

Wilderness House Literary Review 18/2

Sarah Wyman

Elm's Annunciation

Her navel may be a trunk's knot, but it's not,
not to her: heart swallowed down a tube of tree
thick barked with roughened armor.

Oh, omphalos of the turning world,
this one's well rooted in its way
as Earth swirls her extremes about an elm
crowned with infant-creased leaves
hardly still in the wind, power stance
and welcome smudge of sap,
charcoal aged and processed from her pulp.

The page writes its own story of a lovely belly,
portal to the next level for a creature seeking shelter.
The cyclone whirls its possible consequences
of what has been seeded anew, or left untilled
till now. She stands neutered by a difficult dawn
a torso scaffolding branched stasis, new life, quiet storms.

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Steering Story

What people say when you're not around,
parading their overturned trees
like candles in hand,
sparkle explosions of desiccated root thirsting
for gossip to ignite tinder fronds.

One guy had such nightmares
from the skeletal bloom
that he built a forest altar
to quiet the voices
and keep spirits at bay.

Walking by an actual elm uprooted,
he felt the burst of soil flung from muddy depths
the squall of tendrils
searching their accustomed worms
and other parasites.

Stacking a stairway of rotting branches,
a beaver's tipi,
he held the quiet sculpture in place.
And with each passing
added an offering: the hollow nut
a nail, a bit of moss to soothe the voices
to steer the narrative
to calmer ground.

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May Day

A branch of May I bring you
fuzzy ears tumbling up the stem
oh workers of the world,
red-clad runners of the spring
into specious expressions,
laborious toil for the well-oiled
machinations of those
who have time to think
a thunk of new concepts
meted out like cheese
left there to dry,
accidentally exposed
as opposed to the sweet curing time
that works up a good smell
on some splintery barn beam,
forgotten through a long winter
till opened as the festive appetizer
of an entry into the season of warmth,
the slide of the shovel from the hand
on a night to turn in early
under skies of silver gray.