

A DEBT UNPAID

My grandmother is owed one egg.
“One egg?” You say, “How small!”
And yet it’s huge, this debt of mine,
Not minimal at all.

She’s gone, my granny, though she lived
A century and more,
An English lady, soft and kind -
Quite funny, not a bore!

Gran talked of love and sacrifice.
I didn’t listen then -
Too many more important things
To learn, when I was ten.

But ten I was when brother Jim
Caught measles, and was slow
Recovering, for wartime food
Was scarce, and stores were low.

One egg we had, yes one per month.
When I came home from school
I found Jim eating Granny’s egg -
Her gift! How I did drool!

I hated Jim because that egg,
So precious, good and rare,
Was in his tummy and he’d shown
No willingness to share.

He licked his lips, his eyes alight,
He smelled of yolk, he did!
I shouted, ranted, blew my top -
A really rotten kid.

I soon forgot, as children do,
My awfulness that day.
But one month later? Yes, you guessed!
Gran's egg was mine! Hooray!

I ate it swiftly, greedily
Yet savored every bite.
I did say "thank you" but downed all
As if it were my right.

And Gran looked on, with nods and smiles,
How well she knew the grace
Of sacrificial giving, and
It showed in her old face.

Too late for me to pay this debt -
One egg to Gran I owe,
One egg and learning what to give
And when, and how to know.

Mary Norman