Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Devon Balwit: Three Poems

Devon Balwit · Wednesday, June 6th, 2018

Happy Hour

Someone has knit and purled cirrus
into weave, the lightest angora

over backlit blue. I drift and listen to a story
of modafinil, the way it sustains

without sparking irritation, unlike adderall.
The fake ID has been re-pocketed,

tattoos all around. We sip as we would in Europe,
intergenerational. I am one

climbing back into youth through an unlatched window,
mindful of lolling

dogs. For years, I've toyed with nothing that couldn't
be bought at the corner grocery,

my mind already a storm-dancing wire. I'm sad, but two's
my limit, more

and tomorrow's a sick headache, a papier-mâché slathering.
I am as cool as I will ever be—

Not very. I admire a lean Mohawk, boot-striding
the sidewalk. He looks elsewhere,

me the wrong gender and old enough to have crowned him,
the only way he would part

my thighs. After each tale, I release a head-turning
guffaw, popped

like a champagne cork from effervescence.
Heads turn, but I refuse

to quiet. This room is eclosion, an unseen metamorphosis.
What will I be

when I pay the bill and rise? While not her, exactly,
surely more than I was.

*

The Eve of the Poetry Reading

Hearing the fierce mask magnify
The silver limbo of each eye

— (From Sylvia Plath's "The Fearful")

Am I a Gorgon? I ready myself
to read to no one, to send out

my baleful eye over empty chairs.
I say it doesn't matter, dust off

the *audience of one* adage, a lie
told so often I snicker in my sleeve,

prepare excuses before I need them—
multiple readings elsewhere,

a lecture series downtown.
It's practice anyway, at the podium

with my affronted darlings, pushing
them forwards, like my son, years past,

toward threat. *Be pugnacious, now.*
The playground's vicious.

*

Somewhere There Is an Acronym for This

And my child look at her, face down on the floor,
Little unstrung puppet, kicking to disappear

— (Sylvia Plath, "Lesbos")

It happened more than once. The third child left
somewhere, daycare providers running after,

You forgot the baby! Or later still, the baby,
now a boy, banging on the car door as I pull away.

Mom! The children saying something to me
as my mind wanders. *What? What?*

danced just on the edge of keys? They crap, and
puke, and cry, days unfurling like toilet paper,

identical, shit-smeared. At some preschool meet
and greet, a mother says, *I love them more than*

life itself. There is nothing I'd rather be doing.
She's blown her tubes like a bad radio. Me,

there's any number of things I'd rather do,
stand on a cliff-edge and scream just to hear

the echo. Meanwhile, there's a stink of fat
and baby crap. I'm packing the hard potatoes

like good clothes. The teacher calls. Then
the principal. I let the phone go to voice mail.

I should wear tiger pants, I should have an
affair. Each day, just six uninterrupted hours.

The laundry piles up. We sleep on stained mattresses.
The children whine about food. I send them

to scavenge neighbor gardens. *Make friends,*
I say. *Go somewhere.*

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