

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

John Compton: Three Poems

John Compton · Wednesday, June 2nd, 2021

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you are the mother of an orphan birth it
sticks to you like a ghost roots deep in
your blood you hear it even when the
mouth is closed you touch the small
hands & fit them inside yours electric
surges through the both of you like a
bulb flashing on & warmth fills your
molecules the face gives a smile no
teeth only gums the tongue flicks
between the lips it cries your instinct
begins & you hold it close to your
breasts it sucks milk from a wound &
latches like a tick: it gains power &
grows

you are the mother of an orphan birth it sticks to you like a ghost roots deep in
your blood you hear it even when the mouth is closed you touch the small
hands & fit them inside yours electric surges through the both of you like a
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only gums the tongue flicks between the lips it cries your instinct begins &
you hold it close to your breasts it sucks milk from a wound & latches like a
tick: it gains power & grows

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she pauses in wading the lake waist high
the water touching parts she forgot had
existed she slips her hand into the
murkiness wondering if her hair ever
felt like this she knew she used to be
beautiful before age broke her body
across the floor like a chair she rocks
herself her feet moving between the silt
the ducks revolve around her like
moons before settling in their landing
they search her she understands she is
not a tree but could she just raise her
arms like branches & feel love for a
moment a foot farther an inch deeper
she remembers how to heal a wound
with a band-aid before the children
were too old to need her she breathes
she breathes she breathes while
everyone else has finished letting her
exist

she pauses in wading the lake waist high the water touching parts she forgot had
existed she slips her hand into the murkiness wondering if her hair ever felt like this
she knew she used to be beautiful before age broke her body across the floor like a
chair she rocks herself her feet moving between the silt the ducks revolve around her
like moons before settling in their landing they search her she understands she is not
a tree but could she just raise her arms like branches & feel love for a moment a foot
farther an inch deeper she remembers how to heal a wound with a band aid before
the children were too old to not need her she breathes she breathes she breathes
while everyone else has finished letting her exist

*

my house is a tomb of shadows
memories ghosts the floorboards
smooth from decades of feet pushing
their fibers into a pattern of ware the
walls torn & rebuilt & drywalled layers
of wallpaper & pages of life decorated &
destroyed the ceiling watching &
breaking & being replastered my house
is a documentary untelevised unwritten
a secret it grows it holds us like children
& helps us learn to live protecting us
watching it grows us & kills us & buries
us & waits to be filled the empty only a
symptom

my house is a tomb of shadows memories ghosts the floorboards smooth from decades of feet pushing their fibers into a pattern of ware the walls torn & rebuilt & drywalled layers of wallpaper & pages of life decorated & destroyed the ceiling watching & breaking & being replastered my house is a documentary untelevised unwritten a secret it grows it holds us like children & helps us learn to live protecting us watching it grows us & kills us & buries us & waits to be filled the empty only a symptom

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