

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/2

Sean J Mahoney

a tack of misdirection

The Ambassador of the Ninth World and I
ambled down the grade in Griffith Park,
immersed in diplomacy
of critical hubris, when like the working
classes they buzzed us as if we were
but trees deflowered and uninteresting.
Engulfed in a moment 4 ticks too long -
a black and yellow sea tiding high and low
in deafening splendor - the mob
rules breaking into factions but
not before a group hovered before us
and asked us if we really knew
what we would resemble if
put together properly.

We walked on.

I thought about our direction.
I thought bigger picture and
how would we vote and why
for these were desperate times
and I called out: Mr. Ambassador
should we not embrace the folds?
Shouldn't we solidify the middle?

My cry fell upon ears more acute
to the business model of making
greens than care for the future.

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/2

I was not discouraged. The right
thing to do was bet on
the little guy; the tiny
backbone upon which the hubris
is spread too thickly and
voraciously sandwiched by dissent.

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/2

A note about the Great Valley

There are no ponchos draped along side
the shoulders of Highway 99 as one drives
haphazardly out of Bakersfield.

Day laborers walk the rows
tending to the irrigation.

The tightly stitched tropes
of land at the Great Valley's
southern cusp bestow to nobody

nothing like goblets
or palaces; though the Buck
Owens twang can be heard
in the granitic trickle
within the Sierras

as can echoes
of a feud fused
between Owens and Haggard
over a line of blow, a palmed deuce,
or a woman that to this day
still tremors the White Wolf
and Kern Canyon faults.

Trees that blanket
the western slopes of the valley
concert olives and almonds
to parts unknown.

Their deciduous teeth drop and roll.
Trees unsure of their soil hold
can no longer recall the ante
as the valley floor continues
to fill with silts
and the needy.

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/2

Great Valley:
shabby dressing room
with the muddy floor,
sponge that applies
a photo-chemical base
to so many anoxic cheeks
tired of palaces
raised up on crystal
and populous fertilizers.

Just plain tired.

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/2

Lethargy

Flies buzz the head of the keg
left from our anniversary party
two evenings ago. I envy them
for seeing so well, for seeing
only what's before them.

Grass in the backyard stands
a foot high in some places,
shooting up the sides of the tool shed,
the dead stick of a tree,
and tickling the belly
of the mud-caked wheelbarrow.

*If the fox drops its guard
and the timing is right,
will the lazy dog one day bite?*

There is a leaf hung up in the coarse tail
of a macrame pot holder:

I could fold my hand over it,
split it along the crispy veins
and name the new flakes
as they drop atop
the Koi pond of the vacated house
next door,

where larger fish wait out
increasing weaknesses
in the others - they can see it -
before swallowing them.

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/2

Clippings, a story

A patch of grasses layered tight
 and plaque-yellow
yanked up here and there.
Loam where grasslings spring.
Garish rouge of crab grass.
Blush of dried thorny clover.
A root popping out of details
and crumpled into a hand.
Fingers snapping the knots
of dried weeds for an allowance.
Dandelions blown.

Surface tension like a clutch of black hair
fisted close to the scalp. A strike
and a plunging fold. Relational.
Fingers digging in, tips swollen with
skin wings spread and caked
in menstrual art. All tend.

Swathes of asphalt soon laid to regions.
Roads cutting through sectors lined
with lights, cobblestones.

Bleeding slopes: pawn of blast caps
and the angle of repose.
Ode to mirth too heavy for itself
fallen out of favor with the earth
and with the pursuits of its children
pushed up under nails.

The movements - slip, slump, creep, dip -
do not pause for reconciliations.

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/2

A land failure of crustal forces.

A mass wasting thinking
that clippings would tend to clippings.