

Wilderness House Literary Review 4/3

Alexandra Isacson
Edvard Munch

Bohemian painter's splendor-
embedded in bitter wormwood
naked absinthe pours
over cut crystal sugar cubes.

Glassy eye candy sheen reflects
the painted man smoking blue
suspended in mystical shadows,
with madness and women.

He melts into waterglass sheets
with his dark haired model;
her arm wavers and flows into
painted bed- exposes death's
bold staccato heartbeat strokes-
in shades and tints of opiates
striking the ominous morning.

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Opium and Poetry

To Elizabeth Siddal Rossetti

In alcohol doused inferno
Dante paints and Lizzie rests,
sainted simple and sickly in
the eternal lap of laudanum.

She is Ophelia,
rose fingers gripping his
verses like pistils of a poppy,
swollen-sticky with powder.

Resonant voices accuse-
Who gave the final dose?
He is with Lizzie and Beatrice;
their spirits soar in Florence.

In delirium tremens visions,
he teaches his model to draw
again, guiding shaking hands,
cross-hatching depths of emotion.

In a fit, he has her unearthed.
"Perfect in death," they said,
yet the buried alive words
burn and writhe in his hands.

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The Villa of the Mysteries

With closed eyes,
everything is bathed in red light.
Time ceases in Pompeii.
A woman welcomes me,
her silk knotted virgin veil
dances in wind flutters,
she offers wheat cakes and wine.
A breath blows through me-
my mouth opens, words wash out,
burning in the mother tongue of
Demeter and Persephone.