Sheila Black: Two Poems [1]

November 13, 2013 Featured Poetry [2]

& how you make me more alive

In the high plains, the bright colors of
buildings in snow

I see only a picture on a screen

myself turning away
(this long and studied) fading of even the idea

You (us)

For so long I wanted you
It was not (pretty) though I willed it so

it was (not) but every time you
walked in a room

a small foretaste like two children on
a boat

shining (and) stillness

the voices hushed for night like the house

where the father walks around
turning (out) the lights

or the tiny frogs croaking in the mud basins

what pulsing of throat what (open)

I practice imagining you in places I can't see

from (tiny) pictures reconstruct elaborate
daily routines

what stones you count, two ravens on a wire
fence or

six swans aligned on a nickel-colored lake

even a sourness of local bread
(do they eat bread?)

local rice, the cold in the bowl
the thin pancake. It doesn't matter (any) more

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he plays more beautifully when she is gone

The orphic (the Orpheus) lute player

in an after of river and willow

heedless and lost (where) his fingers find
the edge in the string

I read this in the “Dictionary of Myths,” a book

I love for its quixotic title. The muffle (echo)

voice through the trees (which is this)
in which I keep pruning (back), cutting lines

like threads of wire as though (without) them I

would (sing) better or (fly)



[3]

Letter in October

The man holds himself still in the
glaze of wisteria, that purple bruise
cool to enter me. Now he walks across

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a sunlit plaza, the doves above, the
familiar background—drill, paint thinner,
a stillness in his bones and mine—
October: The trees preparing to flame
and fall, become the bareness
under us. I walk to my classroom down
a hall hushed with dust, blown up
from the south, the pure desert where the
light might pin him, leave him
without so much as a shadow.
And today I am all cage, the bones
holding barely, the lava inside corrosive,
a terrible bloom. *Want me,* the hum
my pulse spins when I know it means
so little—shiny thread, bright button.
Doves gather on the branches outside,
plum petals shiver to ground, the burn
inside the tree, the chill it senses under
the flitter of sunlight, blue and more blue,
the sky like an intercession.

Art Information

- "Japanese Wisteria [3]" © TANAKA Juuyoh; Creative Commons license.



Sheila Black is the author of *House of Bone* and *Love/Iraq* (both published by CW Press). She coedited (with Jennifer Bartlett and Mike Northen) *Beauty Is a Verb: The New Poetry of Disability* (Cinco Puntos Press), named a Notable Book for 2012 by the American Library Association. A third collection, *Wen Kroy,* is forthcoming from Dream Horse Press.

Black is a 2012 Witter Bynner Fellow in Poetry, selected by Philip Levine. She lives in San Antonio, Texas, where she directs Gemini Ink, a literary arts center.

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