

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Jeremy Cantor: Three Poems

Jeremy Cantor · Wednesday, April 18th, 2018

A Toast

Here's to the song you heard when you
were falling in love but have forgotten
the title and the tune and the lyrics
so even if you fell in love to
some other song you'll
think this song is that song.

Here's to the way your heart
shunted your brain onto a side track
and left it where you would have to go
and find it and drive it back into town
the next day or the next year or
maybe not ever.

Here's to the way the morning sun
through the curtains on the kitchen window
during breakfast the morning after
suddenly made you think not of Vermeer
but of Edward Hopper.

Here's to the surface of the water that
has already crossed into night trying to
reflect the evening sky's indigo but instead
showing you a color you have no name for
that promises quiet if only you will
slip beneath the surface past the point
where you'll hear water lapping at your ears
to where eyes closed or eyes open
is all the same.

*

What You Don't Know

it feels like the season's last rain
the last rain before the living sweet green

on the hills turns first to the golden brown I love
then to the grey brown I don't understand

the still night air encourages a cloud
of the orange tree's scent

to come out of hiding, envelop the house,
creeping even as far as my open window

around the corner on the south wall
if you stood by me you would not smell it

they could not figure out how else to stop
the little girl's nosebleeds so they cauterized

and left scar tissue covering the nerves
now seventy years later I can count on one hand

the number of things you can smell
and that number does not include

the smell of orange blossoms at night
or the smell of the rain that is about to fall

*

There Is Nothing Like A Berkeley Estate Sale

her microscope (brass barrels)
her short-wave radio (vacuum tubes)
her slide rule (ivory-faced)
her mechanical polar planimeter (does anyone still make those?)
one copy of every journal her work appeared in

books inscribed to her by most of the famous people in her field
boots, butterflies, black and white photographs
boxes of things I looked at for an hour
but can't recall

a monkey's skull studded all over with
round silver ornaments like upholstery tacks

sheet music for piano
an oboe reed
an mbira
a djembe

dictionaries in four languages

novels in three
poetry in two

dust the agent missed when cleaning for the sale

two shelves of journals
with entries in two different hands
except for the last volume
with entries in hers only

a wedding ring

her underwear which of course
she needed until the day she died
but there was no one left who
cared enough to get rid of it
before the sale

back at the car you said “*Please, love—
don’t let that happen to me.*”

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