

Wilderness House Literary Review 17/1

George Freek

AT TIMES I LIE AWAKE (After Li Po)

And I look to the stars.
They tell me the hours,
like a clock without a face,
but they inhabit a cold
and distant place.
The moon reveals nothing.
It gives me neither
kindness nor grace.
I walk into a field
covered in snow. I have
nowhere else to go.
Alone, I stand listening
to the wind blow.
All the birds are silent,
except the sudden
screech of an owl.
I think something
is now dead.
And I hurry home.
I fall into my ice-cold bed.

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AN INSUBSTANTIAL BREEZE (After Tu Fu)

Does nature have meanings,
which mean nothing to me?

Nature is a mystery.

The moon rises,
as if draped in lace;
then falls like a rock
at its habitual pace.

It's the dead of winter.

I drink strong wine.

Nearly sixty, I'm
running out of time.

My wife died young
and left me alone.

I stare at her garden,
where roses once bloomed.

There are no more seeds.

it's now full of weeds.

Its blossoms are stones.

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WINTER IN MY GARDEN (After Mei Yao Chen)

Summer's flowers are gone.
All that is left are
the decaying remains.
The trees are bare.
I can hardly remember
when leaves were there.
In the garden the hammock,
where my wife used to lie,
creaks in a wind
that descends from the sky.
As the winter approaches,
I talk to my cat,
to the moon and the stars.
They have nothing to say.
It's their usual way.
The shadow of an elm
falls over the hammock.
With a gentle grace,
it falls like a pall
or a monk's tattered cassock.