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## *Wilderness House Literary Review 1/4*

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### **THE HOLE IN SLEEP**

By Corey Mesler

Edition 87 of 410 copies, \$9 softbound

Wood Works Press

Review by Lo Galluccio

There is much to commend about this little elegantly made poetry book called, "The Hole in Sleep." In its gray softbound pages lie shortish but deeply felt lyrical elegies to night and its strange ecstasies.

"Being asleep is easy. Being awake is too. But the transitions between the two are ghastly.

--John Bishop

This uneasy declaration of emotional wisdom is inscribed in the opening page. It makes one consider the in between time -- that idea of something missing or absent in the transition into sleep and the subconscious mind from wakefulness.

The packaging includes two finely wood-cut postcards, one the opening poem of Mesler's called "Night of Desolation," which ends with:

"Electricity recoils. I love you.

'Who did you say you used to be?"

The other bizarrely enough is a quote from Richard M. Nixon, that deranged and derided President of ours who is known as much for Watergate and impeachment as for "Nixon in China" a post-modern musical.

Nixon declaring the importance of freedom of speech seems to harbor deep irony, but perhaps it is also a token of the good nature of the press.

There is a poem about the Zen Buddhist Ikkyu's bird. The bird he had killed which he lays at his teacher's feet. "In the morning the bird was next to Ikkyu's mat, that morning and many more after. Ikkyu's bird." So the bird is once again alive, but making the transition or a ghost who Ikkyu must sleep with. There are erotic numbers like, "Cock-a-Hoop":

"Your mouth on me like a poem.  
Your slim backside bent over  
me like a poem. Your sweet vaginal  
lips in my mouth like a poem.  
And afterwards the holy cow feeling  
of just being human and  
satisfied like a goddamn poem."

I suppose what I like about Corey's diction is that it's natural, even corny to him. And for that reason these poems are treats – like slivers of chiffon cake or soda bread; whatever, they are satisfying and mostly very well crafted. I like the modesty of them and the architecture.

He even opens a poem called "Nightwork" with a Tom Waits lyric from his CD Bone Machine, "We're innocent when we dream." This aligns with the whole hole in the sleep theme of the book. The poem is about a therapist's transference onto Corey as a patient while he sleeps:

"I feel reprimanded. I want so to please him, don't you know, he's that father figure. I go to bed at night trying to dream myself a cure, a way out, a dream that will --- O sing! It's all I can do to keep from waking."

Most of the poems presented were published previously in different journals and magazines. I think this book, so handsomely put together, and zen-like in its beauty, has been hard earned. I recommend that you read it.