
Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Dan Curley: Four Poems

Dan Curley · Wednesday, May 6th, 2020

TANGENTIAL

I go off on tangents, my wife says,
But I prefer to call them lateral
Thinking in action. How else would

I have remembered the pork chops
Were left in the car if not for our
Starveling child making BLTs

For lunch? Sure, there's something
To the family motto — When a task
Is once begun / Never leave it 'til

It's done — but now here's the cat
Tossing me come-hither looks,
Rubbing her cheek and ear against

The door frame. How essential
To run fingers through the fur, over
The arching back and up the victory

Column of the tail! My wife says
I've been on tangents ever since
I came out of the womb. I say

Being born was the tangent. I've
Made a life trying to get back
To what I was doing before that.

*

ZANZARA

The mosquitoes of Rome find me
Delicious, as I find Roman cuisine.

I woke and saw the Big Dipper

On my forehead and cheeks, handle
Bent and a hole in the kettle.
I tossed my room hunting that

Mammone, bloated and punch drunk
On authentic American blood:
No trace but the grim constel-

Lation spanning my face. I told
A student I'd been brawling in
Bukowski's Bar. He didn't believe me

Even after I socked him on the arm.

*

THE ART HISTORIAN'S REVENGE

I ought to become a talk-show host.
I think I'd be good. It took only five
Minutes for the art historian in the

Seat next to mine to spill her guts.
She said the last time she'd been
To the Vatican, her husband took

Her by the hand on a bench in the
Cortile della Pigna and proposed
Divorce — this after a day of her

Playing tour guide and leading him
From beautiful thing to beautiful
Thing, and finally to Beauty itself,

Only to exit the tacky gift shop
Of Truth. Soon she'd revenge herself
Twice over: on the papacy with a

Prestigious grant, and on her ex
With a fiancé, due to arrive three
Weeks from now. I took her card.

I had mine printed years ago, but
Forgot them as usual. I never expect
To meet anybody, I said.

*

ELEGY #56

Of the things we still do together in bed
I don't sing. Let the muse close her legs

And recall for me the songs we sang
As newlyweds long ago — “Breaking Up

Is Hard...” (kamma kamma) and “When Will I
Be Loved?” — working together side by side

Fumbling our way between unison and
Harmony, the end of solos and the start of

Sweet polyphony. There's no sharp line
Dividing when we used to sing in bed and

When we stopped, no *terminus post quem*
Like 9/11 and waking up next day

To a changed world. I think it took years.
The singing grew ever sparser until it

Was a thing living only in past tenses.
Perhaps it's time to revisit the past,

A matter of lying down, caressing her
Shoulder, softly, bravely striking up

An old tune in the hope of reclaiming
The urgent, innocent why of it all.

(Author photo by Kaitlin Curley Anders)

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