

**Wilderness House Literary Review 17/4**

*Jeremy Nathan Marks*  
**Deprivation**

The skies are  
an unblemished blue  
unbroken by pollen  
and feathery flecks

The day is overcast  
a ceiling of glass  
un-smudged by specks  
seeking their nests

Who taught us  
to meditate in silence  
the mind a garden  
our bodies creation's  
engine?

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### Freeman

The Freeman maple  
is a blend of Silver  
and Red

For years, I thought it  
was *Acer rubrum* because  
its foliage crimson orange  
and stunning lent prestige  
to quaint streets city parks  
office park parking lots

But the lobes on its leaves  
always puzzled me because  
they looked like a cross  
between two different species  
a mix  
a métissage  
unique to North America  
where people come to watch  
leaves turn swamps into dens  
of flame

What is autumn leaf color  
but liberation  
the end of suppression  
when chlorophyll dissolves  
and leaves share  
their true shades with the birds  
rodents and bears  
who eat their fruits  
store their nuts  
and with humans who do both

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Whether cardinals and chickadees  
retain autumnal fires during the winter  
the way we humans must  
when rain snow fog and frost settle in  
concealing all the subterranean  
activity of the earth for months  
before a hot sun unlocks  
teeming life's strange contortions  
organisms of all stripes grown restive beneath  
the cabin fever of a dormant landscape

Either way Freeman  
arrests me  
it bears the name  
of the man who pioneered  
its controlled cultivation  
not captive liberation

But the tree grows wild.

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### Hemlock

My daughters finally encountered  
old growth hemlock

They are eight and four

I almost said met  
but there are other ears  
here, not the ears of the trees  
or chipmunks that squeak  
in ways a tenderfoot could mistake  
for birds

There are men and women  
locals who wear crosses  
on their necks and place  
bumper stickers on their trucks  
hostile to my affections

The trees themselves might know  
what it means to meet a young child  
but I was not taught to count a hemlock's  
sensations in my calculations

There is room in my heart for the feelings  
of non-human beings  
I wrested those emotions from the soil  
like nitrates and now  
standing with my children  
beside a one-hundred-foot-high evergreen  
I believe that one day my sentiments  
fledgling knowledge of these beings  
will achieve Old Growth

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I take my daughters' hands and say,  
you can touch the hemlock's bark  
'And it won't get mad?"  
the four-year-old asks  
"No, it won't"  
the eight-year-old says

"Can't you see the way it is waving at you?"

I see it  
proud of the fact  
that I don't write off  
the movement of those branches  
as merely some future paper  
stirred by a vacant breeze.