

## Wilderness House Literary Review 19/1

*Joan Mazza*  
**Watashioto<sup>1</sup>**

I'd like to know what impact I had on those who came to my dream workshops with hope of relief from nightmares, recurrent dreams, images that made them tremble to say out loud.

I'd like to know if their nightmares stopped or lost their stink and sting. Did my teachings about metaphor and favorite symbols leave a legacy of soothing power they could pass on to siblings and their children? I'd like to know

if my instructions in how to say no, mostly to women, gave them permission to set boundaries with bosses and bitchy biddies who butt in without an invitation. Could they say no

to husbands, model limits for their children? Did my classes on managing emotions, reframing life's lemons offer some basic skills they didn't learn at home or school? I wonder who will remember me with fondness or a bit

of gratitude, instead of anger at my blurts and blunders as I made my own way toward self-regulation. Who ignored the naysayers? Who followed their desires to travel and paint?

Don't tell me about the hurt and harm I caused.

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1        \*Watashioto. Noun. Curiosity about the impact you've had on the lives of others. From The Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows by John Koenig. Sears Catalogue 1902

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That litany replays on a loop at 3 AM, regrets  
for the times I was indifferent to others' fears  
and confusion. I'm not looking for praise,  
don't need a prize or celebration. I don't

want a mausoleum engraved on four sides,  
or even a tombstone when I'm gone. I only  
hope some few will remember me,  
thankful for the support I offered.



After two hours of talking with a Sprint agent  
whose accent requires she repeat everything  
for me, and my new phone still doesn't work,

I turn to these sepia toned pages, which begin  
with teas and laundry soaps, and move quickly  
into diamond jewelry, watches, and sterling silver

button hooks, hat pins. Bargain prices, within my  
means. I fantasize buying crafted inkstands,  
and Dann's green ink, pens, drawing tools

in a leather case, and a scholar's writing desk box.  
I love the pages of buggies and wagons, followed  
by saddles, reins, crops, and grooming gear.

Window into American life more than a hundred  
years ago, before cell phones and computers,  
when you bought dry goods and patterns

not ready made dresses. Miracle of a catalogue  
that let you buy so many necessities by mail,  
postage a few cents. An 28x25 foot tent, made

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to order for only \$44, canvas samples sent free.  
What was that life like, with mantel clocks  
and bone china platters brought to the table

by live-in servants? Wouldn't I have been  
a factory or farm worker, making a dollar a day?  
Not the lady of a mansion dressed in layers

of silk and wool, ringing a bell. Both Sprint  
and T-Mobile says my 3G will be disconnected  
at the end of this month. But the 5G network

isn't completed for my rural area. No bells ring  
here, no buggy or horses take me to town.  
Birds greet first light as always, wireless

and cheerful, building nests, unaware of bombs  
falling seven time zones away. I raise binoculars  
better than the best in this catalogue.

Four Recipes to Savor Solitude

1.

Clear a table.

Stack old magazines and calendars, glue,  
glue sticks and double-sided tape. Turn off  
your phone and your logical mind. Add music  
in the palette of your youth if this helps. Delight  
in silence if you prefer. Tear, don't cut images  
as they call to you. Arrange and rearrange. Take  
a short walk. Reorder your images again. Cover,  
set aside to cool overnight. Rearrange to taste.  
Add one peppery photo. Affix to foam core  
or poster board. Brush with a sealant. Or don't.

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2.

Take your time, concentrate when you cut organic celery, peel and chop organic carrots while chunks of beef brown in a bit of extra virgin olive oil in a large, heavy 8-quart pot. Add chopped onions to brown them, sliced fresh mushrooms, thyme, bay leaf, sea salt, pepper, dry parsley, a half-ton of crushed garlic, plus eight ounces of red wine. Cover and cook in a 250-degree oven. Serve yourself with the crusty bread you will make during the six hours the stew slow cooks between your reading books. You are worth this effort, this gourmet feast within a hush. No rush.

3.

Fill a bathtub with hot water. Add a squirt of dishwashing liquid for bubbles. (Optional) Leave resentments and hurts at the door. Light four candles. Set a bath towel near. Climb in, sit back, marinate until the water cools. Rest your mind and body as you never have before.

4.

It's 3 PM and you haven't yet dressed. You're sleepy after your big meal, loose and relaxed after your bath. Climb back into bed and sleep as long as you like. Rise when you're not sleepy. Don't look or check to see if the clock is boiling. You are the chef, the chief, the queen. Alone, you can do anything you want.