

Dennis Daly -- Five Poems

Special Feature



Publius Claudius

How appropriate a eulogy:
The curule chair broken, the senate house
Burnt to the ground—Cicero preparing
To defend the monstrosity, Milo.
Catcalls collide! While I lived the great Caesar
Saw me tamper with his wife and did
Nothing. The citizens of Rome excused
Sacrilege at the Good Goddess ritual
(I was smuggled in dressed as a woman).
I started rumors about their wives,
Most of which were well founded; and about
Myself, too many of which were untrue.
I joined cabals bent on the state's destruction,
Then betrayed them, asking for my life.
They gave it to me. Only Milo
The hooligan, Milo, my double
Dared ambush me on the Appian Way.

Mountain Man

Day rests rebellion in whiskey-numb whirl,
The certitude of snow, a curve of drift;
In him no steadiness, a constant shift
Confronts nag's nonesuch, the whisper, the churl.

Below the mountain tops, above the sky
He ranges the world, sets his steel contraptions
Where creeks conjoin to blossom sand barrens,
Where creatures cringe the wolf-fang, the hawk-eye.

Mounds of pelts payroll him for future kills,

Knead down the rage of loss, the seared muscle.
Tomahawk ready, his secrets unrevealed,

Here he stands over pressed and twisted wills,
Shadow-smothered by withered oracle,
Drawn to plateau of flames, combusting field.

Two Jars

after Avianus

A wild current rushed
Us off a riverbank, two jars
Caught in a season's tumult.
We bobbed and twirled in a fall back,
Catch-up harmony.

Different craftsmen created us: you
Of fused bronze with a brilliance
Drawn from the sun, and I
Of molded clay, thinly glazed,
Brittle.

You promise distance; your
Metallic exterior always a threat
To me. We circle in a silent dance.
A dance until tears come. Or
A closing in for the kill.

A Dead Ringer

A dead ringer for Bill Hickok, he sat,
His back to the door, drew three cards, laughed.
Everyone sipped their beers, waiting.
I hazarded a word in consolation,
But I doubt if he heard me. He had known
All along: the suspicion, the abeyance
Of anger, the set up. Even my part:
To get him there. And why should friendship
Interfere? Suddenly, footsteps on the porch.
We stood up, moved away from the table
Determined to see this through. Without
Expression he considered a bluff, saw
It wouldn't work, discarded it. He sat
There forsaken, resolute. God! I wanted
To live like that; to take his place.

Noah Prophesizes

We breathe between the beats
Of syllable packets, pairs
Glowing life, tomorrow's feats
Enciphered in dancing bears
While doleful, sorry trumpets
Announce the elephant
Birth. Embedded in edits
The raven caws, the poignant
Coo of pliant dove. We list
The melody of it all
Through turmoil, towering crest
Heights crashing down, a sea squall
Like none before, a divine
Metaphor spins in eddy,
Sucks into its clandestine
Maw of darkness and belly
Libertine flesh and flotsam.
Justice holds the pitch in place,
Firms the cypress, keeps it plumb.
God, at home in hyperspace,
Nods away ire and sea-wrath,
Bets on bar-coded futures
With centuries of bloodbath
Worked in. The seed of cultures,
Caught in a word-fabric, begets
Each moment of symmetry.
We endure earth-ending threats
In lined artifice ably.
Unsealing this grounded ark
On Ararat, the creepers
Will exhale, even aardvarks
Exit here. The timekeepers
Of flesh read each formal verse,
Listen to the raw light years
Pass by in general commerce.
Concludes thus mankind, my dears.

Dennis Daly lives in Salem, Massachusetts. Daly graduated from Boston College and has an MA in English Literature from Northeastern University. He published two earlier books of poetry: *Custom House* (Ibbetson Street Press) and *Night Walking with Nathaniel*

(Dos Madres). His translation of Sophocles' *Ajax* (Wilderness House Press) was recently performed in Saratoga Springs, New York under the sponsorship of the classics and drama departments of Skidmore College. Among other jobs Daly has worked as a dockworker, Union Leader of a 9000 member industrial local, newspaper columnist, city department head, and community corrections director. His new book of poetry, *Sentinel*, was just released by Red Dashboard Publishing. Visit his blog at dennisfdaly.blogspot.com.