

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Suzanne Lummis: "The Perfect Man" & Three More Poems

Suzanne Lummis · Thursday, May 23rd, 2013

Suzanne Lummis has poems forthcoming in the debut issue of an ambitious new literary magazine edited by Christopher Buckley, *Miramar*, in *Solo Novo* published by Glenna Luschei, and a defining essay and special feature on the Poem Noir for New Mexico's *Malpais Review*, for which she is the California correspondent.

The Perfect Man

(A Nursery Story)

For the men who've asked me,

*Why isn't there a perfect man
in any of your plays?*

He's lonely.

There is only one of him.

He's like the last-of-its-kind

someone captured

and shipped back to the zoo.

Except he

has never been captured, only

by the mirror that captures

his image, speaks

the same reassurance:

you are the fairest . . .

He sighs and, from habit,

straightens his tie, though

already it marks the shortest

possible

distance between two points.

It's terrible being a myth.

Why can't he do goofy

ordinary things—

cruise down boulevards,

be in a play?

He moves

through his rooms,

those spaces clean
 as deep space but stuffed
 with pure light.
 Why can't he be bad?
 He fires a cigarette, lets it droop
 from his lips with a roguish
 nonchalance. No ash
 falls from its tip.
 No smoke rises.

Fruital

Two men wheeling their stuff pull
 past and I catch *I've given up trying*
with her, it's fruital. The airport hums
 with frustration—ice-rimmed,
 delayed and grounded planes.
 It's like when all the thwarted
 ambitions of our lives sprout fruit, aromatic,
 thick, and—Shoot!—we're back
 in the Garden of so-called Eden again,
 this time at the Tree of
You Ain't Goin' Anywhere.
 We devour the syrupy, noggin
 shapes—smack! Now we're crammed
 with those sugars and stuffed
 in our windowless seats—sticky
 and fat. But how can a plane lift
 from the runway with us in its hull? It'll
 quit trying. We're stuck and it's fruital.

Femme Fatale

It's a crime story she's in:
 betrayal and larceny, few clues.
 Someone stole what she lived for,
 made off like a thief in the night
 or high noon. What shall she do?
 This: slide a heel on each foot
 and set out, snapping at each step.
 The man she loves smiles
 from the drug store's rack
 of magazines, just in.
 Looks like he's wrapped his move,
 dropped his wife on a Frisian Island
 and is flying his girlfriend to St. Tropez.
 The men who love her finger coins

in the stale linings of their front pockets,
 and whimper What's your name?
 The job she wanted went
 to the man who tells the truth
 from one side of his mouth, lies
 from the other: a bilingual.
 The job she got lets her answer
 the questioning phone all day.
 Her disappointment has appetite,
 gravity. Fall in, you'll be crunched,
 stretched thin as Fettuccine. Watch
 out for her, this woman,
 there is more than one. That woman
 with you, for instance,
 checking herself in the mirror
 to see where she stands—
 she's innocent so far, but someone
 will disappoint her.
 Even now you're beginning to.
 Even now you're in danger.

Hurrying Toward the Present

“No past tense permitted”
 – Kay Boyle from *A Poem for Samuel Beckett*
 Darlings, this may be the only
 great escape we ever make:
 start dropping your past
 behind you—seeds, kernels
 to be pecked up by scavengers.
 You won't find your way back.
 Or try this: package it,
 mark it Was. Leave it in a locker
 at the Greyhound Bus station.
 Leave the door ajar. Let
 a thief inherit it. You can bet
 it'll dog him like it dogged you.
 Step smack-flat into
 the blasting present,
 your heart asserting Now-Now.
 You feel neither the pain
 left behind, nor what waits
 tapping its hard foot
 up ahead.
 And now, stand up the future!
 Let it go on pacing and cursing
 as it peers towards your whereabouts,
 and the cat's eye gleam

of its watch calculates
the lateness of the hour.

Cultural Weekly is proud to premiere this version of 'The Perfect Man' (an earlier version appeared in Solo) and 'Fruital.' 'Femme Fatale' first appeared in Solo, and 'Hurrying Toward The Present' first appeared in The Cider Press Review.

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