

# The New Criterion

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## Anecdote of the sugar bowl

by Timothy Steele

Stern, hands on hips, the sugar bowl  
Rebuked our lack of self-control  
As we nine children kicked to cable  
Intelligence beneath the table,  
Bruising one another's shins  
With these non-verbal bulletins.

As if a kind of referee,  
Like Stevens' jar in Tennessee,  
While coalitions came and went,  
It was a stable referent  
And from the chaos drew a meal  
And brought our wilderness to heel.

I can't remember, looking back,  
What led to this or that attack,  
To blows I did or didn't strike.  
I just recall it—matronlike  
And arms akimbo, fixing me  
With its fierce objectivity.

—*Timothy Steele*

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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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