

Myron Ernst

AT THE END OF SUMMER

It isn't so much the colors
or the drying up
or the crispness
in the air,
it's about the twisting.

It isn't so much the colors
or the drying up
or the crispness
in the air—
more than the brittleness,
it's about the twisting,
the bending of leaves and light;
it's more the way the whole
muscle of the body bends.

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OLD IN A HEAT WAVE IN JULY

The man in the wicker chair
finishes his cigarillo
and tosses the still burning end of it
over the railing; it lands on the parched lawn below.
What weak, morning breeze there was, has stopped;
it is a dead calm and very hot.
The woman, who cannot bear the heat,
is inside, stretched on her back,
on bare sheets. She has been listening
to slow piano waltzes all afternoon long.
A red car, burning oil, labors up the steep road.
Their son left that morning, but he will be back
in a week or so to advise them again on how
to continue their lives until the end. It is very hot,
and the man in the wicker chair is resting
from having cleared the last of the clumps of wild grass
pushing up for life from the dust of the gravel driveway.
The task is done. This is what it is then;
the tossed cigarillo, the heat in July,
the woman within, breathing heavily on moist sheets,
and an earlier movement of air that has stopped.
It is cooler now, and the tinkling of the waltzes
fades with the sun. The ticking of the hall clock
has slowed, and it forgot to chime the hour.
The man goes in to wind it. It will run for a week,
and then he will wind it again.