

## Wilderness House Literary Review 5/3

*Monique Callahan*

### **Egg; Or A Short History Of My Life**

There are twelve reasons why  
I want to get out of this box.  
Well actually it's not a box at all,  
more like two rows of tiny up-side down caves  
geometric, redundant, a half-circle of  
caskets fit to size.  
Clearly someone had me in mind,  
thought this would be the space I'd fill.

But I want to get out of this box.  
My skin is hungry for surfaces. I want  
the sensation of edges. I want to feel that  
uncentering of my reaction to new spaces,  
to a slight tilt in a flat plane. I want that  
rocking against it.

I want to get out because I'm tired of that almost touching.  
Tired of looking to my left and seeing more of myself.  
Up to the waist in casing, tired of what's under me being the same  
as what's above me, some covering, tired of the stench  
of this casket where if we are cold, then I am cold and when I'm warm  
I'm rotting. I want to get out  
because chances are I'll be beaten and burned in this godforsaken hall  
of mirrors.  
Let me out.

Baptize me in wine or just purple.  
Let me out.  
Crack open my skin  
and leave me to my tired pieces.

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### Prayer

I began with three notes,  
small and unassuming.  
Nobody called me by name.  
No one christened my edges  
with clefs or stenciled me  
with bold black bars  
to measure my palatinate.

Then  
the notes split  
and doubled.  
They arpeggiated  
simple phrases  
of one and  
two and four,  
ornate with  
dissonant seconds.

I began again  
splicing time  
into fragments,  
swinging notes  
into shivers  
in the blue and  
seizing into  
firmatta  
at the end  
of the line.

This is not euphony  
firmatta  
This is not melody  
firmatta  
This is not harmony  
firmatta

I began  
with three notes  
and though no one called me,  
I came.

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### AMERICA

*for Allen Ginsberg*

Duke jazzed you up, you know, I heard it:  
the bronze applause of cymbals, the  
eruption of steel pitches, the  
muscular sliding down, the  
cylindrical sound of the  
lining up and the  
coming together of things.

And Jimi too with his bagpipe shriek and wail, dissonant bending  
of sound, threading of silk spider webs into the stomach black  
of sound and the stretch of sound and the hold  
and swell of sound and the  
manic screams of getting out. America,  
oh how I love the sound  
of you.

I love your open doors, your flatness in the middle  
I love the grass in your cemeteries. I love the quiet  
you give me. I love your way of speaking oceans  
at the edges. I love wrapping your arms around parachutes  
and flying. I love your so very peculiar way of flying.  
America, I just love you.

I am you.

It was inevitable, my becoming. Sometimes, you and me, we count the  
dead teeth  
and stitch them into the edges of this dream. In sleep, we load up our  
cargo  
of bones and begin our ritual migration.

Wait, America, the can is overflowing.

Yes, there is water in it but not rainwater, or water from my faucet.  
Not water from my toilet bowl or my showerhead  
and it's not water from some holy spigot. In seven dips  
it won't make you clean. I keep trying to tell you, America,

babies are not going to keep surviving winter.

America, we have given you all and now we are nothing:  
the skin on our ears, our vaginas, the ash on the soles of our feet,  
as if they were ours to give, we gave them all.

Do you remember the orange breath of crosses, the  
black grass, the poplar and its strange fruit?

America can't you see the dawn, early and proud,  
waving like a damned fool? America, I'm going to rid myself  
of the color blue. I'm going to abandon all my blue possessions,  
build a cement barricade around my purple house and  
take up eating mushrooms for their grayness.

I hate you.

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I hate your love for nacreous skins and prisons  
and blood ties, America I hate your flaming  
prayers that turn into curtains and nausea.  
I hate your speeches. I hate your casual acceptance  
of amnesia. I hate the stench of two homeless men  
sleeping in a bank foyer, I hate one million brands  
of breakfast cereal, a thousand brands of soap  
(and not one of them can do its job), not one of your cronies,  
can even read  
the signs, come on America,  
stop procrastinating.

Let's just ready our necks, and thread them through.