

## **Three Poems by Maryann Corbett**

### **ARCHAEOLOGY**

You think you know him. What you don't yet know  
sulks in its crypt, too cryptic to explain:  
Like chipped potsherds of pain,  
earthed in, below  
the asphalt dailiness and the glazed brick  
of fifty years' routine,  
his hurts lie, muddled as a crockery midden  
down several centuries' strata,  
hidden,

brooding, till some upheaval  
backhoes into broad day the toothy grin  
of a death's-head.  
And there you are, untrained for this, alone,  
too pressed by habit to be still and kneel  
with slow, soft patience, brushing the jumbled bone.  
So no retrieval  
takes place, and blacktop steamrolls down again  
over the old unsaid.

**A CHRONICLE**

Many believed it was the end of days.

Churches were tottering on the brink of schism.  
Some priests denied the sacraments to those  
who followed the wrong pope, or the wrong prophet.

Warriors in bright blazons and strict order  
arrayed themselves for combat on the field  
to wild acclaim, great cost, and little meaning.

The poor arose in arms against the rich,  
wreaking destruction on the halls of state,  
following lords who in the end betrayed them.

At any given time, a dozen conflicts,  
dredged from old hates, disfigured the known world.

Those who assessed the times in later years  
found most reportage biased. Rumors festered.

There was a plague. For years, they went on dying.

**THE WORLD'S FALSE SUBTLETIES ...**

*A bouts-rimés on Shakespeare's sonnet 138*

Forget the evening news. The simple truth  
isn't. And credibility? It lies  
somewhere back in a 1970s youth,  
when things were black and white. The subtleties  
were less entangling then. Well, we were young,  
marching, singing. The chants we belted best  
now deliquesce like snowflakes on a tongue  
snarled in realities, estopped, suppressed.  
Five decades gone, the world's just as unjust.  
Not "couched in our indifference," merely old,  
we can't be sure there's anything to trust  
since every tale the talking heads once told  
crumbles like old newsprint, reminding me  
what the bad news was always going to be.