

# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## Lynne Burnett: “The Colour of Bruises”

Lynne Burnett · Wednesday, October 16th, 2019

*2019 Jack Grapes Poetry Prize winner selected by judge Eric Morago*

When an image from a poem sits with me long after I have read it, I know *that* poem is something special and is one I’ll want to revisit again and again: “rouse the girl I knew, *get out*—the only net / for such a high-wire act.” There is so much that this simple metaphor implies about being in an abusive relationship. The compassion of one being abused to something as breathtaking as a trapeze act creates a delicious complexity. It is a surprising, yet also apt, comparison; the *getting out* as “the only net” image elicits such wonderful visuals of that moment when falling gives way to catch—and fear turns into relief and safety. But make no mistake, this poem has a lot more than one stunning image carrying its weight. The poet makes use of many tricks: rich use of language and sound, reoccurring imagery, and excellent word economy (every word is necessary and intentional, moving the narrative forward). Craft and creativity aside, I also commend how the poet calls attention to domestic abuse in a way that does not come across as didactic. There’s a lot of heart in this work, for the “women pinned to silence.” Every time I read it, I too am left with an ache for “this kind of story to end.”

— Eric Morago

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## The Colour of Bruises

*He didn’t mean it* (again?). She hangs up.  
I’m fireside on a cold night, chilled further  
by a secret that burns to be told—an old friend  
under the mumbo jumbo of a drunkard’s spell.  
Wood crackles like the crack of a heavy hand,  
tongued by flames the colour of bruises. Flicker  
of blue: her eyes, shame’s orbit of dark glasses.

What has passed for love, wounding its name,  
turning it into a blasphemous heat, no mercy?  
Douse it before it consumes you, Diana:  
rouse the girl I knew, *get out*—the only net  
for such a high-wire act. Listen, you’re not alone—  
in the wings: other women pinned to silence,

dying for this kind of story to end.

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