

## Wilderness House Literary Review 16/1

*Karen Klein*

### **Alphabet Soup**

As a kid I ate a lot,  
remember it now as thick  
with macaroni letters my spoon chases,  
trying to corner a "K"  
and capture the rest one after the other  
to spell my name.  
No memory of its taste.  
I didn't think of it as food.  
It was my lunch time game.

Alone in a bed built for two,  
trying to snag sleep  
from the alphabet soup of lovers,  
the pleasurable memories I float in,  
I remember the letters of their names—  
well not all last names, some initials—  
their bodies, their hands on me,  
onset of the sharp, unexpectedly  
wild cunt-brain connection.  
Drowsing toward sleep, still  
float on the memory soup  
of good sex.

## Wilderness House Literary Review 16/1

### Lemon Drops

When I see Fargo with child mind,  
there are no images except  
the buttery, golden-amber  
glow of the door lamp at our stoop,  
shining warmth against the gloaming,  
the North Dakota winter dusk.

Memory, though, retains places-  
a neighborhood variety store  
two short blocks away by foot  
or by sled on which Mother pulled  
me when she trudged a shovel-wide  
path between mile high snowdrifts  
my arms and legs wrapped around  
the one grocery bag to steady it.

There was a 13th Street bus  
that I, as yet pre-pubescent,  
was allowed to take and run home  
to the golden-amber shelter.  
Seated at the table, Mother  
was always darning socks, mending  
seams, my little sister asleep,  
Daddy away on business.

He would come by night plane from far-  
away places where I had never been:  
Minneapolis Chicago Kansas City.  
He always brought a treat for us:  
lemon drops tart but sweet but tart  
like his presence-- longed for, intrusive.  
Even if in bed, I'd rush out to greet him,  
take their lemony sting in my mouth.

## Wilderness House Literary Review 16/1

In the faraway Chicago  
a little girl, Suzanne Degnan,  
was murdered, her body parts  
found in a trunk, valise, or suitcase-  
dismembered remnants. It was all  
over the news--a little girl--  
my age--for weeks I would not walk  
to school. Mother had to drive me.  
Inside the house, I would be safe.

By age seventeen I couldn't wait  
to get out.

## Wilderness House Literary Review 16/1

### Scribble

the straightest line in Kaethe Kollwitz'  
self-portrait  
runs from the artist's eye to the fingers  
holding the charcoal  
intention's arrow hitting its mark

other marks curved smudged  
softness in the perfectly articulated  
face barely noticed beside  
the eruption of crayon's side wide  
jagged unbroken diagonals

one instantaneous swoop of elbow wrist  
continuous up down up down up  
obliterates the already drawn arm  
that holds the hand, fingers, tool  
this gestural violence brings

her impulsive dance of rage  
frustration at her failure  
to create the right arm's three-dimensional  
perspective  
in two-dimensions

or her spontaneous physicality  
breaking free of formal artistic  
restraints smashing patterned  
expectations  
Kaethe Kollwitz enters her art work.