Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Martina Reisz Newberry: Three Poems

Martina Reisz Newberry · Wednesday, July 29th, 2020

SUBSEQUENCE

> *I have brought you here so you will know forever/The silences which are our beginnings*
> ~Eaven Boland

Look here, my years don't
make of me a footnote,
not a semi-mystic, not an
elder "woman poet,"
nor am I a poetESS.
ESS indeed…
ESS does not fit the
largeness of my anger,
the uncomfortable clarity
of my voice.
ESSes do not strafe your eyes
with a battery of code words
for passion. ESSes are not
breathing walking
cauldrons of love, drive and death;
they are not incendiary, fierce,
judiciously choosing life—no matter
how ruinous, how terrifying—rather
than a marshmallow death
strung out over years
seated pleasantly and unseen
on a cushion.
Listen up! Keep your ESSes.
My years are no
indication of the violence
to which I've testified,
the wars I've detested,
the poverty and ineligibility
I've fought unsuccessfully.

I am not become unbeautiful
or anonymous or resigned
because of my 70-plus years
around the sun.
I began in silence
(similar to ESS, no?)
as too many of us do,
but have not stayed there
and I won't return there.
That/those which/who have given
me cause to regret have only done
that one little thing.
They have not killed me.
If there is killing to be done,
I will do it. Try me out,
read what I say.
If I bleed, do not doubt it,
you will drown.

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ME AND AMY LOWELL

U.S. Officially Enters War With Yemen
— Headline from Common Dreams News 10/14/2016

Again we make living beings
into silage—less than silage really—ash.
Again our young soldiers
polish the boots of senators and
congressmen with blown-to-bits
rags of robes, dresses, trousers, diapers.

Ours is now the land from which
nothing is born. We cannot sing
of sunflowers if they've all been
deflowered, devoured by scorpions.
The Good suffer an affliction
of the spirit, the Wicked suffer nothing.

Once, we were our own talismans.
Once we flung our jackets over our shoulders,
boarded home-going trains with
confidence in our home-grown courage.
Once I wanted to be Amy Lowell
…all tremulous with hope and wistful joy

for something that is sure to come at last…

*cradling the future in a glorious past.**
Now I look through chaos for someone
to quote and/or Be. I've outlived
the sleight-of-hand, the constant gestures,
the backstreet bullying from a psychopath

empire disguising itself as America.
In the end, our Ms. Lowell was right.
We have all lost too often, too much,
too many, *in a pattern called war.*
The ugly query stands:
Christ! What are patterns for?

(Italicized quotes are from Amy Lowell's poem *Patterns,* first published in a monthly magazine called "The Little Review" in August 1915.)

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BY AND LARGE

The sun is faithful, tries to recall
why it cannot bleach out terror from
the planet. Every day it stands tall,
confident that THIS will be the day
all squalor burns off the earth after
dewpoint. Poor sun… the minutes proceed,
the hours jet by, and though the light on
water is fine and bright, though shadows
chase each other among the sunlit
trees, so little changes. There is some
reparage when shards of sun warm a
shivering dog or heat the sidewalk
under a homeless citizen. Still,
by and large (as my dad used to say),
very little changes. At 5 pm,
the sun speaks. *Sorry,* it says, *failure .*
is mine. I'll try again tomorrow.
Please understand the implications
of my strife, all the implications
of my struggle, are in the stars. Stay
where you are. Stay tuned. I may return.

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