

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Jed Myers: Three Poems

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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 died—
 there 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 cup-
ful 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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