

Wilderness House Literary Review 6/4

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Addiction

Everywhere a river
A bright glass shard in the river
Your lips like peaches
Your eyes like a river
Looking everywhere
I see in your eyes
How deep the river is
The green glass on the bottom
The water rushing over it and
Wearing it down to dull
Everywhere your river
Moving and flowing
Dancing and running
As your journey starts and stops
And starts again
As the river carries you
To this sea of tears
To the rushing hollow music
Of wind, of gulls, of waves -
And everywhere a river
A river of your songs
Words so hopeful
Flowing away to this river of no hope
The final pull of the tide taking you
In its arms like a baby. And you,
Oblivious to its deep brackish depths
As you float out on a raft of daisies -
He loves you he loves you not
He loves you he loves you not -
What to believe when the river
Has brought you to this vast water
And when you can no longer see
The bottom for the mud in your eyes.

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All the hours we have spent and
Still this river is pulling you out
In this mysterious tide,
And away to your drowning -
And now, I remain here on shore
A distant figure, faint in the rising fog
Watching you drift out
On wave after wave after wave.

Nov 20 2006

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DIVORCE COURT

A man and a woman were getting divorced
The court told them
Go to mediation
It will make it easier on your kids
In the mediation session
The husband pulled a pistol
Out of his coat pocket
And shot his wife
He got her in the shoulder
Then his wife pulled a gun
Out of her pocketbook
And shot him in the leg
He ran out to the parking lot
She followed
He shot her again
She tumbled down
Then the little woman aimed again
She got him in the groin.
Ah, where have they gone
Their first mad honeyed nights?

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Uncle Andrew's Funeral

You can't sit Shiva [*he whispered*] if you're not a Jew
You can't cover the mirror in black
Have cake with relatives and then swiftly sink

Into the deepest part of yourself
Tear out your insides with your own bare hands
Release the wail that's grown in your gut

Let it spit out like the black snake that it is
You can't do that if you're not a Jew
Damn it [*he hissed*] quit sniveling and grow up

No clawing the coffin at this Protestant church
Pastor didn't know him but eulogized: loving husband
Father coach always a helping hand blah blah blah

The wake at the suburban funeral home
Former white clapboard home on a corner
The backyard tarred over to a big parking lot

Flower boxes filled with seasonal blooms
Spring petunias, autumn mums, and winter greens
Formerly an office – accountant or a dentist's

Now the gaps of missing funds or teeth are filled
By his heavy casket borne by yawning funeral boys
Hefting the awkward box on their gray-suited shoulders

Ah shit, [*he said softly*], bring back the screaming and sobbing
Bring back the tearing of hair and rending of cloth
The mighty passion of death and loss

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Roaring hearts and roaring sobs
Crying until breathless, crying until alone
Breath broken, gasping, trampled under, all undone

Never mind, *[he said]*, it doesn't matter now
He's shoveled into earth, deep in the dark ground
"Oh darlin' *[she sang]*, you'll hear our footsteps down there."