

# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## Stephanie Barbé Hammer: Three Poems

Stephanie Barbé Hammer · Wednesday, September 11th, 2019

### War (Larchmont Village, Los Angeles)

There's a war here on the two  
 Fences— my neighbor's and mine — between the squirrels and  
 The birds.  
 It's been going on for days.  
 The two squirrels — one big one little  
 Mount an attack on a tree — why?  
 No idea. There's some weird fruit maybe  
 Or maybe it's existential — *the tree is THERE*  
*And therefore we must attack it* and the bird —  
 What kind? No idea, I am a city person and this  
 Is a city poem so get off my back about sub-species  
 And breeds — so anyhow the bird flies after them  
 Attacking and flapping and pecking til they both  
 Run back across the fences and hide under the part  
 Of the roof that is higher, and so makes a little  
 Bomb shelter for them. I feel sorry for the squirrels at  
 First but they recover from the pecking and they crawl  
 Back along the fence to attack the tree again. They  
 Look like soldiers. They *are* soldiers on a mission  
 And I wonder if there's any way out of this — attacks and counter  
 Attacks and the wounded licking their tails under buildings.  
 I wonder if my neighbor notices. Probably not.  
 Since his wife left him, he isn't home much. I see him  
 At the coffee shop with other neighbors whom I  
 Recognize but don't know personally. I never  
 Saw the neighbor and his wife fighting, but one time I heard her  
 Orgasming alone with the windows open. He  
 Had gone to work. Just her car in the garage.  
 It sounded happy. She was glad I think to finally  
 Have a moment's  
 Peace.

\*

## Neighbors, unseen and seen (Atwater Village, Los Angeles)

At our Airbnb I listen to our newly arrived next door neighbors  
They got in late last night slamming the door and talking.

He sounds foreign, his voice lilts masculine  
She sounds softer, laughing — appreciative?

Or perhaps just resigned. And then the hard steps  
The pounding feet of the child or children; they/s/he leap/s

5 times on the wood floor. The chairs scrape. Then the house goes silent.  
It's quiet now. This makes me think they can't be American. They are too aware

Of others, too mindful of space and sound. But then I could  
Be wrong. I wonder how we sound to them. Do our voices ring old?

Or suburban? Funny how when I lived in a city, neighbors drove  
Me crazy. Now, I long for others — the noisier the better. Yesterday I walked

On a street and looked up at the sky crisscrossed by telephone poles and wires  
I stared at all those crackling connections while a dour girl in pj's came out and emptied the trash.

\*

## A Los Angeles argument about Washington State

we are fighting about the benefits of  
country living  
outside on the patio of this cafe  
on a big street in Hollywood.  
you are trying to speak softly because we  
are surrounded by hipsters with dogs  
and cellphones. you talk about the values of rural quiet, while  
a garbage truck groans, screeches, slams down cans  
and two French guys behind me talk in their language  
in loud voices that I understand exactly  
from the time I lived in Montpellier and eavesdropped  
all the time from loneliness because you were in  
New York practicing  
law.  
they say: "this bullshit of asking how are  
you? and the answer always 'fine don't worry'  
but you should worry I am so worried."  
and you say, "I am so worried people can hear us" and I say  
"no one is f-ing listening. no one cares  
because we are old and we aren't actors and that's  
the beauty of it. we can say anything."  
one hipster pats another hipster's dog  
and the French guys are still talking about

being worried. and you say “you’re  
right!”  
and you laugh  
because  
we can shout under this complete  
cone of silence while the garbage truck  
roars.

This entry was posted on Wednesday, September 11th, 2019 at 4:04 pm and is filed under [Poetry](#).  
You can follow any responses to this entry through the [Comments \(RSS\)](#) feed. You can skip to the  
end and leave a response. Pinging is currently not allowed.