

Wilderness House Literary Review 10/1

Jeffrey DeLotto

Rapture at the EZ Pawn

Rosedale and 820, an urban crossroads
Between industry and the hood, gas pumps
And a minute mart at night that would light
And ring like an old pinball machine, at dawn
Asleep, as the EZ Pawn across the way, barred
Windows and doors, a razor-wired corral
Behind, squatted on its concrete lot of empty
Spaces. When down dove the soft grey form,
Sweeping across two stained lanes of vacant
Highway, wings tucked at plane, surely a
City pigeon homing in for crumbs of a bun,
A forgotten fry, but the forward-facing orbs
Huge and black with sight-gathering reach
Vectoring at full speed to meet the half-
Grown rat fleeing, terrified, where wall
Met sidewalk; in a final moment the wings
Flared back against the currented air, feet
Swept forward, hooked talons stretched
Out to embrace the kill, and the falcon
Mantled her prey. And only I beheld

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Another Day

East Rosedale 7 a.m.

The air and earth thick with fall dew,
A silence is cracked only by the sporadic
Rattling of a pick-up or sedan long past its
Prime, the Homeboy Minit Mart not yet
Open for business within or without; steam
Rises from the stainless boiler on a city
Transit truck, the employee powering off
The bus stop seats down the block. On the
North an angular free-standing shop once
Plumbing supply now sometime crack spot
Boarded with loose plywood, the doorway
Yawning, as a tawny dog emerges, unsteady,
Her ears half-mast, gnawed nipples hanging
Like drained sides of beef in a shambles,
Raises her head high as bony shoulders, and
Mumbles, "Jeez—another day. A drumstick,
With some meat and fry on it--be a real kick
In the ass about now," instead only catching
Scent of used condoms and rain-broken
Cigarettes, looked across Rosedale at the
Projects, and lay down
Where she stood.

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City Pigeons

On the Wires

January, Fort Worth

Hey, Ed, you see the way Charlie just
Squeezed in? Phil's gonna have to do
A dead drop before he can spread both wings—
I can smell the grease on those Jack-in-the-Box
Breakfast tacos from here—but there's worse
Places in this town on a icy morning—the
Warmth in those wires runs all the way out
To my nails— After ole Sol peeks his head
Over that ridge of trees there I'm cruising on
South about a mile or two—the guys found
This sweet spot, a sorta tire shop general auto
Mechanic's place run by these dark guys,
Speak a different language with each other,
But, bird, they just cast these hands' full of
Seed out on the concrete—sunflower, millet,
That mix, just for us. About twenty or thirty
Of us swept in yesterday, pumping our heads
Around, pecking like we were woodpeckers,
But good stuff....Look, we checked it out,
No traps or snares, they just seemed to enjoy
Seeing us crack the seeds— weird—and then
We'll just blow off the ground like a cloud of
Leaves, started by some passing car or dropped
Tool, sweep a tight arc in formation and drop
Down again as one bird. And here's the kicker:
Asian fried seafood next door, Church's Chicken
And a donut shop across the road, folks flinging
And dropping fries and buns and shit like there's
No winter left— Sure, there's some grackles
Holed up in the ornamental pears nearby, and
They grab some quick stuff, but we just strut up
And shoulder them off that. Worse places to be.