

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Katerina Canyon: Three Poems

Katerina Canyon · Thursday, March 17th, 2022

My pain is sculpted into art for you to consume

Here is my pain
Gunshots echoing into the night
Bullets whizzing past me
As I flee across abandoned lots.
Heroin hidden behind the pink bow in my panties.
Consume it.

Here is my pain.
Switch marked whooppin's.
The smell of PCP.
A black man dead in a Texas creek.
Consume it.

This is my pain.
My mother beaten black by my father.
My father beaten blue by police
Over my voice.
Consume it.

This is my pain.
My furniture pushed past the sidewalk
While L.A. Marshals watched
And my friends stared.
Consume it.

This is my pain.
Getting stopped by police
For mumbling reasons.
Getting searched without cause.
Being followed in fear.
Consume it.

This is my pain.
Watching my black mother die

While watching white women live
 With the same thing.
 Seeing my tiny baby thrive among
 Fat white babies.
 Consume it.

This is my pain.
 Watching black babies die.
 Consume it.

This is my pain.
 Watching black boys die.
 Consume it.

This is my pain.
 Watching black men die.
 Consume it.

Discuss it.
 Write it.

Allow it to give you verbal diarrhea
 On CNN, MSNBC and FOX news.
 Give it a BlackLivesMatter hashtag

Then do absolutely nothing.

*

An Afterthought of a Netflix Show

When my mother was in college,
 one of her professors said
 she looked like a black Carol Burnett.

It has been 31 years since my mother's death,
 and I still search Carol Burnett shows
 for traces of her within Carol's face —

eyes gray, not brown —
 hair red, not brunette.
 I merely see mist.

My mother lived with a man who abused her
 every day. She said there was nowhere to go.
 She died before I hit 20.

When I grew up, I lived with a man
 who abused me every day.
 Carol said, "Only I can change my life."

No one can do it for me,” so I left
with bruises on my neck, and a baby
at my waist. At least Carol endures with me.

She is five years older than my mom,
if my mom had lived.

I am one year older than my mother ever lived.

It feels wrong passing my mother. It is as if
I have been caught at six years old
wearing her favorite dress, shoes, and perfume.

Carol looks pretty good for her age.
Her hair is still red.

I’m sure it is dyed— when my mother died,
she was mostly gray. I am not,
but I have less hair than she did.

Right now, you can watch Carol Burnett on Netflix.
I don’t think she will get a second season.

It seems like “stay woke” doesn’t
carry the same cache as “so long.”

In the end, I prefer to watch reruns.
They sit on my mind like happy memories,
of which I have so few.

Most of my flashes of the past are visions of beasts.
I wish I could spend the day watching Carol talk
to children, but alas, I have grown-up things to do.

*

The Tyger, Interrupted

And with all due appreciation to William Blake

*Tyger Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night;
What immortal hand or eye,
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?*

Girl, stop reading and clean this sink.

*In what distant deeps or skies.
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?*

Girl stop reading, or I’ll knock you

Into next week.

*On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand, dare seize the fire?*

How (*smack*) many (*smack*) times (*smack*)
Do (*smack*) I (*smack*) have (*smack*)
To (*smack*) tell (*smack*) you?! (*smack*)

*And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?*

Girl!
Stop reading.
Run to the store and fetch me some cigarettes.

*What the hammer? what the chain,
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp,
Dare its deadly terrors clasp!*

Girl, stop reading. Now just hold it
at the base — like that.

*When the stars threw down their spears
And water'd heaven with their tears:
Did he smile his work to see?*

Girl stop reading and come clean these collard greens.

*Did he who made the Lamb make thee?
Tyger Tyger burning bright,*

Girl, Stop reading & take this trash outside

*In the forests of the night:
What immortal hand or eye,
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?*

Girl — Stop reading.

*



Purchase SURVIVING HOME by Katerina Canyon

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