

Wilderness House Literary Review 19/2

Paul Rabinowitz

Diaspores

A broken clothesline leans
against its shadow

nothing to hang memories
on

through the stillness of the desert landscape
I meander

fragrance of creosote bush
underfoot

dry winds blow
clockwise

shifting transverse
ridges of sand

In the distance a prickly pear cactus
tempts the coyote

despite needles
the coyote consumes its fruit

spreading seeds

every thing
transient

even the shadows

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Unknown Author

I will always return the books you lend me because I know they are important and remember you told me you are a collector of fine things and in your bedroom there is a shelf where you have a collection of books in alphabetical order and sometimes you stare at the shelf when you are alone which happens more often now than you prefer but still you feel protected and rich not in the bank or investment portfolio type of wealth but rather the supply and demand type where others might want to steal what you have if they knew what these books meant to you

but they don't know and you have them.

With me you seem to take pity, saddened at my tattered heart and invite me in and serve me fruit and watch how quickly I devour even the pits which are bitter and hard and say you have something that just might be the right thing for me at this time and go to your bedroom shelf pull out a rare book you found years ago at a garage sale upstate in a town that used to be thriving with a main artery flowing with stores and cafes until one day the factory that manufactured intricate embroideries closed down as the price to make them abroad under dark circumstances became cheaper and purchased it for a dollar from the owner who told you he lived through it all lost everything including his wife

who could not be cured from a rare disease of the heart when the town started to decay her friends moved out and he began to write books and detach from reality sink deeper into a world of fiction with mansions and parties and gilded dreams she could not understand and one day she broke and he gathered all his beloved books then made a sign that read

rare books by unknown author

and stuck it in the hallowed ground where she once gardened and he looked at you with your hand-sewn white dress and recommended a rare book by unknown author who never used proper grammar or clear diction or the right punctuation and you told all this

to me as your cat remained transfixed on my eyes making me

a little uneasy and I finished the last strawberry and you said that each time you pulled this rare book from your sturdy shelf you needed to sit down on your couch because the words like minor chords made your knees weak and when you were deep into the book by the unknown author you wouldn't eat for days or answer texts from friends because you had all you needed and even though you read the book numerous times the arc of the story near the end still leaves you with a sense of melancholy when the man on the bridge gives his hand to the woman with the simple white dress who is thinking about the end

looks into her eyes

as he helps her down and she feels herself helped down and you open the book and point to the chapter and say to please return it when I am finished

after I've thought about the end

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The Seedling

As the glow
of autumn
retreats
winter begins
its unforgiving
trek

like a bare tree
on skeletal
ground
I find you
on a subway platform
leaning
against steel beams

black scarf
wrapped tightly
'round
bowed head
like in prayer
reading the last
revision
of my prose

delicate fingers
touch the page
where I mimic
nature's process

a seedling germinates
pulling energy
from light above ground
while digging
deeper
for sustenance
below the surface

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worn leather boots
tapping
in rhythm
where so many others
have stood
waiting

with eyes beaming
like headlights
you slide the shawl
from your head
finish the last page
as an eastbound L-train
rumbles
through a long
dark tunnel

and for the first time
since handing me Hemingway's
Garden of Eden
you turn
to look at me

and I understand

when thaw
begins
banks overflow
you'll wait
with bucket
and shovel
for the renewal
of spring

preparing a way
for the smallest
revelations
of my truth