

Wilderness House Literary Review 19/1

M. Benjamin Thorne
Song from Aleppo

This is not like other songs.

It does not have a key.

(There is no need for keys. There are no more doors, you see.)

There are no strings, for the lines have all been cut.

There used to be horns, wailing, terrible, horns
splitting the air with harm. No more.

You will hear no chorus; or rather, a very nouveau chorus,
made of a hundred different silences
each with its own texture and tone.

Here, where a government building stands
(well, I apologize, now one must try to imagine such things)
a silence that nearly hums.

Over there, a mosque, I think it was a mosque,
yes, listen and you can tell, the silence there
seems to throb five times daily.

If you look this way, a playground:
the silence so deep and richly textured.

Otherwise, the only instrumentation
is the relentless percussion of indifference.

And who composed this brilliant piece, so modern, so avant-garde?

Why you, maestro, conducted from afar! And so to you we bow.

But you cannot see us; please accept our apologies.

We are now underground.

Jellyfish

Chest deep in the Atlantic,
jellyfish interrupt my swim.
I can't help but admire them,
simple-celled cathedrals,
little floating Notre Dames;
with no brains or ganglia,
only dangling nerves in tentacles,
unaware of the harm they cause.
They simply flow with the currents,
undulating silent bells,
a series of graceful coincidences
made by thoughtless animals.
As tendrils drift across my chest
leaving thin trails of flame,
I remember our last time together,
your hair whipping against my skin
as you jumped up out of bed,
stunned to see my pain.
Why can't we just sow our oats?
you said, confused, before gathering
up your clothes and gliding on, away.

Wilderness House Literary Review 19/1

Times Square, Jan. 1st, 12:30 AM

After the kiss, and crowds disperse
staggering back to the new year,
and Auld Lang Syne's replaced
by an odd salt tang on the tongue,
you can feel the elation deflated
like these balloons loitering low
to the ground, or confetti sprites
so shimmery alive moments ago,
now spread out all over the street
like wasted minutes of a past year.
The phone dings with promises
expected and ought to be ignored,
but you've lost all resolve and realize
already you've dropped the ball.