

Wilderness House Literary Review 10/4

Doug Bolling

The Moments, the Passage

These yellowing leaves along Darksome Creek,
the current now swift now slowed in ramble
below gray bluffs and limestone ledges surely
giving way to time and gravity.

For all my cynicism spawned of a modernity
too huge too unwritten to corner and tame,
I nevertheless claim it once again, some
holiness of earth earthen, some sounding
rising out of a mountain's mystery telling
of a more not less.

In our faraway youth we came here to
swim and begin talk of love, imagine
futures somewhere out there where
dream and sky meet.

More than once deer stared us down
from the undergrowth keeping their
distance with wary eye. Nothing
hostile, just some version of curiosity
permitted by the evolutionary chain.

We were names and bodies and
hopes in some jumble unmeasured,
clowns and kings and owners of
more than we knew, creatures of
an uncertain heat, a sufficiency.

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Now here in a lateness marked
by falling leaves and an unfamiliar
wind I pause in celebration of the
moments one by one, gifts that
say it's OK to be who you are
even with the many failures,
it's OK to hold your remaining
days like a chalice to be filled.

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Tidelands

Where you track the heron tall among
weed and wrack, eelgrass tide tossed.

Sky a composite, patchwork gallery
just there, unwritten.

What motions foretold this,
these shifting dunes in curl
and sway moment by
moment,

you the febrile one made of
heat and dream, two legs
of slow motion.

This lapsed sea gull now a spatter
on moss threaded rock,
whisper below moon,
broken beak and shatter
of wings.

Three sails far out caught in
wind's fury, toy bobbing
on something leonine
aged in a moon's lust.

Where you stand is spume
and absence.
The pledges you made far back
in distant rooms of glances
and drawn drapery.

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Here only moments torn from
a sea's swell and fall,
cello pausing among weep
and boom of taut string.

No dictating mind here,
no frame gathering in,
only a momentary space
holding you,
moving on.

Winter with Cusp

It takes a winter to know how far
the reach, what profit in loss.
Or perhaps only the stars know,
keep track, weigh each false step
through such gardens of snow
and summer's deceased blackbirds
now in pallor of freeze and
forever.

I come each season to measure
danger in heavy ice and weight
of solitude, crush of some
unseen gravity pulling at my
cogito, frail, timid,
rarely touched.

Think pine and fir deep into woods
pathless, compass blind,
stalking your every move.

Think disaster and how far off
is the house of you where each
day they arrange you by
name and pour hot coffee.

A thousand owls must know it,
crack and howl of winter toss
among brittle of branch,
sudden ice in one way plunge.

You hear them now:

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beware, step softly,
count how far the chance,
what coin you can put
on the table.