

NOTRE DAME REVIEW

The First Ten Years

N o t r e D a m e **r e v i e w**

The First Ten Years

Edited with an Introduction by

John Matthias

and

William O'Rourke



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POETRY



Chris Agee

DARK HAY

June grasses had burgeoned to monumental hay: slabs and beds
Printed in eights by the baler's sledge following its green coil
Of concentric windows like stone spirals at New Grange or Radmilja

To a last comma near the midpoint of the O
Where those eight dolmens stand at Giant's Ring. Then stacked
Into stooks "like lambdas" they darkened

To outlines of Mayan temples gathering shadow
In the late light breaking
Low from floes and plateaux, dark quadrilaterals

On the lit immaculate nap of shaven stubble
That reminded me that art is dark
For all its shining genesis. Seeing in stone

The image of hay, I saw too the vision polarized to God's glyph
Vanishing midpoint into nothing
(Swan-necked, double-helix, bull's eyes) on stelae swimming

In grass at the limestone necropolis on the road to Stolac
That passes the dumps of its razed mosques. Then, pausing to smoke,
Two men stood waiting to upend the last bales of an evening's work.

Sandra Alcosser

THE BLUE VEIN

To be human is of the earth, crumbling
~
Is humus. Is humility. Bleeding
~
We fall down. A dog licks our blood. Sometimes
~
We eat songbirds because we are hungry
~
A poet might refuse to speak after
~
Shelling. Another sings until they starve
~
Him, not because he plots against the state
~
Because he makes his own song. For the way
~
She loved his music, and the way he loved
~
The blue vein that rivered from her eyebrow
~
To her brain, the widower on the pier
~
Lifts his cello. Wrist becomes lips, tongue
~
Casals played Bach each morning to sanctify
~
The house, sanctify the mind. We are all
~
Ephemerals. Our blood so close to the
~
Blood of a tree. The cello too is pine
~
A body with ribs, belly. Below the
~

Winter bud each genus grows its own face

~

Vedran Smailovic walks Sarajevo

~

With a cello. He wears a tuxedo

~

Skeleton of the body is the music's

~

Shape. *I don't think about bombs, about*

~

Snipers. We have to remind ourselves we

~

Are human. *I go to the ruined place.*

Dick Allen

E-MAIL TO THE YEAR 2999

The last three digits of your year turned upside down
as if some car had flipped, the odometer
impaled on a cop's flashlight beam,
are the Devil's own numbers. But you know this,
just as we did a thousand years ago,
on the edge of the Great Eve. Like you,
we dangled our feet in centuries to come,
cast fishing lines a far ways into the mist,
wiggled our toes. *Revolution. Revolution.* There's always
some revolution—ours the computer one,
which made you what you are: machine-human, human-machine,
your revolution God knows what. Here,
leaves fall like airplanes, blue cake frosting
echoes our sky;
we live on pills and wild rice,
reciting our words:
accelerate, megahertz, microwave,
cellular, morph, RAM, gigabit, glitch,
save us, save us. We drown in choices,
we revel in sorrows. The last thousand years
have spiraled into a single computer chip
as the Internet widens. . . . If you wish to understand us,
imagine a lightning strike,
a car rolling over and over in the rain,
and the Devil among us,
nothing but a cursor on his screen,
yet typing away, because our world still matters.

Michael Anania

TURNINGS

for Enzo Agostino (1937–2003)
“e ca trovamu ‘a luci d’a’ memoria”

I.

Evening is liquid here,
shadows welling into each shape,
each valley, cut and crevice,

the sky, still bright, its lapis
sun-streaked, the sea—both seas—
darkening past Homer. “So soon

as the spirit has left the light,”
rectangular slips of gold,
embossed, their Greek, somewhat

Italic, found at Thurii
and Piercastello-Laquari,
suspended now behind glass

in the castello at Vibo Valentia,
charms hammered, as though of fire
and light, the sun offered back

to the dark flood, “so soon . . .
on the right side of *Ennoia*,”
a spring, in thought, that is,

lifting itself up out of
memory. Though the reading
is somewhat doubtful, folds

in the gold leaf obliterating
letters, parts of letters, words,
the sense is clear, prayer

and safe passage, "pure," it says,
"from pure to Purity, I come,"
gold out of earth and fire, speech,

spirit in light returning,
suppliant in her "blessed
company," funeral offerings,

of course, but folded and carried
by Greeks at the Calabrian edge of Greece,
the half-day journey from sea-froth

to sea-froth, following one river
upstream, the other down,
from Temesa and Hipponium

to Schilletion and Petelia,
merchants and colonists, death
touched each evening, rising

sounds and stirrings, the Sila's
mountains, caves and streams
—*Aquavona, Riventinu*—

rough passages that saddle
deep into shadow, chestnut
burs murmuring over leaf-mold;

in Calabria, *stasira, stanotti*,
Eleusis—"the enfolding
darkness"—is still underfoot.

ll.

