

# The New Criterion

Poems June 2005

## Cellar

by Eric Ormsby

This is where we keep them: toy trucks  
with busted wheels, the broken stuff  
we can't get rid of, our old books,  
the splintered chair, the fractured tabouret.

There's something stagey in our garbage.  
The furniture is theatrical and grim.  
Our repudiated gestures still live there,  
six feet under the kitchen. They wear  
the vague insulted look of slighted relatives,  
belonging, but pushed aside.

The dark place gives  
reluctant nobility to these disowned things.  
I picture other broken objects down here,  
not always on view: behind the dead palm,  
a litter of stillborn phrases, the snapped  
bunches of words, the shivered promises,  
those dusty entreaties that still snatch the throat

insistent as panhandlers or evangelists,  
those shrill solicitors at Christmastime  
whose poor clothes shine in snowy light.

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**Eric Ormsby's** latest book of poems is *Daybreak at the Straits* (Zoo Press).

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**Eric Ormsby** is the author of *The Baboons of Hada*, a selection of his poems (Carcenet).

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