



1999

Introductory

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Recommended Citation

Zweig, Martha. "Introductory." *The Iowa Review* 29.2 (1999): 159-159. Web.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.5155>

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Martha Zweig

INTRODUCTORY

For tonight we've invited a live
potato to speak. Please welcome the potato.
Elsie, over there, assisting, who also
has spread herself wide for somebody's butter
& fork & says she has not liked it,
will screen your written questions for redundancy,
relevance, & courtesy. Pass them on in after.

Famine, then! —a staple poor people
cultivate less worldwide, we hope, than formerly,
may remind many in this
audience of the potato. The history
of vegetables, like that of animals & minerals,
rides multiple shabby waves into our own,
boggling upon prosperity. How does our uniquely

qualified authority elaborate the point? Intent
curiosity attends potatoes' every appearance:
we've fretted ourselves over what underground
they prepare. Can we take a particular potato,
becomingly scrubbed, as you see,
reliably to represent the basic comestibles
in variety, rice, say; manioc, the kernels, countless beans?

But enough! —programs shuffling! Undeservedly
& twice favored this evening, we acknowledge it's
taken your committee quite some doing.
Eyes gouged out, even boiled in oil, potatoes
rarely confess & never give names, except,
this once, suggested Elsie's, who, the very moment
we approached her, volunteered.