
Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Kathryn de Lancellotti: Three Poems

Kathryn de Lancellotti · Wednesday, August 5th, 2020

What God Is

I don't want to hear what God is
from a book or a capitalist.

A bearded man on a spiritual quest
or from a pulpit.

I don't want to hear about sin
or that desire leads to suffering.

I want a God who is Tantric,
moves slow from toe to crown.

One who appears in fire, in lotus
and between breath.

I want a God who watches
from as far as Sirius, close as skin—
bright star, obsidian.

I want a God who is an artist,
a woman, a man. One who labors
and bleeds, suckles on the afterbirth.

I want a God small enough
to watch the sun fall
into the Pacific.

To climb a eucalyptus,
to ravage a wild blackberry.

A God who takes pride in skinning
the mule deer, finds pleasure
in its helpless sway.

I want God to walk down
the golden staircase
for a taste
of this delicious hell.

*

Figure Study

1

I was so used to men staring
I thought it was the price I paid.

2

I used to wear fear like a robe I couldn't drop
before walking on stage, afraid
the artist might capture something I can't see
in my own body or face.
I once stood naked in the middle of a classroom,
blood dripping between my legs.
I did not move, did not wipe it away.
I let it fall to my feet until the timer rang.

3

I learned to stand naked for hours in stillness,
to be the canvas, blank.
To give to the artist what's needed;
mostly shadows and shapes.
A man once told me
I was too beautiful to paint, that there was something
about me he couldn't capture.
I learned at a young age not to give it all away,
that it's better to be muse than mate.
I told him, I felt the same. I can't grasp myself, either,
too good at silence, at restraint.
I'm an artist, I say, the world is too loud,
the body is never still, always churning, bleeding to create.
I want to tell you what it's like
to be cut into marble, hung in a gallery,
frozen in a frame. I want to tell you
what it's like to watch a man mold you in still life,
to let him believe he's your maker as he carves
your ivory waist.
Such desire for the body he has formed.
Such art his hands crave—I want to tell you
what it's like to hold a man in stillness, for hours,
then walk out unscathed.

*

Homage to My Period

Each month, lovers bleed from me.
It hurts, every time,
reminds me that love is this:
more flush and death.
Witness unfertilized eggs,
droplets of red in a bowl of milk.
Witness the tissue of your unborn spill out.
A cycle, always back to this:
in prayer nine times a day.
This ache in the belly each time
my son asks about his dad.
Each clot I pass
fills the cup full, the cup empty.
It's how the story always goes
—love, bleed, weep.

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