

Wilderness House Literary Review 2/2

Judge Not

I settle my head on the down pillow;
pull the quilt over my ears.
My eyes quickly speed me to sleep.
I awake, surrounded by light.

I am in a pillared hall of echoes.
There is a judge and jury all robed in white.
My eyes focus on a wondrous thing:
wings complete their uniformity.

A committee of my unequal peers-
So, I am on trial for my after-life.
The chief scribe writes non-stop in his tome.
The prosecuting angel smiles (or sneers).
He assumes that I am riveted in his sights.

The elaborate evidence of my errors
makes me cringe, dissolved in terror.
I am struck with damning clarity.
By the end, I won't spend eternity here.

My defending angel serves pro-bono, for now.
She observes, gently, that I gave charity.
"Pocket change", corrects the prosecution.
"Ah, but his history is filled with good deeds."
"Good intentions", counters her adversary.

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The defense deftly dispenses more praise.
"His poetry rings with wisdom and truth."
"Flawed lines and uneven meter," the opposition thrusts.
"Spiritual and learned", her next attempt to counter.
"Free thinker, highly opinionated," the spun response.

Back and forth, lunge and parry.
The legal combatants become unruly.
I can't, for my after-life, determine
whose performance carries greater weight.
The chief jurist gavels for order.

Is there no way to mitigate my looming sentence ?
The prosecutor continues to pile on exhibits
of my life-long miscues and miss-direction.
My mortal self profusely perspires in fear.

The defense pleads for leniency:
"Is there anyone not prone to error?"
First, murmurs , then winged jurors nod, concur.
Perhaps I won't be left to twist in the ether.
I pound my fist into the pillow and pray.
"Another chance, Lord , one more chance."