

**Wilderness House Literary Review 16/4**

*Ashley Moor*

**Porch Cowboy**

Nothing is sweeter  
than waking  
to the silence  
of snow,  
of the movements  
your chest makes  
before the closed-eye smile  
stirs  
the ancient Woman in me.  
I crawl into your arms  
like stepping  
into the sunshine abyss  
of my childhood,  
like conjuring  
the music  
of my sister's laugh,  
like conjuring  
the dead.  
Some mornings  
I wake  
so full of love  
that it takes all of my  
strength  
to keep my chest  
from hallowing  
and my ribs from cracking.  
At 6 a.m.  
on a  
snow-covered lawn,  
the revelation  
of love  
accompanies a cigarette  
and cup of

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watered-down coffee.

All of the words

you whisper,

my porch cowboy,

are stuck to me

on a morning

so unaware

of its own

beauty.

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### Dorothea Fisher (1916-2006)

I was born  
backwards.  
I was raised in a place  
with no name  
but I can still find it on a map.  
The first words I wrote  
as a child  
were of Dorothea's  
funeral procession  
and the brown linoleum  
on her kitchen floor.  
Now I can't seem to remember  
her hands.  
She grew up slow,  
sifting the dirt with those hands.  
Time moved against her  
so gently.  
Dorothea wasn't scared  
of the wind.  
Dorothea died  
two months before her 90th birthday.  
I still shut my eyes to smell  
the rain from her front porch.  
I want to find  
all of the years  
I misplaced under my fingernails.  
I want to see  
Dorothea standing in the kitchen.  
I want to see  
my mother happy.  
Childhoods  
lay dormant as death  
but I have faith

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that they find us,  
eventually -  
face down in the debt we owe,  
dark, dim,  
hungry for summer.  
I believe in the reincarnation  
of Dorothea  
because I have found myself again  
in her ghost.  
I found the South  
embedded in the spine  
and scripture of poetry,  
back porches,  
pink houses,  
love on an acre of bones.  
I stay up late  
to write myself into the arms  
of an existence like the one  
of Dorothea.

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### Semper Femina

What a fickle,  
flawed,  
fabled  
a creature,  
the woman.  
The wild,  
dark  
apparition  
in the corner.  
What a fickle  
thing  
is love.  
We hunt,  
we carve,  
we hunger,  
our mouths water  
for a touch  
of love  
but when it sits  
on our dinner plate  
it eats  
us -  
a reckoning  
of blood and guts.  
It is only in the dark  
that we are  
fickle,  
flawed,  
fabled,  
with our stomachs  
empty,  
leaving love  
untouched.