

## Wilderness House Literary Review 6/2

*Doug Bolling*  
**Skewings/Valencies**

Let the object acknowledge its shadow.

If I die tonight will you stand  
Beside me.

So for dreams forgotten but always  
Ready to surface.

You taught me travel in this world  
Is dangerous but inescapable.

You taught me to weigh the smallest  
Of moments.

The night I watched you making dinner  
In the stooped kitchen with ceiling  
Barely above our heads.

The careful carvings of beef and chicken.  
The boiling pot sending its steamy  
Songs everywhere.

Didn't the outer world pull in  
Its claws.

Didn't the cello you played  
Bring a pure stillness to what  
We had.

How is it love is nearby but inside  
A great distance.

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### Searching

Tide grabs at shore.  
Small animals retreat sensing  
Early death by water.

What of our words that slip  
Back and forth like mice in  
Cluttered chambers.

What is this traveling through  
Unlimned terrain.  
Why are the dying building mirrors  
In which to pretend  
To live.

I walk farther inland  
Listening for your voice,  
You the one who taught me  
To love as though  
It would carry us  
Far enough.

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### Travels in Winter

The cries of winter were everywhere,  
Icicles shattering in the wind,  
Creaking of branches skeletal  
As the ribs of an old man's  
Corpse.

We wanted the music of death  
To fill us this December  
Of time.  
We wanted to ask of love  
The question of loss.  
People entered the woods every day  
And drifted through the barbed  
Shadows and lost their way  
And died in an innocent ravine  
Unseen, unfound for days  
Or weeks or never.

We saw them as lovers who  
Loved too well,  
Who took the outer world  
For what it seemed  
As though the chalice  
Never needed  
Refilling.

We couldn't stay away wanting  
The taste of danger  
In our greedy mouths,  
Wanting to find and touch  
The thin line between  
Life and that other.

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We believed our lives were  
Too much squeezed by the  
Airbrushed billboards  
Of narrow scenes,  
Too many movies and  
Shopping tours,  
Too many hours around the  
Family TV with invented  
News or weather offered  
By painted faces.

We tried to get spring and  
Summer out of our brains,  
Too easy, too fragile  
To be real.

For weeks we searched the  
Death white woods  
For the remains of those who  
Had gone before us,  
Cousins or strangers,  
Prophets of ourselves  
Getting closer,  
Closer.