

Wilderness House Literary Review 10/2

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The Only Woman's Name on the Walls of the Library of Congress

Hundreds of men's names adorn the walls
of the Library of Congress.

But only one woman,
Sappho.

What does she think of this?

How does she feel about being the only woman
with hundreds of men?

What would Sappho think of this honor?

Would she be excited?

Would she be appalled?

Would she be thrilled at the fact

that someone, somewhere decided that she was the one woman
in history allowed to grace the walls of the largest library
in the most powerful, brazen and outspoken
country in the world?

I don't know how she'd feel, but I think
she might like some company.

What of Jane Austen, or Louisa May Alcott,
Toni Morrison, or Emily Dickinson?

I think Sappho would like some women
on the walls with her.

I think the men might surround her
in the dark of night when nobody's around
and taunt her and mock her and say that she's no good,
and she doesn't belong there because women do not have status.

If I were she, I would be livid. I would rage about all those men's
names on the walls and scream there should have been
more women with her.

But she is silent.

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Only her name speaks for her.
For the millions of women throughout history
who have tried to say something
worthwhile and couldn't. She stands alone.

Another library should be built with mostly women's names
and only one man's.
But who should he be? It doesn't matter. Maybe there won't be
any names. Just books people will read
that will make the world
a better place, and make people believe
in the future.