

Poetry Porch: Poetry

The Field Who Would Be Queen

By Joan S. Soble

“During Elul ‘the king is in the field’ and everyone who desires is permitted to meet him, and he receives them all with a cheerful countenance and shows a smiling face to them all.”

—Rabbi Schneur Zalman (1745-1812))

So the field is just the field again,
having slipped its mantle of metaphor
bestowed by sages centuries back.
Liberated, it tilts gold and green
in late summer’s lilting light, as it
ever has, but never has, since nature
always changes through encounter.

Even goldenrod—glorious, pervasive—
is an invasive, a friend explains,
then pauses to watch its blossom tassels
unfurl, its seeds once stowaways
among the ones that settlers brought
across the sea for planting in the fields
they hewed from first-growth forest.

Suited to the soil and sunlight,
these kin of asters staked their sturdy
claim in every local field, seizing
on the untilled pause between
its latest owner’s pressing it to yield
and its previous owner’s letting it go
—as I have the sage’s metaphor

that casts as merely set the field
that all through August dazzles daily—

steals the show, a leading lady.
The playwright, so it seems, approves:
he rises often to his feet from his
shrouded balcony seat to lean in
toward the shimmer and applaud.