

Wilderness House Literary Review 21/3

Daniel A. Rabuzzi

Flesh

"According to a Sardinian proverb / the Devil doesn't care about bones / perhaps because from skeletons emanates a pervasive sense of peace, / ... "
– Antonella Anedda, "Anatomia," in her *Historiae* (Turin: Einaudi, 2018), translated from the Italian by Daniel A. Rabuzzi.

All those unsullied bones,
calmly tracing out our lives
unseen,
swathed in circuits and coils of troublesome flesh.

Righteous bones, predicates to salvation it seems,
if only they could be free from

flesh?

The body rebels, loses its wings,
gains a foothold in the fall,
accepts the flesh,
what choice does it have?

Osseous peace can wait, thank you,
I prefer the flex of meat, the sweat of us, the taste of blood
when I bite my lip.

Prayer mounts matchless quick through muscle,
and skeletons can't sing.

My heart is flesh in flesh, beating
beating, beat-through, bone-throb, blood-string.

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Tapinage

On the far side of the hills,
Sanguinary,
Flame tigers mutter and growl,
Loudly—
 (You can hear them through the soles of your feet)—
Louder.

Worse though when you hear nothing:
Have the tigers retreated?
Or have they slipped through the passes?

Subtle damps in the air currents,
A nod of the ferns without wind.

They wait in the viaducts, the reed-pans and gullies,
With mitochondrial patience and RNA stealth.

The last thing you see are their
 Ruddy smoke-filled glass bodies,

Trailing
 Sparks
 From
 Their
 Tails.

Fire-snakes wait, balled in your ventricle,
Horse-veins, sly arrows,
The cunning of Mulciber
On centipede-feet.

They too hear the tiger calls:
They swim up blood rivers,
Slide out of your ears,

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Cling as a collar,
Wrap as a turban,
Flaming purple,
 Violet
 As
 Deep
 As
 It

Gets.

Pig Grows Up

Pig's teeth
in a jar,
floating,
perfectly still
at noon,
tick-tunkling when
the train goes by,
which means dusk.

Comes midnight,
tusk-light,
Circe's hour,
teeth unjawed
unjarred
wander freely,
insert and twist
the body whole,
stand it up
and roam with bristles
waterstained,
bloody fleck and tippled

harbinger of his own desire
seeking land upon which to
find his host

until the dawn,
when back goes Pig
into dissolution,
teeth again islands
in a watery main.

Eve in the World

Where Adam named, Eve listened:
to the hopes of the green-jawed Earth entire,
to the dreams of the mustard seed,
and the wishes of the lowliest sparrow.

Where he tried with clumsy effect
to edit lakes and rivers,

she drew song from leaves,
quivered love in reeds and feathers.

Where he sought to overwrite,
to mark the tidal edge of continents,

she shaped with song
the planes of love that surged from acorns
oaks.

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Building a Cathedral Underground

*"Night by night
I hear his lifted praise,
Like a broken whinnying
Before the Lord's shut gate."
--- Lola Ridge, "The Ghetto" (1918).*

Not much but it's something,
this call, with eyes that
scan an ancient text,
gaze rappelling down the sheer front of it,
bouncing, seeking foothold, handhold,
someplace to breathe.

Sidewalk not big enough for all the votives
in their niches, flickering, a little warmth
to ease the hands that turn the pages.

Above too empty, folks sealed in cars
alone with their radio dial.
Below's the thing,
along the subway's gala tracks,
hurry now for evensong
en route to Brooklyn, or The Bronx.

The clack and claver of the train,
memorial cards tucked up among the adverts,
a chance for heaven along side free delivery,
your money back guaranteed, no hidden fees.
Ten-fold prayers in a hundred languages,
not one special, but enough together
to open a divinely shut gate.