

## Wilderness House Literary Review 5/2

*Changming Yuan*  
**If, If Only**

the little mouse became  
as boundless as the sky as it wishes

the sky would become  
as free as a cloud

the cloud  
as powerful as a wind

and if the wind became  
as unshakable as a wall

the wall would become  
as penetrating as a mouse

and the little mouse  
a mouse

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### The Naming of a Nation

At birth, we were given pet names  
In school, we begin to have formal names  
For some fame, we choose our own style names  
Among friends and relatives, we are known by our nicknames  
In the literate world, we use our *hao* or pen names  
While we try naming ourselves with all glory and dignity  
Foreign barbarians give us unnamed names:  
Mangis, Chinks, Chinamen, Chinkies  
Chinoiseries, Nuocs, Shina, Chinees  
Ching Chong, Coolies  
Even blue and grey ants  
And so they call us names  
In open defiance against Confucius  
Our master teacher, our saint, our saga, our literary god  
(O poor guy!) ever so obsessed with the Chinese idea:  
A proper name for a proper personality

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### S.W.E.N.: A Rotating Poem

South: not unlike a raindrop  
on a small lotus leaf  
unable to find the spot  
to settle itself down  
in an early autumn shower  
my little canoe drifts around  
near the horizon  
beyond the bare bay

West: like a giddy goat  
wandering among the ruins  
of a long lost civilization  
you keep searching  
in the central park  
a way out of the tall weeds  
as nature wraps new york  
with mummy blue

East: within her beehive-like room  
so small that a yawning stretch  
would readily awaken  
the whole apartment building  
she draws a picture on the wall  
of a tremendous tree  
that keeps growing  
until it shoots up  
from the cemented roof

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North: after the storm  
all dust hung up  
in the crowded air  
with his human face  
frozen into a dot of dust  
and a rising speckle of dust  
melted into his face  
to avoid this cold climate  
of his antarctic dream  
he relocated his naked soul  
at the dawn of summer