
Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Isaac Himmelman: Two Poems

Isaac Himmelman · Wednesday, April 30th, 2014

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Cultural Weekly is proud to premiere the work of Isaac Himmelman.

Rockets

I never looked into the sky
and saw a rocket shooting off
towards The Stars!
I made that story up.

But once I drove my old man's
Lincoln to Harmony Beach
with just my Dog (Rex) and
a bag of weed I stole from a
box on my mother's bedside.
Opening the box felt the way
opening a box should feel.

Later that month I drove
with my father to
Tacoma,
for we were hoping to enter
our crops in
the Tacoma State Fair.
My father is a grower
of wheat and barley
and other biblical grains. And I,
his son, am well,

just his son.

Years later I would
look back at our three days spent
at the Golden Hornet B & B
alongside Route 18.
My father and I would read
choice passages from
the Gideon Bible
and laugh at
the helplessness, the worthlessness
of man in God's world.
“We are dust,” my father would say.
And I would laugh and laugh
and laugh.

At the fair my father's
prized barley won no ribbons.
He returned home to his wife
a failure. I returned home to my mother
a son.

Cowboy

When I was four my grandpa told me I could never be a cowboy. All the cowboys were dead, and that night I cried tumbleweeds in my bed. I had painted a mustache on my face, naked, and I wore a hat and a shiny star badge. I was almost a cowboy (or so I thought.) I told mom the next day what my grandpa had told me. Mom was sad. But during those first few years mom was often sad.

Then my sister was born. I lay in the grass at the hospital thinking of the future. Dad tended to Mom in the Dolorien. Raina waited outside with the others. Then mom's family began acting like sleepers — salmon that never call or visit us. I was still a young stone; too young to realize what was happening, but mom cried tumbleweeds when Chaya was still in her desert stomach, so Chaya came out angry like a suicide bomb; tick, tick, tick— and our neighbor used to sell guns out of his garage. If I was to be a cowboy, and I know now that I am, I'd have bought a gun from that neighbor right then and hunted Salmon like a martyr—

Boom.

Then Chaya was brought home from the hospital angry, and mom's mom showed up to the house with cocaine stained innards and eyes like the Spanish Viking, cold, stale. I was still a young stone. Too young to realize what was happening; too young to recognize demons.

When Josiah was born my parents named him after a boat. He was born on water so my Dad's

friend Al came over to recite the blessing over the dead and forgotten. Al's hair was frizzy and he wore that cap on his head like a king. His hands trembled as he recited the benedictions. Wine spilled out the cup like blood out of our enemies drowning in water.

My brother Josiah arrived home the next day. My brother Josiah was our lifeboat.

What I realize now is that people knew the whole time that mom's mom was a bit yellow. I didn't know that. And it took me years to dig deep into my own yellow to see that for those first years we were living in nineties Northridge Darkness and when the yellow cut us out it was for the best, even though my boat brother doesn't know her and Mom is often sad. But she's gotten better. And dad is happy. Even though we don't call him that. We call him something else now, secret. I keep secrets; tight, mandolin, gray.

Yet now that we're getting older and moving thunderstorms I see mom's sadness for what is always was: loving. So when the boat brother finally moves out and the truck dies and we have to bury it like we buried my Aunt Susie, deep in the ground with fists, the loving will have to be something it isn't, or never was. And then we'll all be sad. Plus you don't flush a truck down the toilet like goldfish—

or salmon.

But everything dies, and I dig through nightmares of dead grandmothers in kid birthday moon-bounces and wonder: Will my boat brother ever see water? Will Chaya remain Six-Days? Will Raina know that she's moved thunderstorms before mountains and her eyes are Spanish like our mother's; tight, mandolin, gray? I leave these movements unanswered. I need to go outside and sweat like the cowboy that I am.

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