

TWO POEMS BY MARY BALAZS

Atavism

Torn ligaments, purpling cuts, shattered bones  
without embarrassment we own,  
atavistic showmen who heartily display such harm  
as once lions, enemy warriors caused.

My twisted ankles, swollen knees were wrenched askew  
by no sabre tooth, hurled stone.  
Darkened stairs, a headlong fall brought me,  
wrapped in bandages, hobbling to work.

Eagerly my curious fellows eye the brandished bruise.  
As accolades, mankind reveres displays  
of physical wounds, the surgically inserted pin.  
Peevish hates, fawning fears are hid,

though these too linger after painful battles,  
despite concealment, intensify.  
In the soul's contusions we take no pride  
as in damaged limbs. Visibly cut,

we prove ourselves survivors,  
warriors who marched to combat and returned.  
We were opposed.  
Though injured, we have won.

## Son, Returning from School

Twelve, you thrust school books and knapsacks to the floor.  
Today's tests, taken, have been passed.  
A job and school concert wait,  
tomorrow's examinations to study for.

You head for your room.  
In its corner tank, your goldfish pair lies dead,  
snagged tails trailing from a betta's jaws.  
Behind raised blinds, bright sunlight is a whetted blade.

Once you moved in easy harmony with childhood's  
merry-go-round, its loud organ music,  
ponies pumping smoothly up and down,  
a Roman chariot's melodic glide.

Today, wind-lashed, the trees' cradles rock.  
Lips tight, you turn from comforts I spoon.  
You are stuffed with the world's fare:  
a crude cart's uneasy ride, a betta's bite.