

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Richard Jones: Two Poems

Richard Jones · Wednesday, September 23rd, 2015

Richard Jones is the author of seven books of poetry from Copper Canyon Press, including *The Correct Spelling & Exact Meaning*. This autumn a new collection of poems about his father, *King of Hearts*, will appear from [Adastra Press](#). *Cultural Weekly* is proud to premiere these two poems.

The Messengers

*Of making many books
there is no end. . . .
—Ecclesiastes*

The children miss me,
remote in the study,
devoted to the making of books.
They think my devotion misplaced
and can leave me
to solitude
for brief moments only,
finding any number of excuses
to come into the room.
They “need to talk”
and always what they have to say or ask
is “very, very important.”
That’s why
they must interrupt
“one last time.”
Seated,
I look into their eyes
as they stand by my desk,
perfectly still.
They take a breath
and search their minds;
for that which is,
is far off,

and deep, very deep;
 who can find it out?
 Endless questions burn,
 a thousand fires they must extinguish—
How do birds fly?
Why are stars invisible
during the day?
Where does my shadow go
at night?
 But just as often
 they already have the answer—
 ever-surprising,
 divine—
 and which as messengers
 they've come to share with their father,
 who lays down his pen,
 takes their hands,
 and looking into their faces
 listens
 to each breathless soliloquy
 describing and pondering
 the sight of the eyes,
 the light sweet,
 their small voices
 the miracle
 he was praying for
 before they came into the room.

Shoes

“Astonishing now to see
 my whole life has been a lie,”
 he said, looking in my eyes
 to see if I understood
 the horror of his insight.
 “It’s almost too much to bear,
 knowing everything I did,
 every thought I ever had,
 was all wrong—off center,
 out of kilter. It’s too much,”
 he said, “too painful to bear.”
 Then he lowered his head and
 looked at his polished shoes,
 clumsy and absurd at the end
 of his long legs, and pondered
 their laced deceitfulness,
 as if all those terrible years

his shoes should have known
better, and turned, and walked
him in the opposite direction.

(Photo of Jack Grapes (l) and Richard Jones by Alexis Rhone Fancher)

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