

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/2

J Ryan Bermuda
Nation

Every handful of months,
I come back to that sanctuary of
tobacco-clay
deep fissured faces.

Porcelain paint babies
adorned with turquoise and nestling feathers,
carvings of buck and wolf and
loom-spun swaddling.

The attendant's face rests;
black hair endures across broadness of shoulders
and down the back that
communes with afternoon sun.

I hand him printed paper notes,
bounded hand yields but vacant face remains.
I squint a half-smile and turn to
pump the plasma from the earth.

Past the fan blast glass double doors,
a young mother and daughter display double braids;
clothed in Goodwill asks for
anything to spare.

I scan across the mesa,
over the untilled sand and cochineal canopy
I could not borrow, then
the truth like the breeze blew.

Apache, Mescalero, Tiwa, Zuni-
Reservation days slip from ox hide hands.
Everything attainable has been obtained,
but the natives own the sunrise.

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Prayer

Our Father, reclined in Heaven-
give me guts to light the
lamps of the Charles Finneys,
the Charles Browns

Furrowed faced children laugh and
ask why angels
peppered my face and I say
“That’s Be-Bop man”

At night, meditating
my organs shriek
your voice descends like a velvet ladder, helixed
BANG

Like watermelon flowers, I covet
the attention
Give me no wings, Lord
Just some wind I don’t believe
That I’m talking to no one but
If I am, I’m glad
Its you

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My Island

My Coney Island- my island,
agelessly glimmering anew.
Monument to the milk-mustache,
confections that buzz on the tongue
like stories.

Meet us boys there- all of us boys.
Take the dime from your Sunday browns-
today's Roosevelt's destiny.
Midway calls sailors like sirens;
springtide war.

Don't forsake me, bones- do not fail.
The twilight canopy dresses
my lady in flares and anthem.
Burn the incense of the boroughs-
youth's tribute.

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Loose The Rain

'Hey boy, Hey boy don't go
get your ball, kid not
from that yard- last summer, that
boy caught the big black sleeps'

Bittersweet evenings when
Philip and I practiced
swatting at the sky to break
loose the rain Still,
lavender matrons who clung
to grandmother's hip on Sundays to
sink fingers deep into tan powdered flesh
carriage down
sidewalk every other day
with bread as boys
pewter factory men
lashed together shelter over the heads
of men with stones in their pockets
who whistled on the job
half-free men's
hands stay black for seasons
at a time

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Wish

Who is counting
all the wishes
blown past candles
for the fathers
to come home
from sand, soil
and from stone?