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The italics of life

by Steven McGregor

A review of *My Grandmother's Glass Eye: A Look at Poetry* by Craig Raine

BOOKS IN THIS ARTICLE



Craig Raine

My Grandmother's Glass Eye: A Look at Poetry

ATLANTIC BOOKS, 0 pages,

Words mean things, sir," one of my old First Sergeants liked to say. This was his plea for carefully considered speech; he believed that words had great power and that a man was responsible for what he said. Craig Raine, in his new book on poetry, *My Grandmother's Glass Eye*, makes the same case. "The first task we require of poetry," he writes, "is to mean something" (his italics).

Here one is reminded of Matthew Arnold's dictum that poetry should be concerned with "high seriousness" (we know Raine is a fan—a quotation of Arnold's appears on the last page of every issue of Raine's magazine, *Areté*). One also thinks of Saint Paul's observation that "when I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned...

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Steven McGregor is a veteran of the Iraq War. His most recent book is *The Silver Waterfall: How America Won the War in the Pacific at Midway*.

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