Partisan Review
Winter 1996

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Poetry and the Classics:

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Monad Noir

Whore at the Car.
One Full Stop at Thirty Eight.
Zukofskified
or Murdered?

Persicos odi, puer, apparatus,
displicent nexae philyra coronae;
mitte sectari, rosa quo locorum
sera moretur.
simplici myrto nihil adlabores
sedulus cura: neque te ministrum
dedecet myrtus neque me sub arta
vite bibentem.

Percy’s cousin ’o.d.’ed. Poor works.
Vice police and next a filly of a coroner,
mildly sexed. Harry Rose, a coy local, run
s a room for renter
s, implies murder. Neil at the lab hurries,
said, “You’ll use a current inquest team in his TR, Hmmm?”
Dead. A kid. And murders knot me. Internal constrictions.
A quick drink ends ’em.

Notes ad hoc and ad bomicidium?

Horati Car. 1.38: The mise en scène is a good example of
Zukofskian Pythagorean upsilonian—or in this case psian—
translation choices. After jump-cutting to the hero’s arrival at the
scene, a Hell’s Kitchen-type area where streetwalkers expect that
any passing, pausing, and unmarked car contains a john, rather
than a dick, we confront “1.38.” I have chosen “One full stop at
thirty eight,” using the old telegraphic code, evocative of the film
noir ’30s, ’40s, and ’50s, for the symbol “.” Here “full stop” stands
for the death being investigated. Another avenue would have been
to read the phrase as “One period at 38,” i.e., one episode in the

6 Dedicated to Douglass Parker with apologies to Colin Dexter, Morse, and Thaw.
detective's life, specifically when he is thirty-eight. Or stretching the original to have 38 stand for 38th vel sim., one could have used the second number as a designation for Thirty-Eighth Street in New York City where near the exit from the Lincoln Tunnel low-class hookers hang out for the car trade from New Jersey.

.1 Read *apparatus* as in English, as a synonym for "works," slang for the paraphernalia used for a drug fix.

.6 TR=toxicity report.

.7 Take *vite* as in French, use the root *bib* for a drink (shortened and thereby quickened), and read *entem* as it sort of sounds (and fittingly ends the constrictions and the poem). The overall effect is of an eastern European poetic *Manchester Guardian* crossword puzzle.

By the end, you should understand that our hero, the narrator, is a 38-year-old homicide detective called in to work the case of a young junkie who died of a drug overdose. Routine and straightforward until Harry Rose . . .

*Thomas G. Palaima*
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ESSAYS
Kenneth Reckford on Virgil’s and Eliot’s Venus
Michael Putnam on the Lyric Genius of the Aeneid
Charles Martindale on the Ruins of Rome in The Waste Land
Richard Jenkyns on Late Antiquity in the 19th Century English novel

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David Ferry with four from Horace
William Logan’s “Beauty” after Horace, Odes I.25
Rosanna Warren’s “Turnus”
Deborah Roberts reverses Horace, Odes I.5
Thomas G. Palaima’s “Monad Noir”
Mark Rudman’s “The Diver (after Ovid)” and “Aesacus Risen”
Alistair Elliot translates Juvenal IV
Tony Harrison’s The Kaisers of Carnuntum

REVIEWS
Daniel Mendelsohn on John Boswell’s Same-Sex Unions
Jenny Strauss Clay on Lowell Edmunds’ From a Sabine Jar
William Vance on The Legacy of Rome
Michael Putnam on Kirk Freudenberg’s The Walking Muse
Lowell Edmunds on Perseus 1.0, HyperMyth, and Writing Space

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