

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Lynne Knight: Three Poems

Lynne Knight · Wednesday, March 18th, 2015

Lynne Knight is the author of four poetry chapbooks and four full-length poetry collections, the most recent of which, *Again*, appeared from Sixteen Rivers Press. Her work has appeared in a number of journals, including *Kenyon Review*, *Poetry* and *Southern Review*. Her awards and honors include publication in *Best American Poetry*, the *Prix de l'Alliance Française 2006*, a PSA Lucille Medwick Memorial Award, the 2009 *RATTLE* Prize, and an NEA grant. *I Know (Je sais)*, her translation with the author Ito Naga of his *Je sais*, appeared in 2013.

Lament

I took them all to forget you.
 The first one liked to keep one step ahead
 and what he said got lost in the rush
 of traffic headed in the same direction
 I took when I left. Then the one
 who wanted me to read the news every
 morning while he waited for the sun
 to do something rare, something worthy
 of poetry; incinerate me right
 there in my chair, say. I left without
 a word. The next one held my hair
 like flame. I felt my face disappear.
 And the one who picked the notes on his guitar
 like fruit and left them for me to eat.
 The one who said what they all said.
 The one who spoke in things.
 The one whose tongue went everywhere.
 The one whose seed I swallowed like a pill.
 And still the hollow in my heart,
 the hollow echo in my ear.
 The nights no dream can interrupt
 dragging their blacks into day . . .
 And still the hollow everywhere

when I cry your name.

(first published in *Poetry Flash*)

The Birth of the Modern

When Rodin first felt the looseness
of the white Dominican robe Balzac wore
to write in, his hands went still in the clay.

He stood for a long while, learning
the cloth's heavy fall, letting it find its way
to Balzac's hands, which would hold the robe

closed from within, simplifying the figure
until nothing human would be noticed but
the head in its defiance of a bronze repose.

Months later, when the Salon scorned—
obese monstrosity; colossal foetus—
Rodin stood in the recess of his studio

embracing one of the maquettes,
feeling all the way back to the heat
of hands in the clay, his own,

Balzac's. At the time of his death,
Balzac's body was a ruin, according
to the Goncourts a belly with a profile

like the ace of spades, though he was
only fifty-one. Yet nothing like kindness
led Rodin to drape the figure. It wasn't

about hiding the ugly sausages of torso,
arms and legs. He needed a man impatient
for great motion—dressed loosely,

striding from the scene.

(first published in *Southern Humanities Review*)

The Sudden Holy

The tedium of personal history, the stories
and their repetitions. And then

a body stripped of all sense of itself
beyond the fundamentals: pain, hunger,
whatever primitive needs keep it twisting
in the night. Some days you believe
you can will her back. Call her name,
say key words—huckleberry, plate
glass, maple—and she'll come running

like a child from the dark. Even now,
ten years after her death, you believe it,
fool that you choose to be over the cynic
scoffing in ridicule. After all, miracles
have been recorded, sworn to, whole
industries have arisen around them—
crucifixes, rosaries, statues and plaques—
and those just for one of many religions
your father claimed were all alike

in being opiates designed to keep
the flock moving in the desired
direction, believing death was nothing
more than a bridge they would cross
into another world because this one, this one—
and here your father would pause, strike
another match, wave the flame extinct—
this one was, let's face it, botched.
Not that you believed him any more

than religion once you were old enough
to see the sorrow at the core of him.
Of most of us, but let's not shift the focus.
Why you as daughter, why those two
as mother and father—those questions
that keep taking you as close as you're apt
to come to nothingness. To no answer.
To down-on-your-knees anyway for every
breath you'll get, for every blessed repetition.

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