

Old Mama Saturday

By Marie Ponsot

“Saturday’s child must work for a living.”

“I’m moving from Grief Street.
Taxes are high here
though the mortgage’s cheap.

The house is well built.
With stuff to protect, that
mattered to me,
the security.

These things that I mind,
you know, aren’t mine.
I mind minding them.
They weigh on my mind.

I don’t mind them well.
I haven’t got the knack
of kindly minding.
I say Take them back
but you never do.

When I throw them out
it may frighten you
and maybe me too.

Maybe
it will empty me
too emptily

and keep me here
asleep, at sea
under the guilt quilt,
under the you tree.”

Notes:

The epigraph of this poem was originally omitted in the changeover to the new website. Because of this, reciting the epigraph is optional for the 2019-2020 Poetry Out Loud season.

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Poet and translator Marie Ponsot was born in New York, and taught at New York University and Columbia University. Her first book, *True Minds*, was published in Lawrence Ferlinghetti's *City Lights* series in 1956. The book went unnoticed, and she did not publish another volume for decades, focusing instead on her career as a translator. Her three subsequent books of poetry won several awards, including the National Book Critics Circle Award. Her poems are both verbally complex and extremely formal, embracing such difficult forms as the sestina and the villanelle, as they engage with intelligence and drama the occurrences of everyday life.