

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Judy Brackett: Three Poems

Judy Brackett · Wednesday, October 25th, 2017

Judy Brackett lives and writes in a small town in California's northern Sierra Nevada foothills. Her poem "As If There Were No Steel" took second place in *Cultural Weekly's* 2014 Jack Grapes Poetry Contest. Her stories and poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Epoch*, *The Maine Review*, *Catamaran*, *burntdistrict*, *Commonweal*, *The Midwest Quarterly*, *West Marin Review*, *Miramar*, *Subtropics*, *Crab Orchard Review*, and elsewhere.

Defining Ourselves

In a picture-book Webster's, under
 "unbelievable" or "harebrained idea,"
 you might find circus elephants balancing
 on tiny stools, their almond-small wet eyes
 empty,
 de-clawed bears riding tricycles, monkeys
 banging on tambourines, also horses
 clattering up dozens of stairs
 to a wobbly platform and diving into
 a not-so-deep pool, the relentless sun
 an aloof observer.

Let's put a girl in a red spangly bathing suit
 on the horse and watch them dive, together. And
 if one of them lands wrong, breaks a leg or ruins
 her eyes, let's train a new horse and praise
 the gutsy girl for coming back for more.
 Let's give them names like Lizzy and Lottie,
 or Red Lips and Sonora. Let's watch the girl
 on the platform casually paint her own lips,
 turn a slow turn, sketch a blind wave, and climb
 onto the horse, clutching his mane in her fists.

Let us admire the divers' beauty, their grace.
 Let us feel the splash that shames
 and defines us all.

Flight Plan

Bone blades jut where her wings were once
affixed. Rolling her shoulders back and down,
she can feel the pulse, the strength of them,
can almost remember flying.

Riding the bike down the steep and winding
pot-holed lane—airborne, almost. Swinging
on the old saddle hanging from the rafters
in the hayloft, hay bales stacked

against the walls, mice nests, bird nests, barn
cats prowling, the owl tucked into his high-up
corner, haydust motes fogging the air,
she sneezing and swinging—no horse,

just girl and saddle, the barn window thrown
open to the green world, she wondering
if she can swing high enough, fast enough,
far enough, swim/fly out the window and dive

into the pond or the house-high haystack.
No, not the haystack—needles, errant pitchforks.

Tomorrow

This flat wide-open place is
airless, but she doesn't know that
yet. She dreams, walks to
the library, checks out
her-five-books-per-day ration,
sits under
a poplar on
the way home and reads a couple,
reads the rest that night, treks back to
the library tomorrow,
thinking that her bare feet are carving ruts in
the earth. Running to
the edge of
town she wonders at
the line at
the curb of
the world where green or brown or white meets
blue (the beginning or the end?).
The orderly fields—

in summer
blindingly green and smelling of
dirt and sunrays,
in winter
crop-stubbed or snow buried—
are alluring and terrifying, pulling her to
their plainness, their silences.
She writes songs and sings them to
herself, to
the books, to
the fields, to
the sky.
She dreams. She waits for
something.
She leaves.

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