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# The Reverend Thomas Burden Thinks of Jesus

by Robert Cooperman

I used to believe Him  
too good-natured about whores,  
before I was blessed  
with knowing Miss Mary LaFrance.  
Lavinia wouldn't understand  
our affection; no need to tell her.  
I can see her measuring my flock  
of rough miners against her daddy's  
congregation of Boston bigwigs;  
believing themselves higher  
than God and my rough preaching,  
her wishing in her silent heart  
to be back with her Daddy.

He's dead, her aunt wrote,  
the old raven flying down to Hell  
after him: couldn't wait  
to take up with him in the next life,  
his housekeeper in this one  
after his wife died;  
the two biddies'll cat-claw  
each other's eyes out in Perdition.

I'm all Mary's got in this world,  
and tell her Jesus is the road  
to her salvation in the next.  
The trusting child believes me  
with eyes dewy as the pure dawn,  
while Lavinia smiles at my sermons  
as if she's holy as God's Mother:  
her way of saying my testifying's  
nothing but chimney smoke.

