

# North Country Notebook



George Vukelich

The Listening In interview this week with Sara Rath (p. 8), because of space limitations, was able to show only a little of how she came to be a poet, and not too much of the poetry she writes.

Because so much of what she writes comes out of our north country, we are pleased to present some of it here. There is the same sense of place in her that is so evident in her mentor, August Derleth.

"I regard myself as a 'regional' writer," she says. "I was born here, raised here and I stayed here. My suffering is here. My joys are here. My roots are here."

As August Derleth once wrote, there are some who have "Wisconsin in their bones." Sara Rath is one of those.

...

for Jack

*When I was nineteen and tanned  
you took me to a sandbar  
in the middle of the Mississippi  
where we loved  
naked in warm island sun  
hidden by tall grass and turtles.*

*I rode the bus home,  
crying, seated beside a silent nun  
who fingered her beads all across  
Wisconsin until she was replaced  
by a wild haired woman on leave  
from the State Hospital  
who chattered nervously and offered  
me a Baby Ruth.*

...

## Wisconsin In Her Bones

October 2

*I awoke in the night  
to the cry of geese flying south  
and I imagined their V against the stars  
cutting through the constellations  
one more autumn.  
"Hear the geese," I whispered and  
curled more deeply  
into the curve of your warm back.  
shielding myself from  
the winter  
and the cold  
raw echo  
of the geese in the sky.*

...

Winter Garden

*I watch the snow falling over your shoulder  
onto the garden, large  
flakes falling on frozen broccoli  
and the twisted relics that were my tomato  
vines.  
Winter, and the end  
of the year.*

*We are seated on the old red sofa  
speaking in uncertain again. You like  
the promise of uncertainty  
but the threat  
of living totally within myself  
after twenty years of sharing gives me  
...just a little tremor in time  
however sure I am of my own strength  
or the capacity to pull weeds  
after secret needs are revealed  
(dormant now this winter day  
waiting for the warming spring  
and some kind of inner stretch  
a reaching for the sun  
a need to feel the sun burn  
sunburn  
on my inner thighs.)*

...

Diapason

*What about the crows  
flecking the black  
branches of the oak  
so near our bedroom window...*

*What about the crows  
watching us  
in the Sunday dusk  
casting raw cries upon the wind  
against the pale wash of winter sky  
a carrion curse  
there will be nothing left  
We do not speak  
and we are presumed dead  
and we eat our shadows  
and we thirst for spring.*

...

Aftermath

*My father died in my dreams  
last night. It was  
October.  
I shouted to your dumb ears  
remembering my father shrinking  
grayer  
quieter every year  
until he finally whispered his  
time had come  
and disappeared  
into  
an old lace hat.*

...

Sara Rath's new book is titled *Remembering The Wilderness* and is published by Northword, P.O. Box 5634, Madison 53705. During our interview, Sara Rath wondered what August Derleth would think of her work now. I think Augie would be damn proud.