

## Wilderness House Literary Review 6/4

*Martin Golan*

### **Finding the Bed in a Marriage**

First you hit the chair  
as you feel through the room  
switched strange by darkness  
Her sleep-sounds direct you  
a map detailed by sighing and rustling  
the steep relief of even breathing  
The room's snap to blackness is a kind of sleep  
Emergency lights in the head flip on  
to let you view the room from within  
The hard bedpost, seen with the hands  
is misshapen, and larger than it was. A bureau sneaks up  
a startled shoe makes a stand  
Nothing survives its deadly idea

You find the bed  
and steal beneath the covers  
warmed by a woman in a distant sleep  
in a distant room you will never see  
and you know inside that this  
is what you stumbled in the dark to find  
stumbled for years through empty rooms  
to stand right here, on this very spot in the breathing dark  
All that is yours is now at hand  
the beating heart of it all:  
A comfort of flesh  
a confusion of needs  
and a contest over space  
Sleep nears  
You dream  
of slow clocks  
ticking

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### 318 West 101st Street: Among Strangers

Fire siren, winter wind  
your lovers now  
I watch as you curled up in white  
unfurl your stories  
your whirling needs  
Outside I hear  
a frenzy of lonely  
stray cats crying

Tonight in the chill of decades lost  
I come to stand outside your door  
but can't find the right door, all  
look right and wrong at once  
I dream instead on the hard cold sidewalk  
in the bitter wind of all we wasted  
of a door that might open, bring me back  
to the night I came to this door  
(if, in fact, it was this door)  
and you opened up  
with all the secrets touching seeks  
your body split  
beneath me, split  
like past and present  
I knew the secrets of your bones, your breaths  
The easy need of all your wanting  
The uneasy greed of all your taking  
Oh, what a dance we did

But in the bitterness of morning an old question burned  
Why  
Why did you sell  
all your earthly goods  
to the sweetest bidder?

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You squandered your gifts  
old lover, old friend,  
you were that car on Riverside  
muffler shrieking  
running yellows  
making every head turn  
a wealth of attention  
spent for nothing  
creating only  
tales for new lovers  
explanations for wives, fantasies  
for long, silent walks alone  
No man is good enough  
I heard your damp skin say  
no man is good enough  
You broke us in two  
left us  
to spend  
our lives  
with strangers

Two window panes of dancing branches  
through all my icy nights I hear  
a shiver of sheets  
a licking of wounds  
it all depends  
on your lover now, I reach  
a naked hand to you, through time,  
a naked hand to you

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### Watching Vera Sleep

There is that look of secret sharing  
you give only to a mirror, now  
you give it to your sleep. You see your  
self, like a woman glimpsed through a window  
soundlessly combing her hair. You move  
on the other side of mirrors: dance  
you are naked with your father  
You are covered in daylight  
As a mirror in death

Only a mirror  
can give you enough  
Your body appears  
uncertain, like a stranger, wanting  
an insane address that doesn't exist  
Love exhausts you  
like a dizzying all-night talk of infinity: you  
who mutter broken dream words and turn again, away  
You are the suicide in me  
While I am patron to your breath  
give you life  
as I see you  
breathing

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### Seeing a Caged Leopard Through Rilke's Eyes

Stalking the silence of his greasy cage  
pacing the bars, the tightness, the torture  
of the ten counted steps of his exile  
The lines of his body tighten and loosen  
and break like a wave that years for release  
As children tease him  
and fathers shudder at his beauty  
feigning terror that he's free  
He makes us feel our rage

He growls for a camera  
or is it in memory of his lost primeval pride  
that smolders in his eye?  
We feel his rage, but lack his power  
We dream his power, and fear his rage  
the slap and quiver of the leaves  
as he leaps, with us, to that eager fire  
of slashing claws and ripping teeth  
going for the throat to take what is his  
but never ours  
The glory and the blood  
a life without thought, without guilt, without shame  
only the clean  
and sweet  
pleasure of the perfect kill