
Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Chanel Brenner: Two Poems

Chanel Brenner · Wednesday, March 11th, 2015

Chanel Brenner is the author of *Vanilla Milk: a memoir told in poems*, (Silver Birch Press, 2014). Her poems have appeared in *Poet Lore*, *Rattle*, *Diverse Voices Quarterly*, *Vine Leaves*, *KYSO Flash*, *West Trestle Review* and others. Her poem, "What Would Wislawa Szymborska Do?" was displayed at the James Whitcomb Riley Museum in Indianapolis, Indiana; and her poem, "July 28th, 2012" won first prize in The Write Place At the Write Time's contest, judged by Ellen Bass. She was a finalist in The 2013 Rattle Poetry Prize for "A Poem for Women Who Don't Want Children." In 2014, she was nominated for a Best of the Net award and a Pushcart Prize.

What We Carry

On Riley's first day of school,
I carried his baby brother
in a sack strapped over my chest,
his blue eyes peeking out
of a blue blanket.

Mothers smiled
and approached us,
cupped his bald head
with their open hands.

Now, I carry my dead son
on my back, his arms
wrapped around my neck.

Mothers look past us,
expressionless, their hands
compressed in pockets
or under folded arms.

When Riley was alive,
I couldn't carry him anymore.
It hurt my back.

Lucky for my spine,
death doesn't weigh in pounds.

His Heart Takes Flight

Why don't I ever get to fly? Riley asked,
looking out the open window,

craning his neck skyward
like a stranded white heron.

We didn't want to tell him
about his brain's weak vessels,

*You just don't know
what makes these things bleed,* the doctor warned.

I told him,
Someday, you'll fly.

While he slept,
the vessels gave way.

Today, his heart is flying to Canada,
a piece of him taking off,

soaring over the Golden Gate Bridge,
Mount Rainier, eternal bodies of water,

landing in Vancouver, somewhere
I've never been.

I imagine the girl
who will inherit his heart

in a white lace nightgown,
her small body supine

on a feather bed,
her mother gazing skyward,

palm on her daughter's chest
like a prayer.

Author photo by Alexis Rhone Fancher

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