

standing and transmitting our culture than popular culture can offer. We need another mode, and we have one.

From the time of Plato and the Hebrew prophets we have known culture to be not only a tradition but an avenue of liberation from the "real world." Education arose not simply to facilitate the work of any given civilization but to allow as well for the achievement of a point of freedom outside ordinary experience from which ordinary experience can be seen and judged. We can see this throughout the long history not only of the humanities but especially of the sciences. Plato's *Republic* is a critical reflection on the easy inconsistencies of Homeric faith. The prophets of the Bible raged against popular notions of a cozy relationship with God. And scientists were burned by a church whose conventional vision they had upset.

The prophet, of course, is not so comfortable a culture-

hero as the bard. His business is to cast a cold eye on the limits of a given culture and to corrode away the rusts of cultural hypocrisy. With varying intensity at various periods of Western history the prophetic voice has intruded its disturbing warnings. Poetry, art, history, philosophy, science have all been the medium of prophetic insight. In education the commitment to open and honest analysis in all disciplines is a prophetic commitment.

The cry for "analytic habits of thought" is a virtual refrain in contemporary discussions of the failings of education. Most speak of this simply as a matter of training and intellectual skill. But an analytic habit of thought has a moral dimension: It asks a student for courage, not merely the intellectual courage to investigate the roots of received wisdom, but the personal courage to stand aside from his culture, to accept—at least for a time—a certain disorien-

SAN SEPOLCRO

In this blue light
I can take you there,
snow having made me
a world of bone
seen through to. This
is my house,

my section of Etruscan
wall, my neighbor's
lemons, and, just below
the lower church,
the airplane factory.
A rooster

crows all day from mist
outside the walls.
There's milk on the air,
ice on the oily
lemonskins. How clean
the mind is,

holy grave. It is this girl
by Piero
della Francesca, unbuttoning
her blue dress,
her mantle of weather,
to go into

labor. Come, we can go in.
It is before
the birth of god. No-one
has risen yet
to the museums, to the assembly
line—bodies

and wings—to the open air
market. This is
what the living do: go in.
It's a long way.
And the dress keeps opening
from eternity

to privacy, quickening.
Inside, at the heart,
is tragedy, the present moment
forever stillborn,
but going in, each breath
is a button

coming undone, something terribly
nimble-fingered
finding all of the stops.

—Jorie Graham