

*Wilderness House Literary Review 2/2*

**GLEANER**

He's not the only one, or even the oldest. More lean than old, more worn than either. Each week rain, snow, or shine, come trash day, he trudges up streets and down, pushing his salvaged shopping cart. He doesn't grab, he assesses, ponders. A craftsman.

I imagine him sitting down to a sparse dinner. "Those young women on Walden Street their usual diet soda and Slimfast. I worry about them – eating troubles can sneak up on you." The tone of a man just home from the office.

---

**A BIT RACY**

Fully awake, chilled to the bone,  
I take to a humble couch,  
fortified with a thriller and a tumbler of Irish.

She calls from the bedroom, plaintively:  
I'm bitter cold, and lonely besides,  
here in our wide and comfortable bed.

Where the hell are you, anyway?  
Rebuked, I put down glass and book,  
amble willingly her way,

suavely discarding garments.

---

## CAFE ENIGMA

In the teeth of a blizzard, he wears shorts.  
Smile unwearied, he stands upright,  
folky cap, funky t-shirt:  
grinding, measuring.

"Sorry, We're Open" says the sign on the door.  
The Square's empty. The dank light  
of a snowed morning  
can't stop his grinding, measuring, brewing.

Monday, any day, hours and hours short  
of noon: does he camp here all night,  
in the deepest quiet,  
grinding, brewing, waiting?

The nearby statues, making sport  
of mimes and geezers, pull tight  
mock-parkas of snow. He  
still brews, smiles.

A shiver? A grimace? He'd snort  
at the thought. Where's his mighty  
good-humor derive from?  
Grinding, measuring, brewing,

call it a ministry, of sorts:  
hurrying a short latte  
to travel, a dark roast,  
or cocoa, or welcome.  
Mad? No, just a glad anomaly,  
on this cold, knife-winded morning,  
grinding, measuring, brewing, smiling.

*For Jeff*

---

## THE CAMP

Just 21, stuffed with miseducation,  
I drifted through Europe on five dollars a day.-  
the Grand Tour on Five Dollars a Day.  
I managed to be underwhelmed –  
Wine headaches in France,  
Rubble-overload in Rome and Athens.  
But Germany had beer in ample measure.  
I felt right at home. For some reason  
I took the tourist bus to Dachau  
on a clear, chilly, breezy day.  
It was all so open. One or two barracks  
had been rebuilt, for display. The guides  
the gas chambers had never been used.  
*This was strictly a labor camp.*  
I didn't know enough to believe or doubt.  
Now it was all white gravel  
and granite outlines. So peaceful.  
So unnerving. I didn't even  
dare snap photographs.