

Wilderness House Literary Review 17/2

Molly Mattfield Bennett
Geography / Earth

*Where the land meets the sea
Some read maps, complex instruments,
flights of birds
for the signs that tell of approaching storms.*

Woe

As the sky darkens the wind and rain fall, and torment drums;
minds crumble before the onslaught.

Is there no one there or do they refuse to see the hand
held out? Do the walkers choose the briar

Filled path, do their eyes not see the blackberries?
Asleep or awake all is one.

They enter a cavernous room, wait on uncomfortable chairs
to be called in a precise and mysterious order

To stand and explain their grief. The arguments are complex;
the focus a flower seller hawking dreams.

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Anger

Drives into town past the paper mill, past mountains of pine logs stripped clean of bark; the air thick with sulfur.

Drives through other towns where rivers run past tanneries, past pig or chicken farms and the fish float.

When dreams crack, people gather on back streets; when voices or devices explode, the children hide.

Old town is a mill town on the river, and the water flows through the old lead pipes.

The families and the children wash and drink the water from the old river.

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Courage

A small girl on the jungle bars talks the Boy Who Roars into roaring at monsters behind a wall.

The boy who keeps true to old friends and his dreams in spite of the flash of easy money.

A mother's cancer has returned, and the nine year old keeps house for the babies.

Anyone who yet again packs the car for a job somewhere far from all they've ever known.

The men and women who leap down to the tracks to save a stranger who fell as the train approached.

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Hope

Sees the homeless who wait on the corner, pitch tents
by the train tracks and highway edges,

Sees the rivers and lakes disappear. They weep
and try to work their gardens. It is hard

To follow the cycle of wrinkled seeds to lush
flowers, ripe fruit to wrinkled seeds.

With nightfall they gather neighbors, friends
to remember. They eat and talk.

They talk of sun and rain, of what is and is not
as someone's baby or dog plays.

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Joy

This singular moment, held in the present as it expands in
delight to fill the infinite. Then

The whole self focused as if one were again a small child up
before the others on a wood path.

Barefoot on soft dust. Twigs and tiny pebbles. Ahead at
the turn a small browner-than-dirt bird

Whirls the dust in a shower of light as if in water, and the child edges
closer. Child and bird pause

On the path in dust and in sun. Soon
there are voices. The day begins.