

Wilderness House Literary Review 19/4

Theodore Wachs
Anniversary

Cool neglect a numbing pall
On fading will

A dimming dream
No longer bright

Why
Looms hauntingly
Wants no easy answer

Because
Shows its outline
But will hug the shadows
Till satisfied

I own them both,
Want neither;

Because
Belongs to you
And must

answer to
Why

Because
Not leaving
Loses staying power

Because
You never left

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Passages

Today

I took Hawaiian Keokolo's name as mine,
Made of him a god,
Felt his primal being and
Roamed his landscape,
Vitalized by water, wind and sun,
Lush with sparkling green-gold life-force
Merging with unending flows
Of universal energy

Tomorrow

I will be again among the quick:
A link unnoticed in
The cosmic chain of being
And infinitely less wet, less wind-borne and less sunny
Than Keokolo today

Appropriating Keokolo's mystic world

Only whet the appetite;
Why stop with him
When a realm of gods
Could offer, say, Aeolus
For a wild Aetherian swirl;
Apollo, with a rarefied immersion in
His many sacred arts;
Or a dose of Dionysian revelry and then
The priceless counsel
Tendered only by Athena's faultless touch

But who would dare share secrets in Promethean mode
And risk the friendly Titan's fate?
Immortal worlds, after all,
Have consequences too

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Inhabiting their timeless spheres,
The gods entice
And Keokolo tempts;
All the while
A nano-second mortal world,
With no known remedy for life,
Is busy warning me:
This
Is
Your
Only
Moment

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The Elms of Central Park

Just as I recognize the shaggy bark,
The sprouting clusters dangling high above
Stuffed with the seeds that also lie beneath my feet,
A posted notice clarifies the scene:
“Please help to save the American elm
Keep out”

How strange to happen upon
A fenced off grove of elms,
Meant for show,
Displayed like some species in a zoo.

The mind takes sudden leave,
Reverts to boyhood mode,
Enduring images of elms –
How their sturdy presence graced the town,
Their verdant canopies
Suggesting peace, security and settledness
Upon the very street

These elms
Are cared for and protected here
To grow and blossom,
Part of some botanic preservation scheme
Where I see
European Linden
And Norwegian Maple too

I contemplate their stateliness
From my side of the fence,
Content to find
That they remain alive at all

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The elm and I have this in common:
Both were rooted once and came to bloom
Upon a ground that each left long ago –
One driven to extinction by disease,
The other destined to seek nurture from
Removal to a different soil

Now we chance to meet again,
This time on neutral ground

Our silent dialogue ends
As we part,
A subtle message seems born--
We survive our lives
By careful cultivation