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“Votive Tablet” and “Heaven”

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## Theodicy

I'm not asking for proof or an alibi,  
but when Your name comes up at accidents  
it would help to know what we're dealing with—  
wind that got away? The fact of ice,

black ice even, as risks crystallize?  
Or is it . . . *us*? As if the precipice  
isn't there until we look down; as if  
—what? Doubt could add risk. So could denial:

*Wildfires? Natural disasters? Or the avalanche*  
of setbacks, disappointments, even harm.  
Acquit Yourself! Dismiss the charges!  
Or, when You judge, call *me* to the bench;

put Your hand over the mic so the others  
won't hear, and You won't have to whisper.

*for Mark Walters*

©Toby Goostree

### Author biography

**Toby Goostree's** poems have appeared in *Santa Clara Review*, *Pittsburgh Poetry Review*, *Kansas City Voices* and *By and By Poetry*. He lives in Kansas City with his wife, Amy.

## “Votive Tablet” and “Heaven”

### VOTIVE TABLET

From the mouth of the boy the dove  
flutters in a circle and quickly hides  
in the mouth of his mother  
under the open dome

shining in the thundering clouds:  
 where the capsizing sailors promised  
 vessels and precious goblets  
 if the boy would rescue them from  
 the steep side of the brazen mountain,  
 the dove fluttering from his mouth,  
 circling and quickly hiding  
 in his mother's smiling mouth.

Translated, from the German,  
 by Stuart Friebert, with Christiane Wyrwa

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## HEAVEN

The elephants, the whales pant and puff  
 through the savannah above.  
 The Huns and Saint Ursula below  
 carry out their horror show:  
 eleven thousand virgins and  
 Pope Formosus beheaded!  
 The elephants, the whales aren't  
 interested in panel-paintings and pant and puff  
 above on their blue  
 rotations through the savannah  
 even now, because below just  
 reliquaries remain from the slaughter.

Translated, from the German,  
 by Stuart Friebert, with Christiane Wyrwa

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## Author biography

**Kuno Raeber** (1922–1992): An early member of the “Gruppe 47,” by the time of his death Raeber had won a number of prestigious literary prizes and produced a commanding body of poems, stories, novels, plays, essays, and translations, recently collected in a seven-volume edition, edited by Matthias Klein and Christiane Wyrwa, who contributed valuable suggestions for improving the translations. Great thanks to them and scaneg Verlag/Munich, their press, for permission to publish these poems, which will soon appear in *VOTIVES: Selected Poems from the Literary Remains* (Lost Horse Press). Among a dozen volumes, Stuart Friebert has previously published two earlier Selected Raebers, as well as fourteen books of his own poems and two collections of stories.