Or "beautiful, this evening's
evening," the sea running white
from Punto Stilo south past Locri,

a sparrow hawk wheeling above
pebblestone, refuge, pinfeathers
catch the mountain light, the west still

streaming eastward, out of reach.

“I am,” the gold leaf says, “like you,
a child of earth and heaven.”

Upland, from the tourist littered beach,
Gioiosa—*Gejusa*—the sun plays
its last, small strains, like mandolin

music, starlight and sound enshadowed
there, your spirit drowsing, cradled
at its home, in speech and light.

III.

A spindle-full of flax, its light,
votive, drawn out and spun,
bent fingers lifting bright strands,

like filaments from the still air,
again and again, the olive wood
bobbin bobbing above her feet.

Her song is whispers, names circling
names, each one said into her hands,
the thread, like a rosary

without pause or end, “Enzo,”
and each other Enzo, Angelo,
Michele, Dominic, Bruno,

Raffaele, so many passing
from light into darkness and curled
into the black folds of her skirt.

Jan Lee Ande

THE GHOST OF A FLEA

(Tempera on Mahogany with Gold Leaf, c. 1819)

The painting turned dull, cracked and darkened
over time, though a gold comet drags its blue tail.
Here and there—the stars are shimmering.

His vision, a speckled Flea, stunned William Blake.
Its massive body strides along on muscled legs.
The head (eyes bulging) sits on a knobby spine.

Eager tongue fluttering, the spirit divulges:
souls of bloodthirsty men inhabit these insects
—locked inside rigid bodies of bugs.

Robert Hooke engraved the form, one hundred
and fifty years before. Yet his flea was any flea
(a tiny leaping pest with long legs and no wings).

Blake's insect, a gothic fiend of a Flea. A ghoul.
Should the Flea swell to the size of a horse—
nearly all the people of London would perish.

Its tapered fingers hold the bowl of blood.
The Flea tilts forward, its long tongue lapping.
Imagine as William Blake tells John Varley

to reach him his things and step to one side!—
the astrologer in a daze. The grotesque figure
of a Flea, even now—warning this starry region.

Robert Archambeau

VICTORY OVER THE SUN

Here come the Futurists.
One wears a spoon in his buttonhole.

One signs an unknown hieroglyph.
One sings vowels, another consonants.

Here come the Futurists. It is 1913.
Kruchenykh, Matiushin, Goncharova,

Burliuk who leads his giant brother,
“I—Burliuk” on both their brows.

Here come the Futurists. Come, Kazimir Malevich,
saying “let the familiar recede,

let all by which we’ve lived
be lost to sight.”

They come. Let all by which they’ve lived
be lost to sight—

let Moscow, drunk, serf-shouldered,
(a stunted mongrel, a cold and coal-blackened thief)

be lost. The massing of troops,
the Czar who calls a madman to heal his bleeding son,

the hunger,
the boy who beats his brother in a tailor’s grimy shop—

let these recede, be lost to sight.
Here come the Futurists. It is 1913.

A flash, a clash of metal, projectors flash again:
They have begun.

They sing of victory over all we know,
a roar against the daily sun.

Then it is 1914, 1940, it is Moscow, Leningrad,
the Gulag, Buchenwald, it is the exile's empty room,

a daughter, grieving.

Here come the Futurists, long gone into the dark

with their victory over the sun.

Renée Ashley

SOME OTHER WOMAN SPEAKS TO ELPENOR AFTER HIS FALL FROM CIRCE'S ROOF

Youngest, least done with your days, you feel
stone-heavy past the windows of those rungs,
such a slender ladder as your life—all

that falling and the knot of your neck undone.
In the swinish yard, the remnants of long drink
wasted and the body of a boy who had a taste

for the stars; the men were off again, their own
descent joyless before them. The pale dust settled
and you, too, were gone. And all because some woman

loved a man! I say I dream you again, raise you up,
say that gravity with its perfect eyesight does not
see you, that your own weight is nothing, that you

do not struggle like a boy falling, but remain
passive in the air with your stars. No contrivance
is beyond love. You must listen: we can make

a comely magic now—in this dream you are falling
but timeless. Trust me: do not look down, not once.
Don't think of gods or of fate with its nasty

smile; don't think of men: they leave you. Don't imagine
the meaningless heft of your body dropping like rain
or the wide, insatiable hips of the earth rising to meet you.