

Rich Ives

Knowledge and Regret

It's more than yesterday today and the dead cows of Galicia
have been shaped by Russian and Austrian understandings
of 1916, Carl Sandburg informs us, and that same year

the red handkerchiefs of childless Andalusian women
were folded, childlike, into the pockets of cream blouses,
so I shot her a timeless look and it missed. I was lonely then,

but now my wife nags me about paying her more attention.
It's too expensive, I tell her and, *Affections are everywhere,*
but love appears only from the knowledge of death.

I believe she will tell me what I want to know,
but you can't even teach children to do this. Wait.
Don't go out there. That beautiful dirty spot

beside the river's first real mouthful since
early fall has something all summer long
to say. *It's a miracle*, I'm ashamed to say.

The Invalid

The man is an artifact although I don't know
what knowledge he suggests.

His little forest of the possible lingers
in the kitchen of the small address of silence,

the nervous detours of water striders complicating
the tensions of the stream's gravity.

This man's not in the guidebook,
the veins of a leaf with no connecting fibers.

There's a prairie dog at his entrance,
alert and ready to dive back in.

The man often lingers in his elevated garden,
opening the red seeds of attractive weeds.

He seems to be an administration of light.

If there's a field in the middle of the room,
living here will be easy, but the one thing
that lasts forever is forgetting.

You've got the words in your mouth.
Spit them out.

A little drizzle of chaos salts the acceptance soup.

If I'm holding the hand of a statue,
he's the kind of joy that's sudden and built from
unfed pleasures.

I'll say he's a good man
before I'll say he's the right man
for any job that requires a spoon,

but I'll feed my soup with my garden
where others like him are blossoming
and going to seed. How ripe the approach
of a ready lover with a fresh green cage.

Congratulations

A pilgrim with no head stood up and grew one.
It gazed longingly at the sun and began to fall apart.

Each year the pilgrim forgot again that the pilgrim was a flower.
Was he warming himself with the heat of his burning house?

Inside a plum, two brothers must part to find their child.
Inside a walnut there's a stage, upon which meat dances,

and a small brain is waiting. Inside a watermelon, little boats
harboring thoughts of ocean-liners. *I am my own wooden hat,*

says the acorn, tipping himself to the sun. The most important
ruler a wise man uses measures how foolish life makes him.

Rich Ives has received grants and awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, Artist Trust, Seattle Arts Commission and the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines for his work in poetry, fiction, editing, publishing, translation and photography. His writing has appeared in *Verse*, *North American Review*, *Massachusetts Review*, *Northwest Review*, *Quarterly West*, *Iowa Review*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Virginia Quarterly Review*, *Fiction Daily* and many more. He is the 2009 winner of the Francis Locke Memorial Poetry Award from *Bitter Oleander*. He has been nominated seven times for the Pushcart Prize. He is the 2012 winner of the Thin Air Creative Nonfiction Award. His books include *Light from a Small Brown Bird* (Bitter Oleander Press--poetry), *Sharpen* (The Newer York—fiction chapbook), *The Balloon Containing the Water Containing the Narrative Begins Leaking*—What Books) and *Tunneling to the Moon* (Silenced Press--hybrid).