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

<>

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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