

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/1

Jared Smith

In Walls Of Wood And Stone

The walls of my house stone
sculpted by glaciers many millennia ago
and swept by the sweat of imprisoned men
tumbled down mountain creeks
in the freshet spring rains
enforced by mighty trees whose limbs
ate of the eternal burrowing into earth
rooting slowly among the grubs and fast life
until their mighty limbs grew heavy dead gold
and were lopped off, polished thin and set
as framework that would withstand insurance
speculators and investors of Wall Street drugs.
The carpet crème de la crème of polyphenes
woven across stark wallboard barbecue.
A home to last a lifetime in ghettos of the soul,
so we parse it out having paid our tithes.
Take off the carpeting, refinish the floors,
buy rock sculptures to hang upon the walls,
run wires vibrant with the world wide web
through the stones that grew eons ago
upraised upon a continent not yet discovered,
enlisting lighting, nuclear power, the dark of coal
to carry meaning among men and place it here
where I, my wife, and daughter sleep at night
and our dogs run pale from room to room
shadows in the darkness beneath a setting moon.

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I've only started to become aware

other people use our apartment at night.
They try to be considerate, inconspicuous,
gone before I am aware of them, but I know.
The coat closet hanging open when I wake,
telltale scratches on the coffee table,
a scrap of paper with indecipherable notes,
the number of wine bottles in the trash.

Someone called yesterday morning, and I
picked up the phone and answered, but it
was for another woman. The man insistent
at the end of a long tunnel of static corridors,
finally reciting our number twice, demanding
she call back, and then late that night came
banging on our door before I went to bed
and certainly before anyone else came in.

It's gotten so we don't have friends over,
because I can't keep the refrigerator filled,
or someone left a moldy tray of cheeses,
or the wood around the door is splintered.
It doesn't matter. These are little things,
but I don't like strangers coming in on us
or sitting behind the mirrors looking out.
I don't like the extra laundry in the hamper
or the dirty dishes in the sink when I get up.

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The God Particle

Halfway through life
a black hole opened within me
infinitely small sucking
words and images into itself
imploding meaning.
I can send nothing out anymore.

We spend long minutes holding
a live phone line open across the continent.
It is a cell. There are no wires. No landline.
We do not speak but in short bursts
and static silence surrounds us.
Comfort in that, but I wonder at times
between the radio waves whether you are there.
A pillow may be stuffed across your face.
Your hands are turning keys in the silence
The doorknob rattles and is a cold wind.
Rollover minutes one body to the next

carioles effect
 trajectory
 velocity
centrifugal mobius space
folded fractals
 cash jingling between stars

Water at sunset
still of wave action
reflects back the heavy stones of time
apartments lived in and left
alleys into shadow
trains into tunnels and clouds
this perfect evening without rain

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except that which dries from the air
as the sun goes down goes cool
everything painted in place
by time and reflections.
An eagle poised above time.
What happens when the light goes out
and everything goes on down
into darkness lit up. Undisturbed.

A tow-headed boy in the alley shoots
the big one, the big eagle cats eye shooter
marble from his sweaty fist against the curb
where it shocks back on concrete, reels
and spins its facets among spheres,
particles against particles spinning
in the loose garbage of urbanity
waves ever outward from the hands of a child.
There is something in spinning...
the town the city the universe the cosmos
and the little things as well always the little
giving proof and motion to the large.
Little is a matter of perception and lazy eyes.
holding existence in hand the size of man's brain.

Each pupil is a point in infinity
sucking the light from your world
and imagining you into being

It is the impact that is important
 spinning in space time
and the splintering velocity
falling deep into the pupils of each eye

on a white shelf in the sunlight
an electric razor lies unplugged

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its cord dangling to a marble tile floor
the floor floating on a matted subsurface
unseen but remembered by the pupil
reflecting in a vanity mirror
in a distant room.

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October Afternoon by a Log Fire

I see what has not changed
for generations weathered plank boards
beetle holed and solid as flies' eyes
within electric lights and heat
in generations gone

Hitler, Stalin, Trotsky, Stalin
Churchill, Mussolini, Hirohito, FDR, Initials
these walls built in a homecoming
a returning soon becoming a retreat.

Mountain pines and aspen change. Asters
wilt. Bears have returned and cougar
Moose too one wolf half starved a year ago
in the foothills.

Lodge pole pine and ponderosa
grown from scrub willow groves
Now gone and the aspen yet again
leaves luminous in dusk
Trout gone into forever pools and riffles
metaphoric stars
The stars though still the same
high distance on a cold autumn night

Each season has excuses.

Windy cabin on the hill we keep pictures on the walls
Uniforms
Old tea pots, doilies, table cloths, a scrubbing board.
The cold passes through
We stuff the chinks with mortar
quick-set by mountain streams
and fire the pot belly stove inside

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with the boughs of trees and even seeds
in the distance of our birth
Old dust in cupboards
Marshall music on a distant breeze
Wagner across candlelight
as the constellations wither.