

Wilderness House Literary Review 18/1

Beatrice Feng

The Beautiful and Incurable

'Sadness wrung my heart as I perceived those pale, hollow cheeks, parched lips, and eyes that gleamed under their long dark lashes with a feverish fire and a sort of passionate determination.

But, my God, how beautiful she was! Never before, or since, have I seen her as she was on that fatal day.' —*Fyodor Dostoyevsky, The Insulted and Humiliated*

The maple leaves let go
of the water and sunlight in their veins
and welcome the cold fever of autumn
as their new sun
by burning into a sky of nacreous clouds,
whose kaleidoscopic radiance

is a rhapsody of withering roses
starting with dews
tracing and crystallising
the fissures and wrinkles in the petals,
followed by the spellbind calling
of the glands' piquant breath.

Then comes a glimpse
of what is behind this veil
of craquelure and perfume: the rapture
of a velvety red undertone.
And this veil is slowly falling, revealing

a purple ocean
whose grace and glow
are a work of bead embroidery:
night, moonlight, coral, kelp, anemone
threaded by the delicate electricity
of mermaids' voices into a profound song.
And this veil is slowly falling, revealing

Wilderness House Literary Review 18/1

a flood of icy light
from the eyes of a saint in ecstasy,
whose inner world is a translucent edgeland
between limpid death and glistening heaven,
but more sublime than both of the airy ideals.
And this veil is slowly falling, revealing

flashes of amber
formed from trees of street lamps,
lit windows, candles and bonfires.
And this veil is still falling, betraying

the truth
of this enchantingly deformed sky
as the source
of that serene blue sky we live under.

And yes. This sky of nacreous clouds
is also lying
in the deepest region of our heart.
It only starts broiling perceptibly
when the placid energy of life
and calm depths of soul have burnt
to the utmost.

Wilderness House Literary Review 18/1

It feels magical now
to stand under this maniac sky
of maple leaves
and have our eyes brimming
with that blazing truth of the heart,
to dance with it
in the surging of our blood
and coursing of our breath.
And to be forever enveloped in it:
have it drip dreams
upon our closed eyelids at night;
To be born into it every morning.

Wilderness House Literary Review 18/1

The Portrait of Dorothea, Us and Our World

'It would be a unique delight to wait and watch for the melodious fragments in which her [Dorothea's] heart and soul came forth so directly and ingenuously. The Aeolian harp again came into his mind.' — *George Eliot, Middlemarch*

This is what might resonate in you
as these words take Dorothea's soul
through the dark gateway of your breath,
skin, blood, into your heart: 'Look,
this is a portrait of us and our world:

ripples sparkle in the dim river
like the eternal kiss of selenite frosted
upon the vast subterranean darkness
that is both its grave and cradle. So does
our soul radiate inside the abyss we are.

But it's more than that. The river then erodes the rocks
and its own clear beats, making its descent
as pearly and poignant as fallen angels
defying their heavenly haven

— we are waterfalls

because our selenite soul is a buried seed
whose opulent flowers will be released
from its abysmal grave and cradle,
and set the outside world ablaze.

Wilderness House Literary Review 18/1

So the falling water
forms a torrential garden
of burning candles that keep
pouring forth blossoms of the opaque
tears they shed. Blossoms with wax petals
clouded by the luminous trembling of flames and
silvered by the blind lyrical weight of night. Touch them
and you will feel

the texture of the world, a sublime Alhambra
whose radiant arabesques stem from the soul
of every one of us.'

Wilderness House Literary Review 18/1

Heart and Water

'...her [Melanie's] brown eyes, eyes that had the still gleam of a forest pool in winter when brown leaves shine up through quiet water.' —*Margaret Mitchell, Gone with the Wind*

Winds tore the leaves from the trees,
and the rain made a bed for them
between the tactile path and stone stairs.

The leaves slumber
under the thin watery sheet,
some of them wholly brown, some
still retain part of their antique gold.

Except one, bright as a sunflower,
playfully skates and flares upon the puddle,
as carefree as the rest.

They remind me
of the golden rings tossed into lakes
by lovers after they break up

or the keys thrown into the Seine
from the Love Lock Bridge
by those same or other lovers

and left rusting in the cold water.
Their lustre as cheap
as the nightingale's beautiful life
sacrificed to paint a white rose red.

Luckily, the pretty metals are then free
from the frantic human world, glowing
as one with the mercurial grace of water.

Wilderness House Literary Review 18/1

Yet their natural glow is different
from Melanie's sparkling serenity:
a heart's difference.

Say, what if it's Melanie's heart
that's left rusting in the cold water
instead of the leaves or the metals?

Her heart will feel bathed
in the limpid gaze of water
and therefore choose to be

a bedroom window
that tells this curious, sleepless child
a bedtime story.

The window starts her story
with the lit vibration of sunlight,
the remains of her heart's warm

shimmer, which slowly comes to a stop
like wind bells when the air calms down.
Then the window becomes entirely dark

and restful as the night it lets into the room:
the perfect setting for magic
to reveal itself.

Finally, like the afterlife of her heart,
its rust comes as frost upon the window
whispering love to the gazing child,

Wilderness House Literary Review 18/1

love that materializes as dust
bearing kisses from distant stars
and will not disappear,

knowing that water,
asleep or not,
never closes its eyes.