

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Richard Jones: Three Poems

Richard Jones · Wednesday, February 1st, 2017

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.

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The End is Here, Almost

The end is here, almost.
The fields and hills are smoke.
The sun is just a ghost.
There's no one on the road.

*

The fields and hills are smoke.
The garden's parched and thin.
There's no one on the road.
There's not a breath of wind.

*

The garden's parched and thin.
The bed can find no rest.
There's not a breath of wind.
There's nothing to confess.

*

The bed can find no rest.
The plowshare's dull with rust.
There's nothing to confess.
The days have turned to dust.

*

The plowshare's dull with rust.
 There's nowhere left to hide.
 The days have turned to dust.
 The hands of time are tied.

*

There's nowhere left to hide.
 Shadows turn to flames.
 The hands of time are tied.
 The night is like a grave.

*

Shadows turn to flames.
 The sun is just a ghost.
 The night is like a grave.
 The end is here, almost.

Check-Up

My doctor in his white coat thinks it funny,
 my fear of death.
 He looks up from his desk where he's typing his notes
 and interrupts my monolog
 to ask if I'm kidding.
 And sitting on the examining table in my paper gown
 with my bare feet and skinny legs dangling down,
 I tell him no, I'm not kidding—
 I'm serious
 about death and dying.
 I want him to take my hand,
 look at his watch, feel my pulse,
 and write notes about my heart into his computer,
 the way I write poems about dying—
 swan songs and dirges.
 But instead of an elegy,
 he rolls his black chair back,
 stands up, looks me in the eye,
 and frankly tells me again I'm funny, really funny.
 He tells me about people who have real problems,
 cancer, stents, catheters, degenerative
 diseases for which medicine can do nothing,
 people who can't breath,

people who can no longer get enough blood
 and oxygen into their hearts.
 Their hearts? I ask.
 In his practice, my doctor tells me, he's seen it all,
 or so he'd thought, he says,
 until he met me.
 Then my doctor who keeps me alive
 opens the closed door of the examining room
 and calls two young colleagues,
 a man and woman half my age,
 doctors fresh from medical school,
 each one impossibly handsome
 in long blue coats with silver stethoscopes
 hanging around their necks like doom.
 In the hallway they are smiling
 as he tells them about the patient in his office,
 pointing to the man in the green paper gown
 open at the back, and now
 even the nurse holding the cup
 with my urine sample is laughing,
 along with the secretaries
 and the receptionist double-checking to see
 that my insurance is still good.

Hallmark

Every year of high school
 during the holiday season
 from Thanksgiving to Christmas,
 when the chill light was failing
 and the days were growing dark,
 my deaf mother and I worked
 for minimum wage in the P.X.
 of the Naval Base in Norfolk,
 opening boxes and arranging
 in the aisle's long display rack
 thousands of greeting cards.
 My mother would turn to me
 and read each card out loud
 as if she were delivering
 the greatest poem ever written.
 I love my mother, and so I said
 nothing, though I'd grit my teeth
 and shut my eyes not to hear
 the sticky sentiment and clichés.
 Those afternoons in early winter
 were a budding poet's Freudian

nightmare, though looking back,
I've grown fond of the memory,
so much so that tonight I will sign
the card I've chosen, thanking her
for being who she is—my mother—
and send it off in a pink envelope.

(Author photo by Sarah Jones)

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