

## **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](http://dennisfdaly.blogspot.com).