

## Wilderness House Literary Review 18/2

*Ron McFarland*

### **The World's Worst Catholic**

In the home of the world's worst Catholic  
you will find no crucifixes,  
no hope of repelling vampires,  
no sacred flaming heart of Mary  
mother of god whose name must go  
uncapitalized in the name of equity.

In the home of the world's worst Catholic  
no one hopes Gonzaga makes it  
again to the Big Dance or that Notre Dame  
sashays into the Top Ten in football again,  
no one confuses Xavier with Xanadu  
or Holy Cross with holy cow!

In the home of the world's worst Catholic  
no one confesses, no one atones  
for their sins or agrees to own  
a single one of them, no one reads  
Dante's Divine Comedy, but everyone  
takes Milton's Paradise Lost to heart.

No one prays the rosary, mumbles  
"Ave Maria" or "Pater Noster" in that  
long forgotten Latin mumbo-jumbo  
litany, no one lights candles in memory  
because no one suffers the nostalgia of regret  
in the home of the world's worst Catholic.

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### Premature Death

*"A couple of drinks a day isn't healthy."  
The Week (April 2023)*

I'll drink to that because I can and because otherwise, how could I survive my own hypocrisy? Of course, I might give up booze citing reliable scientific evidence and the Bible, but then I'd feel obliged to live several years past my probable expiration date, taking care to nurture my kidneys, what's left of my hair.

Besides, aren't beer and whiskey and wine, not to mention the nicer liqueurs, too big to fail? And after all, the "meta-analysis" covered only "forty years of research" and five million adults, so do the math, I tell myself, given the world population of eight billion today, more or less. Statistics or tragedies? I'd say your guess

is as good as mine or Lenin's. Or Stalin's? Vodka imbibers both, I think, but I'd choose tequila on most tropical afternoons. "Lo and behold," one author wrote, his stats show how "the supposed health benefits of drinking" dramatically shrink. He seemed quite pleased about that, I think.

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### Essay on Squirrels

*"The glory, jest, and riddle of the world!"*  
Alexander Pope ("Essay on Man" 1732)

Sammy Squirrel envies the birds,  
especially the chickadees,  
as he glances upward at their feeder,  
the one we call The Chateau,  
hung from an oil-slicked shepherd's hook.  
He knows,  
understands through the wisdom of rodent  
ancestors, he can solve this problem  
elegantly.

Last week Sammy solved for X  
equals the feeder we call The Townhouse,  
which hangs a full foot plus  
over a squirrel baffle that fooled him  
four days, no more.  
Cost us fifty bucks plus shippage.

Last month he solved the humane small animal trap  
(forty smackers plus tax),  
just reached in and snatched the peanuts.  
Can't shoot the critters because we live in town.  
They know that, and no  
we cannot tell one squirrel from the next,  
so Sammy could be Suzie for all we know.

In college we learned about the ancient  
Great Chain of Being,  
that sequence of orderly links reaching  
from mankind to mollusks,  
teaching us how to be.  
It all made sense, and we knew where we stood,  
between some partial and some universal good.

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But this spring's latest batch of squirrels  
casts all in doubt.

These clever rodents make us wonder  
what we're all about.