

Wilderness House Literary Review 11/1

Rich Ives

Alms

*More than enough has been said about ignorance,
but it's all pretty ignorant, so why are you listening?*

That's what the man on the corner is saying. Every day
I walk routinely by and he tries to pour a bucket of

ambiguity on my head. Clarity looks immodest,
but the worst that can be said of it is it won't keep you
warm. Simple problems don't always have complicated
solutions, but how many ways can simplicity do as you ask

the wrong way. The small difficulty you throw out the window
always lands where it makes another's load heavier. I prefer to
sing my happier lyrics with a little strain. It makes the good will
reverberate, and fools think you're not worth listening to, and

they wander off in search of the sugar bowl, which doesn't
sleep, or remember its dream, or notice how its sugar melts
just a little at the wrong moment. The ducks, of course,
can float, so that's how much sugar I give him.

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An Apology for Running Away with It

I'm certain to be discovered. There's a sack of me
in your misunderstanding of my misunderstanding,
like a dust collector worshipped by thieves,

and there's the temptation of reticence to be considered.

I said, *I'm sorry. I'm promised to possibility.*

Was there a discovery I hadn't left open?

How easy it is to unfold a storm, I thought,
the first time I heard that idea climb
into my ear to murmur and purr. She's

a beauty. She wears the jewelry of wounds like
a saint. I'm sneezing thoughtful chairs, I'm sneezing tables,
I'm sneezing interior decoration and beautiful furnishings.

It won't fit my body, but inside, I've taken with me
the crow of light, and his brother might
be there to accept his share, and all night long

I experience starlight landing.

I've slept a great distance. I need rest.

Oh my dear folded one, my heart, my pigeon,

the way you've done this is so adult, so certain
where there is no certainty, where the parade of
witnesses from a distant limb are still trying to testify.

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An Appreciation of Daydreaming

I was brought here, before my birth, by deep caves of circumstantial navigation.
The interior shrubs sagged so low you couldn't hide under them unless
you were already beneath and didn't know what had happened.

When I was a young girl, I threw some bushes around and discovered a pathway
that had been there all along, and oh the chickadees, the chickadees, the chicka-
dees

wove the branches together, gossiping excitedly. I began imagining

a valuable arrowhead was not something I remembered,
but something I held in my shoe to punish myself. I will not
stay here long enough to recover this exchange, already a stubborn loss.

The loved one's approach is a gradual incline. Too many combs
have become available and his mane surrenders itself. (How is this possible?)
The slots in the traveled woods are small enough for larger horses.

It's not acceptable to converse with the apparitions in the new church,
but there's always enough warmth to discuss the why not because I lived in
something that could have happened, and then it didn't happen, and

the earth still returns me until what I have in the words
remembers it's still not what you have in your hands,
which is not the way I experienced it. Sometimes I still live here

though it's known by everyone but me as something else now.

It bothers me that I know this. It makes me too much like everyone else.

A true cloud must go through the body, not around or over it.

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An Attractive Illness

How beautifully my life is being taken away,
but the art of these assassins remains temporary.
Death never ages an old dodger's obscene and
seductive calling. His seething cauldron of surly
princes on the make flaunts his surrogate darkness.
He wishes me no more harm than I currently wish
his yappy little sidekick, but there's a delicious
black screen behind childish delight. I've got
an ex to grind and a bone to trick. Once more
last night the full bottle of memories grew
drunk on air and filled me with its history of
ferment, or was it defeat's portion? I knew
you were innocent, but I didn't know myself.
When I got sick on it, you arrived excited.

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An Autobiography of Air

Air's lost child tells of a propeller inside, an old hat worn by another child, which a third child remembers, inside, not trying to impress anyone.

Evening says yes and yes and again,
as if slowly forgetting how wonderful escape can be.
It's a courtesy that wakes me like children

gluing paper wings on grasshoppers, which keeps
the wings from opening, and their own wings as well,
like *innocence* but without the innocence.

So I wonder, *Which way did one of you run?*
And the child has bent the nails. The child has
pulled on them. The child has climbed

into the holes, where the child's body becomes
a bag of weights with names like *Yesterday* and
You didn't answer me. Phantom pain lies

low and to the left of the limb, which was hurting
last week. I should translate. You would know what's left
could float there. Life was full of trouble, yes astonishing,

because it was my life, and I didn't want it,
because I didn't know how much I wanted it.
Now I'm a stingy child that still smells like

missing cheese before a breath is there to share it,
just before anything I could be. It happens before.
We don't need to be so ready.