

Wilderness House Literary Review 6/2

changming yuan
White Calls

How often
Have I lain in thick darkness
Imagining a white crow
That I wish to see
Or rather to be

Not until the other morning
Did a wild bird cry
Its glaring jaws into my dream
Like a persistent knock at the door

Beyond my curtained glass door
Beyond my curtained dream
The crow hammered all its calls
Right into my soul
Resonating with my truer self

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Ischemia

In my line of people, especially on my father's side
There never seems to have been ample blood
Running within the arteries behind our chests
No matter how warm-hearted we actually are

As in the case of my father, who used to
Accuse me of being an ill-hearted teenager
My heart muscle is imbalanced
As one side is less infused with blood
Than the other, thus causing palpitation
Short breath, and a strong sense of
Tightness, heaviness or tiredness about life

To diagnose my cardiovascular defection
Neither an echo nor a stress test is needed
For I am keenly aware of my own doomed
Arteries that have been clotted
With too many syllables
Voiced or voiceless
And to make all these sounds flow out of my heart
Is already stressful enough

Nevertheless, I will keep pumping out these words
All so blood-soaked

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X Missing: Provincial Proverbs

Affection blinds season

Beauty may have fair flower, but ugly roots

Caesar's wife must be above suspension

Drink only with the luck

Enough is as good as a beast

Fire that's closest kept burns most in the fall

Good face is better than a good base

Handsome is as handsome buzz

Injuries are written in glass

Jill has every jack

Knowledge is no burden

Love is full of beer, love is without season

Money is often lost for want of honey

Nature is above nurture

One man's feat is another man's shit

Present to the eye, present to the kind

Question for question is filled with air

Reward and punishment are the calls of pity

Slow but sure wins the race

Trust is the mother of defeat

United we band, divided we call

Variety is the spice for a wife

Willows are weak but never bend for good

Youth never lasts for peril

Zeal without knowledge is a runaway source

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Worldly Affairs (4): A Zeugma Sketch of Uncle Sam

Every time you stage a play or an election in your own yard
You cannot wait to shake hands with your audiences and their wealth
No matter whether it is the passage of a new bill or an old dilemma
You excel particularly at manipulating public will and private property

With your weeping eyes and hands
You keep waging war and peace far beyond your boundaries
While you kill non-Americans and their hope together
To turn all others and othernesses into biblical dust

More often than not, you selfish intentions prove
Much more destructive than your smart bombs
You invisible fighter jets strike far farther
Than your visible arms of peace effort

You are simply too great for a small criticism
Too super-powerful for a weak opposition
Too democratic for a totalitarian competition
And too single-minded for a double standard

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SAWS: A Seasonal Poem

Summer: in 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

Autumn: not unlike 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 makes new york
 into a mummy blue

Winter: 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

Spring: like a raindrop
 on a small lotus leaf

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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