

## Wilderness House Literary Review 9/2

*David Cooke*

### **Pheasant**

A small time hustler, a princeling,  
he is on the make and mooching  
down along the hedgerows.

His head in the cloud  
of each moment's business,  
the world is lying at his feet.

On a whim, his thoughts  
a-scamper, he sets off  
on a pointless dash

from nowhere to nowhere;  
then remembers flight.  
Climbing raucously

above the stubble,  
his song's in the key  
of twisting metal.

And when the time is right  
his sex is functional.  
It's all him, his pageantry –

for any drab will do.  
Inheriting robes  
from distant Asia

does he dream of lives  
he's bred for, or guess  
how it will end

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here at the roadside  
– cast off by  
a casual bumper,

his gauds in disarray,  
his dark flesh ripening  
beneath a perfect sky?

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**LE PETIT PARISIEN 1952**

*after Willi Ronis*

A small boy running, but not for his life,  
as all can see in his fearless smile  
and the gleam of elation

that shines his eyes. This is the day  
he will always remember,  
important only because of an errand

and the small coin he didn't drop,  
holding it up on tiptoes  
across the counter of a baker's shop,

disregarding for once  
the glass-fronted shelves of pastries  
laid out on a lower level.

The still warm, unwieldy baguette  
stowed beneath his arm,  
he races homewards.

At his feet his shadow,  
foreshortened, inscrutable,  
can only just keep up, one step behind him.

Shape-shifting, a demon,  
it seems momentarily a cat –  
its back hunched, its dark pelt bristling.

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LA NUE PROVENÇALE

*after Willi Ronis*

She is like Eve in exile,  
awakening each morning  
when the sun has risen,  
then rising herself,  
shackled to the day's routine.

She opens a shutter,  
and the light sweeps in  
across the uneven stone floor –  
her summons to the tasks  
that lie before her.

But first a strip-wash,  
the astringent purity  
of her ablutions. Leaning over  
a basin, the chill water  
unseals her eyes.

Still only half awake,  
she takes in the tarnished  
mirror, a chair; and sees how little  
is needed to live  
on the far side of paradise.