

*Wilderness House Literary Review 3/2*

*a.k. huseby*

**Butcher**

We all know why he goes  
to the shed every afternoon  
after one, sometimes two,  
if he can hold out.

He drives the tractor in the almond groves  
or the canal bank, works his jigsaw cutting  
windmills, sawing children, gardening,  
watering flowers, Holly Hobby  
on a swing, injuns in a canoe.

I sneak into the trailer  
with the kitchen that folds  
and reminds me of Barbie's bed;  
the room at the back is all bed  
and a door,

a door  
with a picture  
of a naked woman, naked  
with a white hat, a cowboy  
on the back of the door.

While he drinks in the shed,  
I lay on the bed in the hundred degree  
heat, smelling the age of the blanket,  
scratchy, the oil of him,  
and staring at her, divided like meat,  
lined and apportioned: breast,  
rump, flank – fascinating to me,  
smiling like she is pleased.

**Chimney Bird**

It fell from heaven into our narrow flue,  
impassable trap, that black holding hearth,  
beat furious wings against the glass,  
as my children peered through with fear  
and delight as the monster bird  
in shadows lay on snowy wings,  
mottled soot and dark captivity,  
until the frenzy slowed; resignation  
lit a burning flame atop the logs  
with orange eye flickering anxiety  
as fate sifted the air about in motes  
with the slightest movement,  
the eldest child calling each station  
of one inch or toward the vanishing corner,  
and the windowed screen rattled,  
as the omen, visitor, gift feared us  
and that we would not set it free.

**Lightening**

Each time the rain dropped its drum on our roof,  
I would flee the approach, the idea of the storm,  
and crawl into the black beneath my bed,  
afraid of the dark, more afraid of the barrage,  
the commotion of ozone and rolling hammers,  
but he would tug me loose, whining,  
from my carpet-smelling space of sure dust,  
coax me to the desk below the blue-painted sill  
and point when the fury arrived,  
blistered the sky, backlit the purple  
thunderheads shot through by dazzling  
static fingers running in the sky's raven hair,  
and we stared as the siphoned sky pumped  
danger from the ground, energy pulsing  
back to heaven where the light flowed down,  
death returning the backswing of weather's scythe,  
a pendulum; I could smell hell and feel  
the runty fuzz rise on my neck and arms,  
with each fevered strike.