

DANIEL TOBIN

Airs For a Needle's Eye

*All the stream that's roaring by
came out of a needle's eye.*

W.B. Yeats

Hermeneutical

Riding out with the ship at dawn you saw
Yourself come back from everything that was
Going to be. Everything that was, was
Present then, but would not be what you saw.

Emmaus

Footsteps on the road.
Whispered light.

On the other side
the risen
walk beside you.

Eschatological

Hang
in with

me
I am

still
coming.

Parable

I believe, the blind man spoke,
and Jesus rubbed

earth mixed with spittle
into his eyes: a miracle—

He was blind again,
this time with light.

Omen

He woke in the last
evening light

to find a sparrow
dangling dead

from the feeder,
its feet still

gripping the perch
and alongside

another, its beak
a shuttle
going
at the seed.

The Great Day

Eyes seared by light,
I grope toward the switch that
flicks off the sun.

Lines to be Shuffled into a Ghazal

Words troop in black ink, file after file, each field
wound into the spine, their landscape snow or bone.

The Prophet's Vacation

After forty days
and forty nights the desert
feels like paradise.

Trace

He would breathe perfume
from the word rose,

its petals fallen, so many
eyelids and fine dust.

Shibboleth

Our fingers share skin's hieroglyphic,
sussurant Braille, cryptography of touch.
With one word two caves open on shores
where breaths heave spellbound in an epic gloss.

Password, furtive code, tesserae—: Who needs
a lexicon to obscure the tongue's seal,
fluent as we are in body's lush ciphers.

Song

The cedar beams have fallen.
No myrrh. No lily. No rose.
Only your eyes can warm me,
Dark pools blooming in snow.

Beginning and End

Night. A faucet drips.
I curl closer to myself
like anyone's child.

Daniel

Where is my name
going, emptied

like any wind?

Hearth

Trapped
here inside

the ribcage
small light

chill wind
of it we make

a home—
sweet home.

Coal

Molten host,
ash made word.
Swallow me,
bitter rind
of the world,
follow me
chosen dust.

Sinai

It's been years since
I climbed this

ridge, distant
glow, the urgent

voice calling out—
Here I am, still

tugging at the knot
In my shoe.

Salt

Before desert wind
lifts this woman into sand
let us run our tongues along

her whispering hands,
those eyes that chose her longing,
to taste the unimagined.

Dawn, Reef Point

Light garbles on the tide's redundant tongue.

Archimedean

Morning at its fulcrum,
the mind a poised lever—
again the sun rises
under the horizon.

Major Interval

How many years had he waited
for the window to open in stone,
sky burning its blue in granite
in the place where a hawk had flown?

Now wind blows light on his forehead.
The moon is a still pond at night
from which the loon's departed.

The Egg Cup

The shape it makes in air
light playing off the lip
holds the morning
in its bowl—
little urn
little
chalice
adorned
with a spray
of cornflowers.

At Wind Point

Chill breeze off the lake:
I hold in my hand
a monarch's wing,
silk-soft, color of rust,
color of a tiger's pelt.

Spiritus

Window up.
Window down.

Wind....

Compass

Ruffle the pages
As if casting lots,

The sound of water
On a distant shore—

Anywhere whispers
In medias res.

Again, Basho's Frog

plops into his old
pond, still mirror, its ripples
untranslatable....

Daniel Tobin is the author of three books of poems, *Where the World is Made*, *Double Life*, and *The Narrows*, as well as the critical study *Passage to the Center: Imagination and the Sacred in the Poetry of Seamus Heaney*. Among his awards are "The Discovery/The Nation Award," The Robert Penn Warren Award, The Robert Frost Fellowship, the Katherine Bakeless Nason Prize, and a creative writing fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. Widely published in journals, his work also has been anthologized in *The Bread Loaf Anthology of New American Poets*, *The Norton Introduction to Poetry*, and elsewhere. He is Chair of the Department of Writing, Literature, and Publishing at Emerson College.