

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Nate Maxson: Two Poems

Nate Maxson · Thursday, November 13th, 2014

Nate Maxson has published three books of poetry: *Vaudeville Jihad* in 2011, *I Wished For A Serpent* in 2012, and the recent *The Age of Jive*. He can be found performing his poems around Albuquerque (where he lives) and abroad.

The Intruder

To capture in stillness, or rather catch and release (because I may be cruel but I'm not a killer)

A noise over brownouts in the fauna, underfoot when I'm trying to/ speak, please/ to solidify

The flash of snow, the scar before it grows/ the virus as it frolics,

Would be sweet/ blackberries ripened in mud under shattered greenhouses

And weren't we just, in carrying out the punishment as prescribed (envious beyond pragmatism)

Only subliminally aware of the difference between these actions/ the inoculation and the democratic response

Admitting the necessary brevity of a hypnotist (who has to keep the audience wanting more) and when that's not possible/ must disappear into a foregone conclusion, passing out in a rosegarden (how quaint)/ stems with thorns trimmed blotting out the sky

Like a mandala or a snow angel, it's the seeing that matters/ not the consumption

That's the real hunt, we may scoff at the notion of a quest but we still listen to hunger even as half-lie that I have no desire/ neither push nor spark (honest I don't)

For the weaponries of the obvious and the muscular (show me your trick again, I wasn't paying attention)

You hungry ones/ who move assured in dominion over hard earth marking territory in lipstick, urine and chalk

And when I awake listening to the arctic misplaced in desert branches dehydrated, it will be as an

intruder not a guest, however perfectly the silence I adapt

Your invitation/ to come on in, the water's fine/ is kind but frivolous

I'm just the watchmaker's apprentice (convinced of my surgery in time rather than the mechanism)/ in the end

I have never been to the place accused of being my homeland, I have only inhaled all the stories/ and I've come to the notion (gentle)

That when you realize: you aren't going to escape

Keep running

History Lesson

From the beginning of the 19th century through to the end of the second world war, there was a tradition among young upper class Austrian and German men

To receive

A scar from their fencing matches, this was called: a schmissen

Unlike in other European cultures, they considered it the chivalrous thing to do

To not duel with any footwork

And in fact the goal of a duel was not to win

But to withstand pain

So the most accomplished duelists would have several scars, some on their arms and some: on their faces

This was considered a mark

Of manhood among the wealthy

Some of them even accentuated the scars by putting horsehair in the bandages to aggravate the healing process

These people were widely considered to be, the most civilized of all the civilized people

This tradition

Went on until the middle of the 20th century

And I learned about it

From a book on the history of the holocaust that I was given as a child so I could learn what my

people had gone through

My grandfather said we should never ,ever (ever) forget and in case I should ever consider forgetting

Here was a book with a collection of starved children and bodies stacked a hundred feet high, for my education

The book had a photograph of a Waffen SS officer with a strange scar running down the side of his face, long and white like a flaw in the film made flesh

The swords were razor sharp, very thin and dipped in cooking oil

All greased up

For the war effort

Which brings me to my point,

I've known numerous women

Most of them, non-practicing Jews like myself

Whose arms and legs were crossed

With what appeared to be

Dueling scars

And while I may lack any such

Badges of honor

I did, however

Sleep

On a pile of stuffed animals

Until I was twelve

Years

Old

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