

## **Dennis Daly – Three Poems**

### **Possessions: Salem 1914**

When the chemicals ignited,  
The ones used for patent leather,  
Flames scorched up the elevator  
To the factory floor. Celluloid

Bags burned and bales of cheap sheep skins  
Torch and curled to ash in minutes.  
Out of the hollow a fire storm  
Took Carr Brothers, then Dane Machine;

Workers jumped out opened windows.  
Canal Street caught flaring embers.  
The mansions of Lafayette Street  
Were swept away. Dynamiting

Saved Essex Street. Two houses blown  
Apart. Pickering's coal smoldered  
As the state's militia marched in.  
"Peabody Street's going," someone

Shouted. John Long, who lived there, dropped  
His hose and ran home, found his wife  
Dazed, carried her out in his arms  
Through fiery fist of door frame.

Hours later the Boston Post  
Noted the Longs on the common  
Content in two chairs, a table  
And lamp near, with their tin bath tub.

### **Elizabeth Morse of Newbury**

My tongue snick-snarled with prayer,  
Accusers everywhere. O dear  
Dear Lord send pity spraddling  
An angel's back

To bludgeon this prison wall,  
To free your saint, unjustly  
Pinned by neighbor's complaints,  
Adjure them quit.

(Backward, befooled people  
To keep talisman tacked  
Over doors—what ghouls  
They feared!

But I stole these charms  
And made them face what I  
Faced, bespringed  
With mud—

A demon's trick: I ducked  
Piplins bursting into dust  
Head-high; I felt the sting  
Of chats on thigh

And back; by spoons and forks  
My grandchild tormented  
Almost to his death; and,  
Moreover, we witnessed

In every room the dance  
Of furniture). Free me Lord,  
Judge me innocent; for I,  
An interloping witch,

Sentenced by unwitting worms  
To hang, have faced, superstition-  
Less, this fantastic world, fought  
Against it, and loved it.

### **Nanepashemet's Fortress**

New moon, you give  
A people no light, they  
Flee before ravage,  
Before the lust

Of Tarratine.  
A refugee among  
Your own kind, you  
Tread the deep swamp

Of snake and blood,  
Elude your killers,  
Seek the penultimate  
Pleasures of time.

Stockade of pine,  
A moat five feet deep,  
The draw bridge; your fortress  
Impregnable

As a cumulus  
Cloud. Even the plague  
Decimating your lands  
Could not get through.

But you, gulfed in  
his gloom-world knew the end,  
The silent moccasins,  
The birch shadows

Confirmed your dream-fears:  
Soon, beneath your feet,  
A scree of rubble,  
A red-stained blankness.

Note: Nanepashemet, killed by  
the Tarratine warriors in 1619,  
was Great Sachem of the Massachusetts Federation.

**Dennis Daly** lives in Salem, Massachusetts. He has been published in numerous poetry journals and magazines and recently nominated for a Pushcart prize. Ibbetson Street Press published *The Custom House*, his first full length book of poetry in June, 2012. His second book, a verse translation of Sophocles' *Ajax*, was published by Wilderness House Press in August, 2012. Daly's third book is set in Salem and is currently seeking a publisher.