Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Mary Carroll-Hackett: Three Poems

Mary Carroll-Hackett · Wednesday, April 6th, 2016

Mary Carroll-Hackett earned BA and MA from East Carolina University, and an MFA from Bennington College, Her work has appeared in numerous journals including Carolina Quarterly, Superstition Review, Drunken Boat and The Prose-Poem Project. She is the author of four books, *The Real Politics of Lipstick* (Slipstream 2010), *Animal Soul (*Kattywompus Press, 2013), *If We Could Know Our Bones* (A-Minor Press, 2014) and *The Night I Heard Everything*(FutureCycle Press, 2015), as well as a chapbook, *Trailer Park Oracle* (Kelsey Books Nov 2015). Another full-length collection, entitled *A Little Blood, A Little Rain*, is forthcoming from FutureCycle Press in 2016. She teaches at Longwood University and with the low-residency MFA faculty at West Virginia Wesleyan College. Mary is at work on a memoir.
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Instead of Wings

I've broken bones, shoulder blades that fold like paper clips, ribs stretched and cracked from carrying babies, three of them pressed into the spiny cage of my back, tumbling down through the dark passage between my hips. Femur song, long bones hollow now as flutes. Maybe that's the sound you hear, when you sink down into me, wind singing through empty space, a woman's history of giving as displaced as stars in that vast and distant sky. Sometimes when I cum, I cry, from the beautiful collapse and explosion, from the tender notion that all women have harbored over time–that maybe you can still teach me how to fly.
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Some Mornings Are Chronic

tenacious in their violence, relentless in the ache that tastes dark as coffee burnt to the bottom of the pot.
I had dreamt of being deaf, of losing the sounds of birds, the wishing whir of water, then worse, in the dream, someone threatened my son, and I, now also mute, found myself incapable of protecting him. I shivered into the kitchen. Arms folded, I stared at things, cups, sink, unable to separate into waking.
It was the morning they blew up Paris.
A hawk, brown as toast, sat at my window. He screeched into the hollow, into the wind. His ruff, crowned tuft of white feathers, lifted and fell again and again with each tense high note. Down the road, I could hear the horses, their braying, like wailing, like the barbed wire I always knew would never hold. The hawk screamed for them to stop, but I knew they would run, persistent in their race

against this insidious sadness, until their lungs ripped with cold and fire, until their blood left flecked trails on the snow.
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A Poor Girl’s History, and Doc Martens

1
I bought mine second-hand, in 81, from the thrift shop on the mall called Dapper Dan’s. Couldn’t afford them new, and I had plans, was gonna spray paint them blue, with swirls, Van Gogh’s Starry Night, in every step that I made. I bought Cyndi Lauper lace too, tied up my you-can’t-be-white hair right there at the counter, as the girl desperately seeking someone didn’t even look up as I paid. She did sigh, though, as she counted the coins, tips it had taken me three days waiting tables at The Crow’s Nest to make.
2
I wore them with a cute print dress, thick socks, and lace leggings, letting that lace peek between the
flounce of the hem and the bite of the boot, like a tease, like a promise, like a threat, like I knew the secret of what it meant to be both wanted and wild.
3
My mama hated them, especially when I wore them with skirts. She scowled, didn’t say much, took my fashion defiance, my stomping about in the dirt, with sorrowful silence. I know now, this woman who, as a child, had no shoes at all, understood that booted call to power, like we could, both of us, somehow be, in the end, thick-skinned and protected, against the inherited violence of poverty, the legacy of anger and need. Sometimes, it takes a conspiracy to believe.

This entry was posted on Wednesday, April 6th, 2016 at 8:01 pm and is filed under Poetry
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