficult and recalcitrant of materials.

—Phil Tabakow is Professor of English