

BEVERLY BURCH

Apologia for Exposed Roots

*... give them beauty for ashes,
The oil of joy for mourning.*

Isaiah 61:3

Forgive me, how I am ravished
by the blossoming face of others' disasters.

I never meant to step outside and feel awe
but after the explosion that killed forty strangers
the sky bled a vein of jade and indigo.

The day a firestorm feasted on hillside homes
I felt a smack of reverence as noon sun
turned red and crippled gods appeared
in the spiky architecture of blasted oaks.

Demiurge. Maker who buckled me this way
to cataclysm, must want me to keep looking.
A land mine bares a filigree of exposed roots.
A tsunami thumps open the sea's body
like an egg.

Not to stand and gawk but see it all:
and to know it's about pain.

Forgive me. I seek apertures for grace,
even a small fracture.
Otherwise it's just shrieking. Like a dog slammed
by a pickup, left in the road bloody.

Beverly Burch's work has appeared in *New England Review*, *Willow Springs*, *Salamander*, *Tinderbox Poetry Journal*, *Southern Humanities Review*, and *Poetry Northwest*. Her first book, *Sweet to Burn*, won the Gival Press Poetry Award and a Lambda Literary Award. Her second poetry collection, *How A Mirage Works*, was a finalist for the Audre Lorde Award. She is a psychotherapist in Berkeley, California.

STEPHANIE HEIT

Mardi Gras Lights, 2016
Oil on canvas, 30 x 30 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST