

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/2

Byron Beynon

THE CALIFORNIA CONDOR

*'man treats his mother, the earth, and his brother, the same, as things
to be bought, plundered, sold like sheep or bright beads'*

Chief Seattle of the Duwamish League

We have looked up
at the settled sky
at midnight
when the faithful moon
searches the blue
shadows of a blue land
tortured and broken
as unique patterns of flight
disappeared before dawn;
the hunter, the hunted,
the menace of a lost inheritance,
as the wind stings secret minds
to open like our rare wings
before only echoes and silhouettes remain.

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JELLY ROLL MORTON

He rubbed shoulders
with piano professors,
those pool-hustling
years playing hard
New Orleans'
sporting houses,
he knew back then
all about the break and riff;
released jazz rhythms
free as fine doves
above black America,
hearing the scope
beating evenly inside
a left-handed pulse.

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CARCASSONNE

A rhythm of air
moves in radiant summer
towards the city of limits.
An emission of heat
on the eastern edge of the Pyrenees,
where cylindrical towers
perched high on an escarpment
wear geometric peaks,
crenellated walls
roofed in grey slate and red tile,
the silent witnesses of history
written within
sunburned faces of stone.

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ADRIFT

The smoke offers itself
slowly to the east,
speculating the dry air
on a such a windless day
the light is never still:
steering near a chart of coastline,
always brooding beneath
the stretched out arms of a soft sky,
the simplest action
appears complete,
a feminine dance in accord
on rising ground,
a full-bodied gesture
beyond the hearing of human roofs.

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A CRUEL DUST

Time's running blood
changes everything,
a death, a rebirth,
the liquid light
on the breath of spring,
the tenacity inside each life.

A country continues
to invent itself,
derided
it stays
on its feet.

A cruel dust gathers
from the skeletons of cracked lives,
the embraced witness
a calm survivor in a troubled age.