Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Peter Neil Carroll: Three Poems

Peter Neil Carroll · Thursday, December 17th, 2015

Peter Neil Carroll is the author of three collections of poetry, most recently *Fracking Dakota: Poems for a Wounded Land* (Turning Point, 2015) and *A Child Turns Back to Wave: Poetry of Lost Places* (Press Americana, 2012) which won the Prize Americana from the Institute for American Popular Culture. Other books include a memoir titled Keeping Time. He has taught creative writing at the University of San Francisco, taught history and American Studies at Stanford and Berkeley, and hosted "Booktalk" on Pacifica Radio. He lives in Belmont, California.

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Eye Witness

She was striding too fast, skidded
on a bulge in the pavement, flew
like a plane, and made a hard landing
on her face. I think she broke her nose.
Blood splattered her glasses. An old man
stopped to help her up. He brushed
off her navy blue coat. A shopkeeper
appeared with a box of tissues, dabbed
her face. The woman kept saying
thank you, thank you, thank you.
She had a refined voice, polished
manner. She wore mint-green panties.
I was behind her when it happened.

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Looking

The ocean is sneaky, low waves, rapid
surges, a drawn backward suck. Crab-like
a breaker leaps, catches a woman stepping
in foam, snatches the top of her swimsuit.
She screams, hands jump to her breasts.
Children nearby gawk at her panic, show
fear. An older boy moves closer. Her friend

rushes with a towel, his voice soothing.
The kids turn, scatter, but the youth
stays, entranced. Man and woman retreat
to a blanket. She dresses, gathers her bag
and basket. The boy struck rigid, his face
a mask. He’s done nothing but
look, seen. Her image riveted, indelible,
for him, for me, eternal.

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Bait

Canvas backs cackle after sex
and smoothly swim apart. Trees
still bare, the woods don’t filter
light. Green is greener, flesh
fleshier. Speechless deer stare
at the humping geese. We’re all bait
for a passing creature. I hesitate
to approach strangers, afraid
to startle someone I may want to eat.

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