

JUDITH BAUMEL

On The Military Tract of Simeon DeWitt

In a patent of witch hazel, pennywort, gooseberry,
nettles, bird's foot trefoil, and so on and so forth,
the groundhog pours himself along,
the rabbit hops, the robin hops,
and cocks his head and picks and picks and picks.
The worm wiggles in the beak.
Fat robin, fat bloody worm.

The chain bearer's straightforward
choices marked attentiveness
to opportunity, sixty years of useful
appointments, intermarriage,
survival governor to governor.
After the revolutionary war his service
brought the solider-volunteer six hundred
acres and a spot in a pageant: Hannibal
on top, Ulysses between Hector and Dryden.
Dryden between Ulysses and Virgil, Milton between Ovid
and Locke. The *States Hundred* made for gospel and literature.

*Mushroom towns: my bones turn sore at the bare
recollection of joltings and other nameless vulgar annoyances.*

*More practiced in mensuration than in baptism,
the geographer's historiomastices. Pretension*

*of name costs nothing and is found
everywhere among dilettanti in nomenclature.*

If my son confuses property with prosperity,
duty with diligence, I repeat the legend that Cincinnatus
returned to the farm, to metes and bounds, survey and trap,
impoverished back behind the plow.