

## Wilderness House Literary Review 8/4

*Edward D. Miller*

### **Questions of Home**

*an attempt to pay homage to Elizabeth Bishop's "Questions of Travel"*

Away from you I dreamt I had insomnia.  
I wish I could fold and refold last night's sunset  
and give you an origami swan stained blood orange.  
Part of me wants it all translated and explained;  
Yet the remainder yearns to exult at the sequences  
and utterances beyond comprehension.

In a kiosk up the mountain fruits of every shape  
comingled like adamant landowners in a baroque hall.  
Nearby a lorry driver washed his face in a stream that recited its own  
soliloquy.  
The "muzak" came from a waterfall heretofore unseen.  
Surely some events *should* conquer consciousness.  
The proprietress ran the fruit stand with a forlorn gusto.  
How skillful she was in devoting one eye to the *telenovela* while she spoke  
with us!  
(Yet you must doubt my description: No doubt I was a tourist leapfrog-  
ging over thorny context, landing upon a series of smooth-stoned prem-  
ises.)

The traveler asks:

*Is there any reason to represent a beauty deemed foreign?  
Surely categorization flattens the roly-poly world into a slide show.  
One is duty bound to wince at any phrases of wondrous encounter.  
Such words sour when spoken.*

When I return to the orchards of my north,  
I fear it will be cratered by the brunt of fallen apples.  
When I bleed the red always forms the map of New England atop my  
skin.

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The traveler asks:

*Is carrying a key enough to prove one has found a place?*

I have all the documents that permit me to be crowded into an airbus  
filled

with those lost and those found.

But a word not listed in the Customs Declaration travels with me and I  
can't translate it: *saudade*.

Even if I am held prisoner by perspective,

In this jail there are orchids with soil-free roots

and stems that wrap themselves around the bark of a tree.

If only serenity and perfection were perceivable in a blueprint.

Houses are as easy to plan as itineraries but our home demands intrigue  
and bliss...

Its floorboards creak with the fleck and glitch of resolute companionship.

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### **The Old Country**

*a homage to James Broughton's "This is It"*

This is the part that stands for that whole  
And this whole is made up of those parts  
My voice is only an echo  
Your echo travels but stands still  
In your eyes mine I do not see  
The way that you stretch is so just so  
There where the whole speaks for the part  
And here has a summer home in there  
And here we are in the old country

Say that name and all verbs turn active  
And all action is made wet with words  
In the presence of the teller  
You must sign no pen no name no money  
I sign my name in the old country

Our new home is an unseen see-saw  
And this is how we play and our play  
Stretches past borders of guard and gate  
This is the whole that speaks for the part  
And this new part parrots that old whole  
In the old country echoes speak first  
This is how we play and how we stretch  
This is that stretch in the old country

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### The President is in Town for the General Assembly

This poem is reticent to expose its argument:

Is it an intentional fragment?

Is it an aftershock provoked by an imagined conflict  
between the writer and her reader?

Surely it investigates epiphenomenon almost impossible to trace.

But if the poem is only about poetry itself is it merely an event in language?

Does it skip stones along the watery surface of expression  
or to put it too bluntly dive its way into the deep?

Metaphors can be dangerous, but they are not assault weapons.

Enough questions, at least for now.

Today I yearn for happenstance--

And I wait for a check from a freelance employer so I can pay some bills.

The September light is a paradox--

It shimmers yet produces more shadow than ever before.

Perhaps it's the medication I'm on but I smell peace in the autumn air.

Or maybe the apples that the boulevardiers are biting have lent a scent.

My auntie once said: "the pursuit of knowledge is a Sisyphean game.

Regardless one must play."

A physicist, she bragged that 96% of the universe is not perceptible.

Trying to accept that so much matter and energy exists undetected  
is a lesson in letting go.

No matter how early I rise I am always late for this class.