

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Dorianne Laux: Three Poems

Dorianne Laux · Monday, September 1st, 2025

A blessing,

when my bunny
jumps up on the couch beside me
and offers her small skull
to be stroked. Often I'm reading, lost
in the cold world of *Anna Karenina*
or seeing *The World According*
to Garp. But her world is the only
world, this couch, these pillows,
the rug set down on the bamboo
flooring, her running onto the smooth
wood and sliding, like a child,
under the kitchen table to hide,
or jumping up on a chair to survey
her queendom as she nibbles
the ratan. She turns her head
into my hand, like my husband
turns to me in bed and nuzzles in
under my armpit until I stroke
his head, then lifting his face
to give me the last chaste kiss
of the day. He doesn't speak
like she doesn't speak. No need.
The eyes turn liquid, bright
with pleading, and I feel
his need. A blessing to be
needed like this, to know
the heart of another so fully.
The frailty of love. Our
helplessness in it and
before it. The largeness,
largess, of such silence.
And then she turns away

and leaps four feet into
space, hanging on air
with the faith of all
land creatures that the earth
will catch her.

*

Girls

At the harborside, the landfill,
in a ditch beside the railroad tracks,
they find them, the girls, curls
snagged in bramble or swallowed
by mud, seaweed woven around
their bare arms and broken necks.
And strung from tree to lamppost,
piling to piling, plastic police tape flickers
in the breeze like cicadas in a field.
Or in a field with cows grazing, unfazed,
expressionless, the opposite of wicked.
Bodies dot the vast territory
of the known world, as if we are a species
that still practices sacrifice, the clouds
wisps of wood smoke from the ritual flames.
And by now it's mechanical, gathering
evidence, fingernail scrapings, footprints
or tire prints, a shred of cloth caught
on a thorn of barbed wire. I never
have to ask what day it is. It's always
the day of the dead, 1800 in a year.
You could fill every pew in the First
Presbyterian Church of Hollywood
under its Gothic edifice, behind
its stained-glass windows, below its
belfry soaring heavenward. Hollywood,
birthplace of starlets, girls struggling
to become famous, though they
will most likely see their picture
on a Thursday night flashed
on the local news, their name
scrolling across a banner, their face
on a poster in grainy black and white
stapled to a telephone pole.

*

My Monarch

Monarchs die with their wings open.
The Monarch in my yard that escaped
her tender chrysalis, tore her wing
trying to climb the brick wall.
I put her in a paper bag with lantana
flowers so she can have a taste
of sweetness to take with her
on her next voyage, nectar
on her long, curled proboscis,
though most of her taste buds
are on her feet. She lived for days
in her flower bed in the papery dark,
her tongue an unerring arrow, trailing
her torn coat of many colors.
We have forgotten
how often the world is a home
for the damaged. No matter
how hard we scrub the kettle
it never reclaims its shine, day
after the day the flames carbonize
calcium, turn the inside of the kettle
a powdery white. I'm just not myself
this morning, having found her unmoving,
but her ruined wings were spread
in such splendor, as if surrendering
her beauty, her youth.
I place her gently in the potted
redwood I foolishly planted
a year ago. It's grown two feet tall.
Spindly adolescent that will mature
without me. I want to die like this,
under a sky made for giants, a tiny
naked being. No confining coffin.
Smudge of nectar on my lips.
My arms flung wide
to whatever comes next.

*

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