Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Jed Myers: Three Poems

Jed Myers · Wednesday, June 22nd, 2016

Jed Myers is a Philadelphian living in Seattle where he's a psychiatrist with a therapy practice. He began to seek publication of his poems as of the events of 9/11/01. His collections include *Watching the Perseids* (Sacramento Poetry Center Book Award) and the chapbook *The Nameless* (Finishing Line Press). Among the honors his work has received is *Southern Indiana Review's* Mary C. Mohr Award. His poems have appeared in *Prairie Schooner, Nimrod, Crab Orchard Review, Harpur Palate, Crab Creek Review, The Briar Cliff Review, Atlanta Review, The New Guard*, and elsewhere.

Asylum

I'll offer you passage toward asylum through the canals of my ears—please come now, straight from the radio station. I don't know who you'll find here who speaks your language. But already my grandmother calls to you in her Yiddish as she chops beets for our borscht. Your face, gritty in front page ink— I think you could hide if you had to in any odd shadow. But quick under these mom-and-pop storefront awnings my eyelids. Please, come back behind the shop, where we live—yes, the kitchen. The future ferments here in our memories' brine. We've pressed fine slices of reddened smoked fish, gift of the parted seas, upon bread fresh-risen on the yeasts of the West. And let us eat by the candles we've dipped in the wax of our histories' hives, our stories a weave, the wool of our sheep on our shoulders. Too many have diedthere are all kinds of sudden fire,

and all the sparks one fear—the other comes seeking asylum, what we've secured only a few breaths before, and what shall we offer? Here, my grandfather's chair, and the shawl he brought across the water.

Here After

Dying elsewhere is sudden, out in the sun—dying here a white curtain, nurse when you press the right button. Elsewhere is an outdoor market stun-blossom, blood flesh and flatbread charred and shredded, a bone ash spread. Here is a quiet long shock, dumb winter windows' stare at the pallid potatoes and sliced bird on your plastic platter. The dying here and the dying there you're born to one matter or the other. Chaos will come as magnificently symmetrical viral particles, or circulating free radicals prodding your chromosomes to double and double like burgeoning insurgents' camps, or surgical mishaps, impromptu blasts... and slow or fast, thereafter the dying lasts. What will be the echo won't be explosion or scream or siren, nor the beeping of cardiac monitor till it goes monotone, nor the low lone whimper of someone you've left here after, but this resonance: Once, when you were intact, as the machines wheeled past, the smears being mopped up and all the gathered dispersed, you'd taken someone fresh-numb with loss in your arms, and later, she held another.

After Parking at Starbucks

I've opened the door to her dark seat in the car. Mom offers a skeletal arm, skin loose around bone and what thready muscle

remains under blue tortuous veins. I bow and take hold with one hand a cradle for the creak of her elbow. one where stiffened fingers can rest. My hesitation's hidden as I am its lone witness—something fine and brittle might break as I lift it away from its place, like that china cup I fumbled and dropped soon as I'd slid it off of the hutch for a better look one morning when I was five or six. It had been her mother's, I heard her sharpened voice insist as we stared at the scatter of jagged white bits on the floor's innocent oak. It was what remained of a set—one cupful of distant comfort. Had I been more careful.... Gently I tug on her arm, help her stand, and steady her imperceptibly as she shuffles beside me. The old shatters keep us company—a chattering wake. There's never a lack of the broken— I hear a muffled clatter, a girl in pieces it isn't too late to hold.

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