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# 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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