

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/4

Barry Spacks

A POEM ENTITLED "SOMETIMES"

Sometimes I lose the word "dialectic,"
but after a struggle I get it back.

Sometimes I think of lush lives not shared
with Sally, Portia, God-bearing women.

Sometimes I sniff for the attar of glory,
but often that quest proves untenable.

At last I'm the grandfather out in the garden
quietly watching the children at play.

Often I sense a new bud stirring
deep in the heart of a full-blown rose.

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WALKING OUT, WALKING IN

I checked my box in the faculty mail room,
walking out ran into myself
walking in.

This young guy looked like an earlier me,
eager and dumb to consequence.
I stared at him hard in our passing.

What could I say? How could I warn him
as I walked out and watched him
walking in?

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A MIRACLE

In a B-movie dream I'm clutching stone
dangling from battlements over a courtyard,

family, friends, some weep below,
some laugh, shout "Jump!" but nobody rushes

to fetch me a net, a fireman's ladder:
"Hang on, Barry, we'll save you," no,

no one is likely to save me, I need
a miracle somehow, somehow to know

that I'm no more alone than the universe
and as certain to fly, letting go.

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THE COURSE

No crashers allowed, we're filled up, thanks,
if you're not on the roll move on, those chosen
will study Catullus, Archilochus --
"Wretched I lie, dead with desire..." --
till girls become theology,
not Godhead but Girlhead, so cheer up, guy,
while others are writing hexameters,
comparing fragments from mummy'd papyri,
you're free to live without any thought
so go forth and stop your grouching.

THE ADVISORS

Advising a young poet,
my seasoned painter friend and I
tell her not to coarsen her soul
with obsession over -- ta-da! -- "success."
Her face dims when we say we encounter,
as teachers, many young people
aspiring to an honored life
in artistry.
We talk of making
for making's sake.
She shows us photos, paintings, poems,
mediocre, undistinguished stuff

(yet who knows...*someday*...?)

We praise her zest, her young ambition,
feel guilt, of course, imagining
misery ahead for her,
loss, maybe terminal frustration...

"don't discourage, don't discourage,"
the teacher-spirit within us keeps thinking.

"Long-odds, very long-odds," is what we tell her --
"very long odds."