

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Matt Bialer: Two New Poems

Matt Bialer · Wednesday, February 19th, 2014

Matt Bialer is the author of six books of poetry including Radius (Les Editions du Zaporogue), Already Here, Ark, Black Powder, The Bloop (all from Black Coffee Press) and Bridge (Leaky Boot Press). His poems have appeared in many print and online journals including La Zaporogue, Green Mountains Review, Gobbet, Forklift Ohio and H_NGM_N.

Cultural Weekly is proud to premiere these two new poems.

TELL THEM WHAT I SAW

They are trying to revive me
 Floating above the Resus Area I am part
 Of a study – The Division of Perceptual Research
 The white patches of heaven on my chest
 Emergency medical physicians, nurses, technicians
 Lean over me Outside I can see my wife, two grown sons
 Weeping, a prayer circle Psalm 34:19 The Lord
 Always brings us through My son's track and field gear
 I'm above the nurses station Laughter, tonight's double date
 At the Well My mind more clear Bright light everywhere
 The doctor motions for the defibrillator paddles to shock me back
 I remember, the boys little, we climbed Mt. Greylock – miles
 Of farms, the curve of the earth They commence cardiopulmonary
 Resuscitation, even pound my chest I can see the video monitors
 Placed at the top of the ceiling Psi Effects Altered States
 Of consciousness If I come back, tell them what I saw 15 feet
 Above: Two cheetahs
 Racing across a great yellow plain A finish line Kingdom of Light

PAST LIFE

The nightmares haven't stopped
 Kicking, thrashing His mother wakes

Him, he's screaming 3 year old boy, otherwise
 Happy toddler Flopping around in his bed
 Like a broken power line Then the actual words:
 "Plane on fire! Blue Bear! Little man can't get out!"
 At Hobby Lobby – lifts a balsa wood propeller plane out of
 The bin "That's not a bomb Mommy. That's a drop tank"
 Distinguish World War II planes – P-51 Mustangs, Spitfires, Wildcats
 Drowsy in bed, reveals that he flew a Corsair, Japanese shot him down,
 Blue bear again, the name of the ship he took off from With my wrinkled
 Hands I dust off the photo frame, bleached shot of him, smiling from
 The cockpit – 65 years ago

These young parents of a boy, hearing the memories of my decades
 Lost older brother Boy's father, an oil executive, doesn't know
 Why he is at this reunion This is crazy USS Natoma Bay
 San Diego, Grant Hill ballroom Frail veterans at tables:
 Maps, journals, photographs Chasing his son's memories, not yet
 Potty trained My brother's memories No one knows what
 Blue bear means Someone's nickname? He finds the best
 Friend his boy mentioned – Jack, rear gunner, now in a wheelchair
 Bullets and bombs exploding everywhere, aircraft overhead
 Plane right next to him – his friend, my brother, last mission
 Raid near Iwo Jima, March 3, 1945 Hit head on, middle of
 The engine Nothing but debris

Boy's father calls Doesn't want to upset me
 He and his wife believe their little boy –
 My long dead brother Can they visit? Fly to Springdale
 From Baton Rouge My big brother 6 feet tall, 21 years old
 Loved flying Sang on the radio, in a choir Red Sails in the Sunset
 Before basic training took me to the county fair Water guns,
 Spin and Win Lots of prizes Down the midway – fireworks
 Bursts, rings of gold-green stars, twinkle and flutter down An
 Old lady now, I wear my plaid blouse, black slip-ons Serve
 A bowl of nuts The boy, five now, calls me Annie Parents
 Say it's rude He was the only one who ever called me that
 Our older sister Ruth, gone now Calls her Roof Mortified
 When Mama took the job, common maid Boy's father asks
 About the blue bear I shrug, tell them I don't know After
 They leave, out of a cardboard box, the clear plastic bag –
 Charred blue teddy bear I can still smell the gasoline

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