

Wilderness House Literary Review 6/4

Alice Weiss

Demeter Sequence

A Few Takes on Fertility

Demeter, bloom goddess, crop goddess
earth mother, mother.

Daughter. Godlet (like a starlet)

close like a vine climbing a tree, circling, embracing, thickening.

Creeps Persephone, rhizome like, sprouting roots,

away to Hades, god of the underparts, abducted by adolescence, by time.

Her mother freezes

earth, dries it, ices it, storms it.

Whoever told you that story is trying to justify winter.

Once she gets a taste of those underwonders

will Persephone come home?

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Demeter Speaks

Come now and you'll find me
in the woods. I creep among
the oak roots, the stink of string rot fungus
(the leaves are brown
before their time) and
the thorny bittersweet
and blackberries: I snuffle after you
as if I were a dog.

I blame you for the rain,
the mildew. You, there,
stubborn in your pavements,
wind howling through your subways,
your buildings made of mirrors
your rivers on fire.

Isn't he below the waters?
Shouldn't you be sweeping
onto my shores?
He's supposed to let you go.
But I know who's
not coming. My baby,

my tomato.

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Day of the Dead

I've come, a stranger, to the house.
Taken to the living room, I see
a child-sized wooden painted doll

dressed in red and gold sitting,
resting her arms on the arms
of a high backed chair.

I touch her hand with a single finger.
She slips her fingers over mine,
presses mine like any daughter.

My hostess approaches and says,
She's Mexican. They embrace their dead.
Her eyes and mine meet darkness, greeting.

Close and low, I hear the wooden voice,
Comfort my mother. I see, in the entrance way,
Demeter hesitate, then leave by the front door.