

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/2

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Metal-rimmed-cardboard-bordered photo slides

Ocean waves fold, ebb the shoreline.
Water crashes against bordering rocks.
Palm trees bend with hard bristly shelled fruit
That drop to the sandy ground.
But, the middle-aged woman doesn't remember the place,
Except through metal-rimmed-cardboard-bordered photo slides.

No, she doesn't remember these things,
Except through antiquated photo slides taken
When her family lived there - the tropical haven
Of fenced-in-military-houses-and-backyards,
All the same manufacturer, sizes, colors.

Memories abound, bounce off these photo slides
Placed in the pale yellow projector balanced
On a brown leather seated wooden chair.
A wide movie screen pulled up, connects
To the vertical green-blue metal stand:

The middle-aged woman – then a toddler in cloth diapers –
Who chases a cloth-diapered boy up, up this banana tree;
The older sister who waves her arms funny, in a bikini top, a grass skirt,
Placed between two shorter girls dressed the same, dancing the same dance;
The father who grills steaks, the mother who uses a metal bucket
To shovel water out from the tidal-waved backyard.

More color-worn images blink through the projector's lenses,
Until the final photo of the middle-aged woman –
The pink-nosed-toddler-with-pink-white bonnet –
Who sits in a towel-covered carriage underneath the leaves
Of a medium-sized palm tree planted on a white lava sand beach.

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The projector clicks to a blank yellowed screen,
Lights flicker yellow-to-white, a popcorn bowl
Falls off the arm of a tan sofa onto the Berber.
Brown kernels scatter about, unnoticed by the
Chatters, giggles, laughters of the exiting relatives,

Many of whom never ever saw an actual Volcano.
But the middle-aged woman, silent, stays behind,
Automatically picks up the burnt kernels,
Cares only about those metal-rimmed-cardboard-bordered
Photo slides quickly boxed away.

And oh, how ocean waves fold, ebb the shoreline.
Water crashes against bordering rocks.
Palm trees bend with hard bristly shelled fruit
That drop to the sandy ground.
But, the middle-aged woman still doesn't remember the place,
Except through metal-rimmed-cardboard-bordered photo slides.

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The woman reads this book ...

on the wrinkled, brown chair.
The read is pleasant –
maybe because she's found
a cozy place that fits the
woman's slight form.

And so the woman reads
this book about "Woman",
understands – as she relaxes –
but also finds this paperback
lacks something. What is it?
She is lost, panics. What could it be?
Then she looks at old photos
on the coffee table. Of course!
This "She" needs a "Him".

And so the woman puts on her lap
this book about "Woman", closes her eyes.
Wow! Now woman meets man, makes family.

Her legs cross; the book tumbles to the floor.
She wakens, stands up, puts this book back
on a shelf in the center wall's bookcase,
thinks about Michelangelo's *The Creation
of Adam* and the Book of Genesis where "God said,
*Let us make man in our image, after our likeness ...
So God created man in his own image*"
(1:26 and 27) and how Eve is eventually created
from one of God's ribs.

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How in the world can a book focus just on “Woman”?
Isn’t life a mixed combination? Confused, uncertain,
She takes an old masters art book off a shelf,
looks at the cover’s painting of Titian’s *Bacchus
and Ariadne*. Then, she nestles once again
on the wrinkled, brown chair, reads this book ...