Mercury [1]

April 10, 2017 Featured Poetry [2]
Borders [3]

Poem by Kevin Killian



Mercury

When I broke the glass thermometer, out ran the mercury,

in one liquid blob, matter calling to matter, like not one of its molecules
wanted to be parted from another even for a moment.

Mercury was supposed to be so mercurial—like Ariana Reines, the poet.

We were celebrating her book *Mercury*, in Chicago for the AWP,

she and Dodie and Peter and Lewis Warsh, reading together in a bar, and

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she cancelled, due to snow in New York, but the crowd learned that
she had deputized Thurston Moore to read for her,

so they were assuaged, but then it turned out Thurston
had missed the same plane. Joel Craig, the emcee, came out and had
to announce that they wouldn't be getting Ariana, *nor Thurston*,

but me, and this one woman, sitting at a round table by herself next to the
mic, by herself except fourteen bottles of beer surrounded her, when
she heard the news she smashed a bottle on the table and screamed,
"Fuck that" and bolted into the snow, so I got up and read, thinking
worst auspices ever....

My mind ran clear, and I declared to myself I would be Ariana for half an
hour,

just assume her identity. To my aid came Thespis on silvery wings. I was
more Ariana than she herself had ever been, I'm sure, and as I spoke
her words, I understood the difficult section of *Mercury* called
"Thursday" as has nobody

else before or since. I was writing it on stage, live, giving it to my fans,
word by word, and I realized that he, the missing Thurston, was the
god they had coined the word "Thursday" after,

for he would bless us on a Thursday if we leaned on him,

it could be any day of the week,

it could be all the molecules in his body entering and filling mine,

I would be a day. I'd run around after myself. I would cohere.

When I finished, the silence swelled around me, profound, then a burst of
sustained applause, and even the woman out in the snow was
sobbing, for she hadn't heard me.

Art Information

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Kevin Killian is a San Francisco-based writer and artist. His books include *Impossible Princess*, *Action Kylie*, three volumes of *Selected Amazon Reviews*, and *Tweaky Village*. Recent projects include a novel, *Spreadeagle*, and *Tagged*, nude portraits of poets, artists, writers, and musicians. *Writers Who Love Too Much: New Narrative Writing 1977-1997*, a capacious anthology edited by Dodie Bellamy and Kevin Killian, will be out from Nightboat Books this spring.

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