

Tibhirine, Algeria, 1994

Vickie Cimprich

A silence gapes each nightfall
in our prayer. Early during Compline,
when community looks downwards
to its hands or at the floor,

various nails
of the day's mistaken thoughts
or deeds, our own or of those
who plan us harm,

bind our minds
for a brief time
to a self-shaped cross.

When I look up, each face
— Christian's, Luc's, Célestin's, Amédée's —
or any brother's, turns into a mirror,
then, absolved, a mirab:

recess of the fear,
where God is hiding,

plain as day.

La Fête de l'Ascension

Vickie Cimprich

Did he tell John
the day before? His mother?
Surely friends at Bethany.

Maybe overcast, like today.
Disciples walking around
purposively, like good monks,
before they gathered for the last time
on Olivet.

The highest branches
of the tallest trees wave
a little: à dieu!

Black stork chicks, high
up in protected nests
in the 500-year-old Forêt de Cîteaux,
crane their necks
to see the bottoms of his feet.

Au revoir! À bientôt!

The Cell of the Oak, c. 468 A.D.

Vickie Cimprich

Her cook Flora let on
that Brigid was baseborn.

Their River Liffey monastery
was called kill-dare, cell of the oak.

In it, her weaving would be something practical
like shrouds. Years before he died,
she made Patrick his. Had always thought
this friend of her heart and mind
would be the first to go, a shepherd
driven by his cares for the unruly
Celtic ewes and rams.

Flora bragged that Brigid had
changed water into ale for seventeen
churches' ten-day Easter feasts.

How the cook or anyone
remembered anything at all
after that is the miracle.

Vickie Cimprich lives in Kentucky. Her poetry collection *Pretty Mother's Home - A Shakeress Daybook* (Broadstone Books, 2007) was researched at the Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, KY with the support of grants from the KY Foundation for Women. Her work has appeared in *Bigger Than They Appear: Anthology of Very Short Poems* (Accents Press, 2011), *Dappled Things*, *The Journal of the Association of Franciscan Colleges and Universities*, *The Journal of Kentucky Studies*, *The Merton Journal*, *Plainsongs*, and *Poetry As Prayer: Appalachian Women Speak* (Wind Publications, 2004).