Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Linda Neal: Three Poems

Linda Neal · Wednesday, May 26th, 2021

More Makeup

- after Sharon Olds, "No Makeup"

I've resisted paint for so many years, resisted the chance to be like my mother. My reflection hangs in all the mirrors I refused bathrooms, college dorm rooms, bedrooms, the makeup counters I passed by, the places where I could have "put my face on" the way she did, but I didn't. Now. it's time to start doing my face, make marks with horsehair brushes pulled across my bones to bury age in layers of stuff — primer and concealer, foundation, bronzer and blush. I don't want Marilyn's Vaseline undercoat to make my skin glow like the feverish face of a hospital patient or a woman in the throes of labor. I won't outline my eyes in black, all around, à la Liz, or paint my lips into a pout like Sophia. there's something to admire, something to love about the way my mother stood, cigarette in one hand, lip brush in the other, the way her red lips curled

above her overbite
Tonight,
here I am, looking
at YouTube makeup videos,
longing for lush lips and velvet brows,
hungering for my "hooded eyes"
to be young again,
learning ways to soften the lines
and shadow the lids,
making my face
into some semblance
of who I think I was.

*

Marriage Tract

In the beginning, marriage was a delicious ceremony, midsummer amid pines, needles softening underfoot, followed by new percale sheets, smoothed onto a hand-me-down double bed where laughter and sex-wet nights rained down. We'd heard that the migration of days would dull the lust, but not that the dryness would come so early. When long nights of love-making became long days of clocks and books and a typewriter on the breakfast table. When the breakfast table became the lunch table, the dinner table, the baby changing table by the bassinette. When I won at cribbage, and he threw his coffee mug against the wall. One New Year's Eve I wrestled with an earache and my guilt for keeping us at home. At least you're learning how to cook, he said. An absurd comfort. The baby cried. The baby grew into a boy. Another came. And the house with the lemon tree and a view of the Pacific. But we never saw the world through the same kaleidoscope, even as we both saw the dog eat the lemons that ruined his teeth, and we both loved sitting at the edge of the ocean in matching beach chairs. We said we would hold on to the dirt of marriage, hold on to it for life, until we were hanging on for dear life. No one said, Sorry, I'm so sorry, I'm so very sorry.

The marriage bled until it became a wound

we could not close.

*

Ekphrastic Life

She will always sit, naked in shades of ochre and desperation emanating from her posed body, always be a woman sitting before the artist who might (or might not) be god.

There always will be the canvas, maybe a background tree, a lake in the distance—brushes standing in a clear glass vase, objects in the foreground on a wooden table.

The woman doesn't want to stay on the sheet of linen, possibility of movement a passing thought, however. She remembers the artist, his soldered face, permanent scar below his mouth,

the hand-sewn patches on his chest, candles in the window burned all the way down. She thought his leaving was as temporary as the ochre sky and the three-year hunger he left her with.

Her story: an inert body circling the loneliness of Cyclops, history lessons turned and torn. Sitting, knees pulled to her chest, she contemplated

the ochre air and chalk clouds surrounding her. It would take an act of violence to escape, but so far away the knife, hanging from its magnet on the wall.



To purchase *Not About Dinosaurs* by Linda Neal: Amazon link Lulu.com link Signed copy directly from author

Photo credit: Mike Reardon

This entry was posted on Wednesday, May 26th, 2021 at 6:48 am and is filed under Poetry

You can follow any responses to this entry through the Comments (RSS) feed. You can skip to the end and leave a response. Pinging is currently not allowed.