

Wilderness House Literary Review 18/4

Matthew Johnson

The Last Call for Mickey Mantle

The last call for the last boy of Summer
Is the far-too-familiar creak of cruel, gimpy knees
Hobbling around the old Yankee Stadium bases,
And unable to man the outfield on back-to-back days.

The last boy of Summer
Used to prank by day and party all night,
Going to the bars where Sinatra played,
Where the tabs were never totaled for superstars,
And the women were just a nod or wink away.

But that's all gone now in 1968,
As the boy's injuries and drinking have sped up the aging process,
And the most common ice on tap in the locker room
Were the ones found in the tubs he stayed in for hours,
Following the games.

All those October victories were over for the Oklahoma Kid,
Though he would never say no to the champagne.
The once smiling, loveable pup of the national game,
Is forced to sit with the legs of an elderly man,
And can't help but wonder, after another hitless game at the plate,
What happened to the years?

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Emily Dickinson Walking in the Garden

Despite what most assume,
I imagine Emily Dickinson, outside of her room of solitude,
Flinging her arms around the Earth,
And reaching out to touch the sunsets and winters,
As well as the June bugs and alloy moon.

In the poetry, found crumpled up in her bedroom,
The blast trumpet of flocks,
And the butterflies, flapping their kaleidoscope wings,
Echo overhead, tickling the sky.
She presented to death, the woods, and their divinity.

Instead of footsteps to explore nature,
Her feathered pen took in the countryside,
And instead of her fingers,
Her ink traced doodles in the waterfront's sand,
And it all reads as if, I myself, am breathing in the shoreline air.

She remade the forests with her hands,
And we engulfed the trees,
And when they stumbled upon her journals,
They opened her books,
And could do nothing, but watch the hope fly free

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Musings at the Rocky Statue

It could've been placed outside of a sporting arena;
Before they go off to watch their games,
Rocky would be the last thing the Philly faithful would notice:
They would see him, and their city and their neighborhoods put up on
screen,
Overlapping between fiction and reality,
And that famed sculpture of the southpaw going the distance
Sets a mood for athletic excellence that a tailgate simply cannot recreate.
But still, if you've never been to Philly,
The Rocky statue is not outside where the Flyers or Eagles or Phillies play,
But to the steps leading to the city's art museum,
As if the curators and organizers understood,
Beneath the bloodshed and fighting and Hollywood, craft is there...