Fall 1999

The Novel in Three Chapters

Mary Jo Bang
THE CRACKED JAR CALLED CAN IT BE TAUGHT?

After ten years of seeking, light was thrown
over a side of the boat and the whole wasn’t what we expected:
was not white, had no eyes but behemoth teeth—

Quelles dentes, Granny. Be advised: A boulder is gravel
to glacier and snow is where you left it in the shade of seeing
a summer’s residence.

The building was like a cake, wedding of wished and fulfillment.
Two dreams: in one, a mouse hands back a wolf-totem from Warsaw,
saying: This is your Grandmother’s husband,

a painter of small crucifixions, influenced by Gris
and perhaps by Braque; the other was a hand wiping a smudge
from a face. Can it be felt? This caring.

From a semblance of sun, a clown drops his face painted yellow
to match fire when it flares, the sound of heat in a flue.
Sit in the chair covered with please and let me touch you.

O boat house of ester ore, what can you teach us of keeping?
It cannot be taught.