

My poem, "Patmos of Revelations" was written nearly fifteen years ago. With a small group of friends, I made the journey to the island, in part, as a pilgrimage. We also hoped to see Robert Lax, the American poet and friend of Thomas Merton, who settled there many years before. As we knocked on the door of Lax's building, hoping that he might be willing to let us in, a neighbor leaning out of a window told us that he had left Patmos a few months earlier. Caring relatives had convinced the ailing poet that it was time to return to the U.S., which, in some way, he too, recognized. He died in Olean, NY, in September 2000. The simplicity he sought, the passages he made from Judaism to Catholicism, from Hollywood to *Time* magazine, to the free spirited juggler and the spiritual wanderer fed a process of lightness that structured his poetry. Although we were disappointed not to have what would have been a very special conversation, there was something satisfying about the fact that as peaceful as his thirty-five years in Patmos had been, his enlightenment allowed him to travel full circle. Love was that circle and thus he could accept dying in the place where he had begun.

The visual aspect of Lax's work often resembles the gaunt, lean sculptures made by Alberto Giacometti. His poems reveal irony, humor, a transparent winnowing of content and form in order to remove the egotistical crusts surrounding moments and realities he wished to create. His work, in its minimalism, proposes a beautiful freedom. His poetry, perhaps never fully recognized because of its apparent simplicity and humble originality, dances on, wavelike, very much alive.

His life and work came to mind when I sat down to write two words about my poem. In the spirit of Lax, I shall emit a smile of gratitude. My poem, like the waves hitting the island, went out and then returned rejected, ever since it was written. Yet I knew it was a real poem and one I cared about. I wrote it, it existed, and now in the paper pages of this journal, like a bottle washed up on shore, an editor has found its message.