

The Time Traveler Comes to Cana

M. Shayne Bell

So I went to Cana and spent Sabbath
in that house, their guest, before the wedding.
The daughter spoke with joy of her marriage;
the mother sat impatient—Sabbath's end
the time for her to cook what food they had;
the father counted too few flasks of wine
again and again, too few for his guests.
I would have given money; I had it,
Roman drachmas hidden in bags of wrapped
cups they thought I traded in Galilee.
"Take these cups," I told them. "Serve the wine you
have in them." And they marvelled at the cups'
craftsmanship, and I never explained they
were mass-produced in Mexico. Not one
cup survived to become a new relic:
I traced all twelve cups to the dumping grounds
outside Cana, all broken in three years,
fragments thrown out as if they meant nothing.

So the wedding day came slowly for us.
Then He came, and His mother. She and He
sat at a table like all the others.
I thought: He *did* miracles. I'd proven that
when I'd wandered through Judea two years
after His undoubted crucifixion,
hearing secondhand accounts of His work:
so many thousands had seen Him, had heard
His words. Some few had seen Him heal lepers
or the blind. I talked to a once blind girl
who wept to tell me how He spit on dirt
to make mud with which He anointed her
eyes; she wiped it off and saw His face first.
I could never find the lepers. Not one,

once cured, ever admitted to that cure,
ever said, "but for Him I'd be unclean."

So we ate and drank that day, at that wedding,
and I thought: He *did* miracles. I thought:
I have come so far to see one. I thought:
Will He know? Will He know how far I've come,
or how quickly after I got permission,
or how many years I tried for permission?
And I thought: would He do it with me here?
Or would He wait till some other wedding
in Cana? I knew the sequence of events,
if I could trust the one evangelist,
but when the wine ran out, I, impatient,
called for more, as if I were drunk, as if
there were more wine, and when the father brought
what he thought would be water and poured it
apologetically in empty cups
I heard the growing murmurs of surprise.
I held my cup a long time, watching Him,
before I tasted what was in the cup.