

Again with the Light

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Poems

MATTHEW ROBB BROWN

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AGAIN WITH THE LIGHT

Poems

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The italicized quotation appearing in “The Elm and the Dove” comes from an email by Julie Gould and is used by her kind permission.

Dedicated To Kay Elizabeth Brown

my friend

my love

my companion on this journey

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The poems at the end of the book, beginning with “Why Does the Lord,” come from an earlier period. Some are unpublished, and others appeared as follows: “Why Does the Lord?”: in a local church arts publication. “Shore Drive”: *Who’s Who in Poetry in American Colleges and Universities* 1975. “Barks”: *The Bellowing Ark*. “West Sugnet”: *The Poets of Now*. “To Bob Lax”: *Seeds in the Black Earth*. “Mirrors Of Gethsemane”: In several small publications. Later anthologized in *The Country of the Risen King*, Merle Meeter, Ed., Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker House 1978.

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Enough Flashlight¹

Annonciation—Flandres—Milieu du XVI^e siècle (Musée Cluny, Paris)

A single Angel Gabriel, enough flashlight, filling surely not waiting for the sponsor, the painter therefore summoned an army of angels in order to make the most convincing scene!

(GOOGLE TRANSLATION OF THE ORIGINAL FRENCH CAPTION.)

Into the narrow room a ladder, like Jacob's, comes down; Gabriel and his entourage all in light at once appear, to infuse it with a word from God which waits upon Mary's reply. Above the window the Holy Spirit, the dove, also hovers. No action, no overshadow, no salvation, without Mary's Yes.

Blue Mary: her book, her lily, her curtained bed. Room more sumptuous than we perhaps imagine, a place fit for this Sixteenth *Siècle* Mary, who has cast her eyes downward, as if to catch the angel's message not with eyes or ears alone, but with heart. She will consider it there, turn it, view it in every facet, long after she has waved it into life.

Enough flashlight! I don't know what to do with my emptiness. This cloud of dark at midday—I wish you'd show yourself, send Gabriel to bring a word with tongues from the forge, another word—but could I take it if you did?

Quiet, two figures converse in the street beyond her Gothic window—more like tongues of aspen by the Seine, than those of angels.

1. "Enough Flashlight": The original French of the caption, at <http://chambredecouleurs.france-i.com/7152>:

Un seul Ange Gabriel, assez falot, ne comblant sûrement pas l'attente du commanditaire, le peintre a donc convoqué toute une armée d'anges afin de rendre la scène plus convaincante!

This poem also appears at: <https://blackforkreview.com/issue-1> Used by permission.

Making Music²

The reader, chanting the Prokemenon:

“to make music of your Name.”

The many names of the one God circled, like a crest on a mountain
spread among us as light, down through the leaves of the beech.

Let me wash clear as a lake in North Wisconsin,
clear to you as a tree, empty of leaves, waiting for a lift
in the light. Walls and windows cast a blue light;
Mary’s smile is subtle, for even though we killed her son,
he came down and reached and lifted us by the hand,
Adam to one side, Eve to the other.

Why, Father asked, did the Apostle call himself
“worst of sinners”? Answer: In order not to judge others.
For not to accept myself as worst is to make some other
worse than me, even where that other goes unnamed.
To do so is to judge; to judge is disaster. He concluded:
It’s not about me, it’s about giving the others the benefit of the doubt.

I will go to the desert of a quiet mind. To the cactus of mercy
I will take wing, to where the heart speaks. All day I burn,
as the sun pours out molten gold. Evening again sheds blue light,
upon gates, doors, walls, bushes. To make music of your Name.

2. “Prokemenon” is Greek for the verse, taken from the Psalms, which is chanted before a Scripture reading in an Orthodox Christian service.