

Wilderness House Literary Review 13/1

James B. Nicola
Night Roles

Since Night is carved with no straight lines
(save for the makings of our minds)
but only curves (just as Nature, Man
and especially Woman were chiseled, once)

She is as the Cornucopia, her wicker
dress adorned with sequins and rhinestones,
her plenty protean, plastic as her void—
and as our wonder, imagination, fear, awe,
creativity, and love.

You suspect (or remember) the womb of everything
and return to your beginnings. Yes,
isn't that in part what makes us men,
the ellipses, rounds, and meteor crashes
again and again, in a parade
of flourishes?

At dawn only the horizon appears
a straight edge to the physical eye,
both the end and a beginning. But while
the Mathematician in us says that
two points define a line, and since
we glean two points, there might then be a line,
as we come to, if we come to,
the Scientist reminds us that even
that straight edge, the horizon, is actually
a great carved curve.

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Go outside. Can you help but feel
like the Knight on a steed come upon a tower
whose cached-away Maiden has peeked around
the corner of her turret and risks being seen,
whispering the secrets of the firmament?

Her Siren song, filtered by distance, turns into
the subtlest rustle of the rushes in a breeze.

She wants to be heard and sought.
O, those warm nights!

Then Day, that celibate Cyclops,
the loudest and gaudiest mook in the room
who struts from one side of it to the other
with the cockiness of a dictator,
ready to pour his liquory gallon on anyone,
murders the Maiden and stashes her corpse
behind his glower. Then you become

the Dick who must solve the mystery
and, having tracked down the loot at the end
of the episode, the Prince who with a kiss
brings the dormant damsel back to life.

I have trusted that I'll always succeed,
if not parsing the motive, restoring the victim,
if not a Twin Sister, night after night
after night, and haven't been disappointed
yet.

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Fusion

There can be no prudishness in the stars
Can there?
The atoms and the molecules have at it
Hydrogen banging Hydrogen begetting Helium
Hydrogen and Helium then having a go
No thought of undue incest or paradise or sin.
Not a soupçon of modesty—no courting, even—
Just having a go again and again and again
And again and again to smash and fuse and get—

Ignorant of their uncouth ignorance
Yet shining, bright as God, in spite of All,
No whit of concern for illuminating our condition,
Fertilizing our wastrel imagination,
Or how they ever made me possible

And you, unmet, like the first two molecules
Of almost nothing,
Heads turned
Starting to spin, then swirl, then sweat
Wanting only some Magic Energy
To invent something
Together
Like
Desire
Love
Union
Children
Life.
Lost

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I hate the sky for swallowing up the rainbows.
I love the sky for letting one reappear.
I love the ocean for all the love that's in it,
the organisms, dark spots, and ideas.
I hate the ocean for all the murder it
facilitates, the dangers meted to
even the peaceful wayfaring soul on a yacht,
raft or ocean liner, looking for some peace
or other destination. I hate storms
for their wanton ways: destruction, turbulence,
making one sick. I love the storms for the
fresh air and new terrains that they inspire,
the seeds they transport. And I love the hour
of sitting, thinking, waiting for the inspiration
of a sky, an ocean, a storm, or an idea
to come. I hate the hour when it does not.
I especially hate the sky that gives a glimpse
of rainbow after a storm, then swallows it
before I get a chance to chase the pot
of gold at the end. But the rainbow is
induced by moisture, the sky's homage to ocean,
its glitter but a creature to be eaten,
like the lost chord that you happen on when tickling
the ivories of an organ in a chapel
deep in an untraveled, hardly ever traveled, wood.