

# The New Criterion

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## Dependent nature

by Timothy Steele

The worker hovers where the jade plant blooms,  
Then settles on a blossom to her taste;  
Her furred and black-and-yellow form assumes  
A clinging curve by bending from the waist.

So, too, the sweetpeas, climbing on their net,  
Cast wire-wrapping tendrils as they flower,  
Nor need they shield themselves from a regret  
Of the dependent nature of their power.

They're spared the shrewd self-mockery of the sage  
Attuned to limits and disparity.  
They're spared the sad mirth serving those who gauge

The gap between the longed-for and the real,  
Who grasp provisional joy, who must not be  
Desolate, however desolate they feel.

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**Timothy Steele's** latest book is *All the Fun's in How You Say a Thing* (Ohio University Press).

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