# **Cultural Daily**

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## **David Rigsbee: Two Poems**

David Rigsbee · Monday, May 15th, 2023

#### Joan

It was no different than any other day. Already, we were hyper-aware of the clock Whose poker-face ticked toward nine.

Our teacher was a clueless woman with her Upswept, stainless pussycat glasses, Slip strap inching down her sleeveless arm

as she diagrammed sentences that looked like the cutaway of a ship, words on deck, then all the way down to steerage.

The late student was a tall girl, Joan, first heir of integration. I will not say beneficiary, because it was the day

we tortured her. She seemed a lonely girl, but it would be more correct to say our prank only bolded the torment of her being

there, where she belonged, to learn how language sought the measure, to release her from the trap of thoughts

unexpressed. Someone had the brilliant idea to bring a box of thumbtacks and shared them with us before class.

We leaned over to pour three or four like spilled candy on the oak desk seat. Then we returned to our zits and waited,

staring at desktops, books closed. She appeared, and the teacher looked up, said nothing, and returned to her chore. Wishing to be invisible, Joan moved among the seats, pulling the skirt of her white dress aside to pass down the row

until she found her seat and looking up at the gray teacher, sat. She was the color of plum, of internal sweetness fading,

the jolt of the joke revealed. So much we could never know passed us then the way a blanket of blackbirds

suddenly sweeps itself off the sweetgum and scatters into the Carolina night, leaving the leaves for a moment shaken.

For she was a child and we were children.

\*

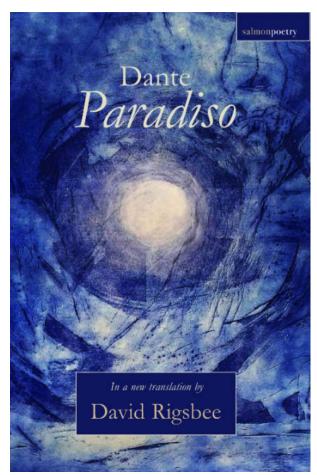
### Why We Marry

For Kurt Erickson and Heidi Moss

You see it when night returns and you think, yes, I could have stayed far away, but did not. And the night rises immediately to meet that small affirmative, bringing with it smoky clouds that will separate and reform into a darkening monochrome, according to the law. Starlings race across the rooftops as the west pulls the light after it. The banter of birds is pronounced, each insisting on its rights. A few peel off and fly upward as if they wanted to see the curvature of the earth. They remember how it is, living the days in disbelief. A man presents his torso to the window and cars go by below, their missions useless to speculate upon. Some kids gather on the corner. One lights another's cigarette. A third stares down, texting, her face glowing. Or not unglowing, and yet clear and not ungracious. For the night moves each into a renewed formation, the night

that contains the past, the way the soil contains every single one of the dead. Your hand extends on a day in the future like a small beetle, raising its wingcase with a flick, which is not an announcement but a portion of silence, pretending one thing, and meaning the invisible other.

\*\*\*



Dante's Paradiso, translated by David Rigsbee

## Purchase Dante's Paradiso, translated by David Rigsbee

This entry was posted on Monday, May 15th, 2023 at 8:55 pm and is filed under Poetry You can follow any responses to this entry through the Comments (RSS) feed. You can leave a response, or trackback from your own site.