

Great Meadows in the Autumn

Let's bring Wounded Love along the dirt road
in the middle of Great Meadows... let it
ache for the yellow flowers of lotus
summer; let it breathe rusty reeds, and sit
in the wooden chair... gaze at clouds in water
where lotus float with wane green, yellowing
and browning; let it unwind by bleak wind,
cleansed & thirsty to shed. Nothing wasted...
withered leaves, bare branches & mud fodder for
beaver dams... here, there, in the marsh. When Wounded
Love breaks from tears, let it fondle bent lotus head
with seeds ready to land, then engrossed by the
Great Blue Heron behind stripped stems, moving
stilt by stilt... silence... before the lightning strikes.

Published by Spillway 29
Xiaoly Li

My First Day in America

I step forward
to stand on a bridge arced
across this small stream.

The sun hangs high.
The wind so lazy it stops.

No one walks on these streets.
I hardly hear cars pass by.

To study abroad, a dream of distance.
My first flight has reached so far—
a continent of robins!

Only yesterday, my mother
told the nanny to hide
my baby, so that I would
not hesitate to leave.

In slow water I see my face
twitched into a mosaic.
A leaf falls in,
blood red.

Published by RHINO 2019

Xiaoly Li

Much Unsaid

I.

She rocks in the white bamboo hammock
in Beijing beside a pomegranate tree.
I want to ask my mother, *Who was the*
best friend who betrayed you?

My father had told me, not my
mother, her best friend reported her.

Growing up, I never saw her smile.

Her father worked for the old
government, was sent to prison.
She always thought she was singled
out for country labor because of him.

My urge to ask burns.
She swings higher and higher.

Come, Mother waves. Picking one
pomegranate, she opens the magenta rind,
hundreds of jewels waiting.

II.

Next to the lotus pond, my father
slowly spins out a long curl of smoke.

Her friend did what she had to do, he says,
My biggest regret is not warning your mother
don't tell anything to anyone even her best friend.

The cigarette butt burns to his fingers,
I see his old sorrow.

His years of reticence —
survival in the era of
doing what he had to do.

From the tip of the golden lotus,
the dragonfly takes off.

Published by Worcester Review Volume XLI, Numbers 1 & 2
Xiaoly Li

Love Genes

Structural variants in genes associated with human Williams-Beuren syndrome underlie stereotypical hypersociability in domestic dogs

— Bridgett M. vonHoldt, etc.

They say you are born with Love Genes—
love so innocent, unwavering.

You greet me as if a long lost lover. You toss around
a dried sweet potato in the air before basking in its flavor.

You bounce, poke, yowl at a sea stone, shake your head as you play.
Each leaf, each grass, each mail box pole, each fire hydrant—

your roses to sniff. The language of your eyes,
never judgmental.

I answer your little cry as if catching a firefly.
I sing you a lullaby; you fall into a good night.

As I dive into each moment of *your Being*,
I ponder why humans are challenged,

born with the syndrome? And what takes us
to love without Love Genes? I wonder

how many silent cries of His eluded my ears?
How many long nights She missed my lullaby?

Published by Cider Press Review Volume 23, Issue 3
Xiaoly Li

Quantum Entanglement

Particles
mirror each other
no matter
how far apart.

The butterfly,
the philosopher Zhuangzi —
who became the other?

The light turned on
by nobody at midnight,
when Grandfather passed away
a thousand miles afar.

My dear child,
when I hold my tongue,
I still talk to you.

I search for my mirror—
climb mountains,
walk rivers,
even cross the Atlantic ocean.

I make photo art,
write poems.
dig deeper to look for

you,
somewhere,
near or far.

Published by Ricepaper Magazine 2019
Xiaoly Li