

STAN ROGAL

TABULA RASA

dig the universe as playful, cool, & infinitely blank
a tightrope-tremble across netless space
all of Leonardo's science touched with magic

yet, how to be a match for the infinite?
you grow old, lose your hair, lose your teeth
small dogs perform their nasty habit on a pant leg

where prayer is less useful than whisky or a smoke
the clothes fit well, but what becomes the body?
clapped in the box beside the iced oysters

one looks around & sees much puff & twaddle
up to the neck in apostrophes & petty exclamations
all these words? all this language? wasted

why is it we never tire of the clown & puppet shows?
the vain attempt to make a virtue out of anachronism?
droning a drowsy syncopated tune . . . *tra-la, tra-la* . . .

haven't you heard, haven't you heard, the bells?
the snarling agnostic stands little chance amid such glory, glory
we become a pretty Proust machine
grinding out sweet madeleines for the mass