

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Tyree Daye: Two Poems

Tyree Daye · Wednesday, June 3rd, 2020

**To: All Poets
From: Northeastern North Carolina**

It's just getting hot,
dogwoods showering our shoulders with flowers.

I saw dead baby birds on a trail
so I know new life has arrived

lost in the survival of pine and ash. I'll say it plainly—
we need you down here.

Yesterday, my uncle put a nail through his thumb
working for the same white man he's worked for since sixth grade.

Last night his blood fell on the bathroom floor and made a star
he couldn't follow.

He needs to hear your poems.

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Field Notes on Beginning

they each had a decision before them. In this, they were not unlike anyone who ever longed to cross the Atlantic or the Rio Grande.

Isabel Wilkerson, from The Warmth of Other Suns

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I wear my grandmother's wing-ready bones
 like a blue unbuttoned housedress
 through the city of festivals and fireworks that blow up in a one cloud sky
 Some nights the block tells me all its problems
 The city becomes one mouth its tongue pointed to the sky like a steeple

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I'll meet you at the hanging tree in Rolesville in 1957
 I'll be the man in his father's hat
 you be women back from the dead we've decided
 a long time ago the question is not how
 can black people pray to Jesus? It's how can white people?
 I'll meet you on a train headed to Queens
 just tell me where I promise to gather your bones
 only for good I was not touched by the darkness
 between two buildings I stayed in the moonlight
 like you told your daughter to tell me
 I don't want to die
 in the south like so many of mine
 I want to be carried back

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We were digging in a field you'd turned over
 When you lifted the soil in your hands you knew its name

This is what you said was mercy ground
 that I was safe here and I began digging again

I saw every lover who once held you
 while your children slept
 in rooms of so many blankets
 one small fire for everyone

the blankets wrapped so tight
 no cold could get in

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Leaving is necessary some say

There is a whole ocean between you and a home

you can't fix your tongue to speak

<>

Others do not want me no farther than the length of a small yard

They ask Where are you going, Tyree? Your mama here

you've got stars in your eyes a ship in your movement

<>

I said my few-note goodbyes my dead will not come
I will not see a cardinal in the city

so I drew one on my chest
A coop inside a coop inside of me

(Both poems are from his book *Cardinal*, from Copper Canyon Press, 2020.
<http://www.tyree.work/>)

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