

Poems by *Daniel Tobin*

Conchiglie

Thrilled, or oblivious, the meal bugs
circulate inside the pasta box,
for them the one true earthly paradise
hardly dreamt of in the provinces.

To have wakened into life
in the ecstasy of conchiglie,
each coin of fluent flour-paste
machine-cast, transfigured
into a seashell's perfect artifice--
edible trove, infinite loaf.

Do they hear as they slide
into the conch's sweet tunnel
the siren's song of an ocean
equal to their insect hearts?

The lid lifts, and out tumbles
the cosmos into a boiling sea.
Dazed survivors scramble
on the folding corners of their world,
while a few flayed swimmers
bob lifelessly in the oil's slick.

And the one who managed to lodge himself
deep in the recess of his dream?
We'll let him stay, swaddled
in sauce, before we eat him,
corpse in a deaf ear,
like any eminence or god.

DANIEL TOBIN

Marduk
(after the Babylonian)

Here is the true adamant and will of the world:
out of my mother's body I made the world.

To cut her in two as though gutting a fish,
that is once recipe for making a world.

From her eyes empty rivers, from her breasts mountains,
from the wound of my birth, the release of the world.

The snows are her siftings, each breeze her last breath
that wanders the roads like the lost of the world.

To save them from loss I raise up my cities,
each one a beacon, a map of the world.

On streets I have left no place for the errant
for in every home I alone light the world.

If the gods want to sleep, I will let them sleep
and make myself god, the lord of this world.

I am the grain, the plough cleaving its furrow.
I am the storm that floods the whole world.

I am the singular, and the dispersal.
I judge all the living and dead of the world.

These words were judged by god's judge and given:
whispers through walls, wind, another world.

Daniel Tobin's books of poems include *Where the World is Made* (co-winner of Katherine Nason Bakeless Poetry Prize, 1999) and *Double Life* (Louisiana State University Press, 2004). His poems have appeared in numerous journals, and have been anthologized in *The Norton Introduction to Poetry* and elsewhere. Among his awards are the Robert Penn Warren Prize, the Robert Frost Fellowship, and a NEA Fellowship in Poetry. He is presently Chair of the Writing, Literature, and Publishing Department at Emerson College in Boston.