

Wilderness House Literary Review 4/3

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Nada

1.

He sits himself down at his desk like an
atheist awaiting the descent of grace,
prepared to propitiate, bargain, sacrifice,
whatever it takes for a vacuum to
suck up this vacuum he abhors.

On the beach the bathers
turn on their towels and sigh;
the teacher at the blackboard
explained how but never why.

In the lounge ladies clink their ice cubes
and nod; in the park kids are getting high
on pot, glue, worse; before their cathode-ray tubes
the old breathe the stale, ostracized air.

As for him, he feels full of nothing,
nothing on a chair.

2.

There's nothing inside the nothing inside
but nothing, and this nothing swells like a
diapason, adds weight like a careless
jockey, declares it's both process and thing,
neither fair flower nor foul wind but mere
blankness, white whale's flank, space left by last year's
celosia, the heavy hush after the
final waltz. It grins sullenly then yawns,
a maw fit to swallow selfish prayers, baffled
lust, elegant or crude philosophies—
in fact, it gobbles up far more than these,
eats everything that Polyphemus sees.

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3.

Children and lovers, scholars in full spate,
an oboist squinting hard at her score,
a sturdy slugger pounding on the plate—
I swear, there are plenty more
to reknit the world, ravel up those rents
through which vacancy peeks—perhaps even you,
feeling senseless and yet making sense,
struggling from your oubliette and seeing blue.