

Wilderness House Literary Review 4/4

Carolyn Gregory
At the Goblin Market

Two sisters danced in hoops
through the Victorian room
where white curtains blew,
ghostly music carried them,
one bitter she had eaten too much,
the other, trying to help her.
Despite suffering,
love bound the girls
dancing in their hoops,
playing with the rhymes of fruit.

We sat in the audience,
tasting the poetry
swirling in this pas de deux
when the girls were young.
They discovered temptation.
The taste of nectar was sweeter
than they could bear.
One girl withered into herself
when the goblins took their fruit away.
Loss hurts
when the object of desire fades.

We watched these two dance -
one comic, the other singing full-throated.
One suffered for the loss of fruit
as though all color vanished,
the other put her to bed gently,
lulled by the sea and sky.

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In another country, we knew what
this love is about.

I fell down and you picked me up.
You discovered rhymes
and I brought you fairy tales.

We danced in our own white skirts,
eating apples as we left the theatre,
avoiding goblin shadows
for the bright street home.

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Taking Measure

Last night late, we drove past the river,
shimmering silver under moonlight,
a long stretch beside a dark road.
You turned on the CD player,
Visions of Johanna drawing out
its long melodic line about beauty and belief.
I told you I can't cry.
You changed the music to the blues.

Earlier, we sat watching the play,
drawn in by lunatics held in a cage.
One spoke to noone
and another banged against restraints.

On stage, good and evil warred
between two men,
one bent on sensual glut,
the other pure but unable to unlock
the kingdom.
One spoke for human rights,
the other praised the body,
denouncing progress.

Dominance-submission, sense and nonsense.
This is the war that pitches revolutions
inside the soul.
Fire hoses blast water on what remains.

One man's stabbed at another's expense.
A raging woman changed history
at the turn of her knife.

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Afterward, we ride together through the dark,
taking measure of our own demons.

My sadist slashed your poet.

Your accountant buried me
under mountains of nickels.

The slide guitar draws out its slippery chords
as a black man wails about losing his job,
his home, his dog
and on through the traffic lights.