

Cultural Daily

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Molly Fisk: "The Faithful" & Three Other Poems

Molly Fisk · Wednesday, November 27th, 2013

Molly Fisk is the author of *The More Difficult Beauty*; *Listening to Winter* (#4 in the California Poetry Series); *Terrain*, a collaborative chapbook with Dan Bellm and Forrest Hamer; and the letterpress chapbook *Salt Water Poems* from Jungle Garden Press.

CW is proud to premiere these poems by Molly Fisk

Before I gained all this weight

I was so self-conscious I could barely
walk into town for fear people
would stare. I thought I was hideous,
unlovable. Now I want to shake
that poor girl, even though it wasn't
her fault, so afraid to be human —
rattle her cage of good grades, self-
tanning lotion and green eye-liner,
fast-acting depilatory cream, tell her
to smile for God's sake and kiss
the next boy she sees, life is shorter
than anyone imagines. Silver planes
plummet from clean skies, cancer gnaws
the marrow of even younger bones
than yours, wake up! There's still time!
Everything around you is unbelievably
beautiful.

Daylight Savings

How many times can you write about rain
and the way it's blown against darkened windows,
even though no two gusts are the same?
Something woke you. Something will always wake you —
in the bad dream when you're steps beyond danger
and trip, or dreamless, a cat walking over your ribs.

Light rising down the street will find the maple's tips
and sluice her branches like rain. This week,
the clocks' hands forced ahead, pushing us back
into shrouded mornings, an Austrian fuel-saving measure
from 1916, which is exactly how history holds us:
tenderly, though unremembered.

It's telling, the way we pine for order, maneuvering time,
limiting speed. And still, men fall in love with other men,
women with women, wars rarely end no matter how earnest
the mediation. Prying the back of the bedside alarm
to coax the big hand with an index finger changes nothing.
Stopping at stop signs, washing behind our ears —
none of it matters: we're helpless. One breath of lust,
delight, sorrow, rage, and chaos claims us.
Even in dreams, in downpours. Water slaps the glass
again. Dr. Williams and his damned wheel barrow, glazed
with rain water, beside the white chickens. The wind's
picking up. On the sofa, a cat's ear turns forward, back.

The Faithful

Sometime during the night I woke, convinced
the familiar W of Cassiopeia overhead was merely
a random cluster of stars and morning was near,
though the clock said 1:46 and the sky was dark
as it gets inside a coat sleeve in November
when you're poking around, trying to find your scarf
and gloves. Smoke hangs over us during the day,
the sun a bleary eye, then melts at dusk
back to the valley. Fourteen California fires are half-
contained but rowdy: they jump the lines as soon
as heads are turned. Thus is the summer
of our discontent made ignominious winter, and we close
our bedroom windows, coughing. We're the lucky ones.
It's not our own houses burning. And we knew all along
global warming was coming. We're the offspring
of socialists, Communists, and skeptics: the ones
who, from the very first, believed.

Stoking the fire at 3:48

before there's any sign of morning and the air when I go out for kindling
is glassy cold. I let the wood get wet and what's drying now on the tiles
catches slowly, sizzles like an animal turning on a spit. I cancelled the paper
long ago. Now my old drafts are tinder, heat curls inflammatory stanzas
on 20-pound bond. I know it's absurd. Not the pioneer-approved method.
When it comes to building fires, I'm exhausted before I start. Half the wood

is too big for the stove's door and I have no axe. It's good to know why everyone's so stern about tarps — the best mistakes being educational but not fatal. I tug open the gate and back through, even though the blue wheelbarrow's tire is flat. You can't see this in the dark but gray smoke is pouring from the chimney now. I was a Girl Scout but you'd never know it, throwing store-bought fire-starters in on top, although they do catch, and half-finished sonnets light up and the damp wood after a long while burns merrily, like some perfect pile of birch logs Robert Frost thought up.

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