

2004

Belonging

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Belonging

Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"I. I do not belong to America. I will not murder another human being, Because of foreign policy, I will not pretend to see, What good can come from patriotism."

Cover Page Footnote

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GEORGE CASSIDY PAYNE

BELONGING

I

I do not belong to America. I will not murder another human being,
Because of foreign policy, I will not pretend to see,
What good can come from patriotism.

I do not belong to Oneonta, Lowville, Sackets Harbor, or Rochester.
Not to St. John Fisher College
or the Crozer School of Divinity.

These places do not claim my soul for an address.

I do not belong to Amy Bianchi, my glacier eyed seraph
my best friend

I do not belong to Don and Cheryl Payne—the ones, who taught me,
Gandhi's art of fishing—

The ones who married me to Christ.

I do not belong to the Open Door Mission, or the Sojourner House,
Although, it is within these walls
That I taste true fellowship.
I do not belong to the Prophets, or the Apostles, or the Saints, or the Martyrs
Not a single man or woman
Has my allegiance.

I have never spoken to Mary.

I don't belong to C.S. Lewis or Pierre Teilhard de Chardin
Although they have saved my life more than once,

Yet, I do not owe them a single debt
It is because these are people and places

And exist as presents—

We are presents to each other—
That we open with mad pubescent muscle.

II

I say, it's ok

Not to belong to the billions of skies
That passes beneath the Ether
and equations of hemispheres untold

I say, it's ok

That we think of nature not as Thoreau did,
As the only source of daily bread

It is because I eat,
God, that you are willing to teach me hunger.

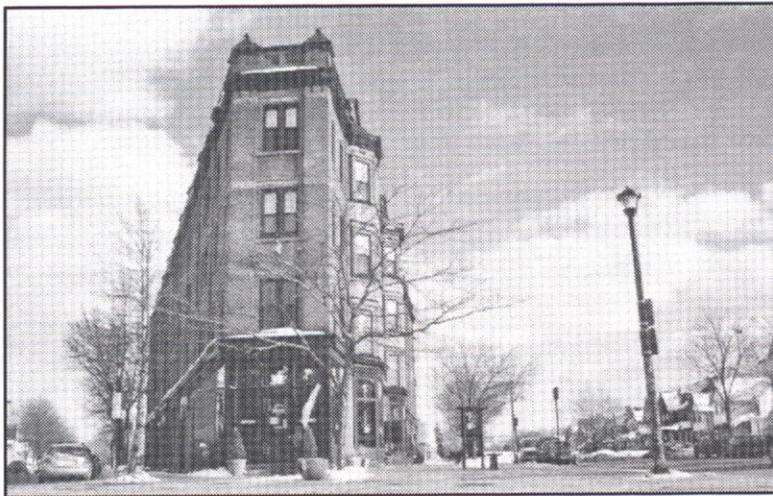
And yes, the pagans will suffer.
I too have felt their wailing stomachs—
I too have resorted to licking memories of holiday recipes
From dusty *Life* magazines.

But I have come to your table.

I have come back to the feast which is your love

It is because you have taught me how to eat your blessings
And how it is to starve without them,

That I will forever, belong to you



JENNY STOCKDALE