

TEMPLE CONE

Listening to the Stars before Dawn

The mouse makes her bed in the same field where she might die,
Lifted upward in a barn owl's claws, a meteor in reverse.
Imagine how she sleeps, nose to tail, curled like the spiraling stars.

Before the universe exploded into being, astronomers say,
It was the size of a cherrystone. But they're mum about the fruit
Enfolding it, or about the mouth that drank the juice of stars.

The derricks over Texas oil wells are like postmodern theorists,
Pumping dry the ground they stand on, making themselves useless.
Appaloosas circle a split oil drum to drink rainwater filled with stars.

Today we scarcely agree on the meaning of meaning, let alone of words.
Grace means dignify snails to you, God hides in a pistachio nut to me.
But let's try to agree on this: there is darkness, there are stars.

Somehow one sculls to the end of *Finnegan's Wake* and begins again,
Somehow the goat can digest thistle, cardboard, and oyster shells.
Atoms are endlessly consumed and reborn in the bellies of stars.

Eat and be eaten, commands the world. Jesus is a wafer on the tongue,
The serpent at the beginning of existence swallows its own tail,
And from the collapse of stars comes a darkness hungry for the light of
stars.

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