

# POETRY

## *On Viewing Paintings Of The Annunciation, The "First Mystery"*

The sky is always blue and there is a large window,  
sometimes fluted columns or archways

through which a careful artistic hand has painted  
a 15<sup>th</sup> century Italian village or a tree growing beside the Tiber.

Maybe there's an enclosed garden,  
medieval artists' favored symbol for her sacred virginity.

In some paintings a cat sleeps in the window nook  
or chases its tail across the floor at the solemn moment

when the messenger angel descends, kneels  
in front of this innocent one, offers her a white pointed lily,

reads to her from the holy scroll, declares  
what has been ordained, what cannot be undone.

A white dove hovers above her. Its beak points at her heart,  
ready to pierce the white gown, the blue robe,

bring the holy act to completion, make her eyes widen.  
Those pale hands (it doesn't matter if they are painted

open to receive, or clenched in refusal),  
those hands come to life as she raises them

to cover the moans that will inevitably escape  
her delicate pink lips.

**Mary Katherine Wainwright**