

Wilderness House Literary Review 21/3

Craig Kirchner
The Big Question

*If a tree falls in a forest
and no one is around to hear it,
does it make a sound?*

Is often described as a metaphysical debate
of grave import.

For me it prompts less deep thought,
but of the same ilk.
Is there a road or path if you don't traverse it,
if your footprints aren't there baptizing it?

To what extent do humans and their concept
need to be present for existence?
If it is not in my world, if I don't know about it
how existent can it be?

Does Amsterdam suddenly become
alive because an existentialist got off the plane,
because a great thinker gave it an address
in this blank slate of an indifferent world?

Sartre would say that the forest, trees falling, exist
but lack significance until perceived by humans.
I would remind him that the other trees heard it,
the squirrels mourned, the fungi communicated the loss.

Spinoza years ago, in The Hague, having moved from
Amsterdam, proclaimed that God is the sum of all substances
of the universe, not an entity or creator. Man is unaware
of the causes of his concerns, setting the stage for Freud,
who everyone heard, but most never met.

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The Office

The context of this room with its
one window, desk and bookshelves,
cheap art, is suddenly stifling.
The beautifully parallel horizontal blue lines
on white legal, and me staring left to right,

knowing that the ink when it meets
the resistance of the page
will feel introverted, compressed,
not at liberty to jump the two skinny,
vertical red lines to get past the margin.

Perhaps a better milieu,
a hill looking out on an open field,
of poppies or high corn, sitting under an oak,
stretching toward the sun, acorns falling,
and white clouds, moving steadily across blue velvet.

Or the deck of a ship at night,
the middle of the ocean, stars,
sparkling white dots on endless,
black night, above grey waves,
moving infinitely to the horizon.

More unconstrained, maybe even large,
flowing font, or freewheeling cursive,
but still and all, miniscule,
meaningless, same block,
same as in the office.

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Tower of Horses

I take four books of poetry to the librarian to check out.

He remarks that, "This is my favorite."

You're a big Mary Oliver fan?

"No, the cover, the Blue Horses by Franz Marc."

I'm surfing Neanderthals, wanting to write about
interracial marriages with Homo Sapiens,
and come across the cave art, 33,000 years old,
at Chauvet Cave in southeast France.

The two-dimensional similarity to the cover
of Ms. Olivers collection is eerie,
separated more by blue, than line and style.
Mary begins her blue horse's poem:

"I step into the painting of the four blue horses.
I am not even surprised that I can do this."

Franz died young of shrapnel to the brain -
his blue horse paintings are interpreted as apocalyptic.
Mary explains that she wouldn't want to have to
explain to the horses about war.
The *Tower of Blue Horses* was auctioned in 1945,
for 80,000 Reichsmarks, taken into custody by Herman Goring,
and subsequently disappeared.

I would like to step into the cave and mind
of the artist who painted the tower of horses
on the wall at Chauvet: by torch light, before the great wars,
before poetry, before shades of blue,
when their value was barely priceless,
and tell him of Mary O., Franz Marc,
ultramarine, royal and cobalt blue.