

Wilderness House Literary Review 12/3

daniel jacoby

way things are

few miles just
outside of millersburg
past rusting trailer park
across hard road
from fayette grocery
now fallen in
gravel road snakes
to stock pond
full of catfish
rippling in the wind
on early spring day
unshaven trapper exits
old 58 international pick up
just back from big box store
his back and his trailer
lean a bit to the east
limping on bad leg bought
sliding down muddy creek bank
checking trap line
four wheeler fires on first pull
starts for the high timber
hunting feral hogs
killed a good hound
dog always too aggressive
wears leather knee boots
for massasuga rattlers
eye out for poachers
who try to kill everything
grey back in a shallow draw
catches an old eye
old smith out now
series of single action shots
Shiloh baptist now has a bounty
of pork for the pig roast

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mark the time

high blue azure sky
so clear today
not even a contrail
carp striking at the surface
at cobwebs wind blown from trees
so many breaking through the cover
looks like skipping rocks
cranes flit about searching
for fish and fresh water clams
bobcat screeches off to the south
resents my being here
winter sun reflects off unfrozen lake
blinding my southern view
blackbirds in no particular hurry
pass in a catatonic flight pattern
yapping at each other
large buck passes quietly on north bank
followed by a doe with twins
wary mallards land off in buck brush
while five hooded mergansers
dance in the decoys
sundown's timber shadows
creep across the muddy lake
like ancient spirits of Sauk and Fox
draw with the wind
a myriad of patterns
on the brown water easel
for a few fleeting seconds
erase it and start again
off to the west high stratus fingers
reach to the darkening east
cold front crawling bringing winter
even the eagles absent today
with the scent of snow in the air

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confession

letter came in early november, 1970
on a sunny mellow wind
that suddenly changed
with a chilling westering draft
holidays spent in jersey fields
new year as government property

letters intensified the fear, the loneliness, the loss
mortality realized at thirteen hundred feet
jolted back by hard georgia clay
refined by calculated espionage
instinctively retreated to the shadow world
focused on the cruelty of nations

not hard to cross lines
once considered sacred
morality and decency, things of the past
defend the homeland at all costs
now approaching my seventh decade
still in search of a moral compass

wonder at what it all has become
having lost all faith,
devoid of all virtue
did the people deserve my sacrifices
deserve to thank me even vaguely
for the evil I did