

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/2

After Shakespeare: Selected Sonnets
George Held
Cervena Barva Press
ISBN 978-0-9831041-9-3, 2011, \$15.00

Review by Irene Koronas

Everything about this book is genuine. From the cover art to the typeface, the reader will find a finely crafted book of poems. George Held's sonnets remind me of love poems, especially, Neruda, "Twenty Love Songs" in which there is often a sadness, there is often sadness in love poems and Held lets us in on what often imbues a sonnet:

*"Sharp cuts the knife of light at night
A thousand yards below our house
Where moonless nights have long been pitch
At least since Mohawk fires flared.*

*"We love the silent black nights,"
I'd tell our city friends in praise
Of this rural upstate haven. Now,
Because of some newcomer's fear of dark*

A bright light illuminates his yard..."

Just as the poem brings us to an earlier time, the poem also brings us forward to the current culture full of trepidations and fear. Held plants reality in each sonnet, "Despite this shrill artificial light

a semblance of silence still remains." He takes the sonnet as his own just as Shakespeare held his time in his pen. These sonnets hold an interior voice, as well as, the apprehensions nature presents us with:

*"How well old poets understood the way
That late fall days – the sun's ever-dwindling
Calories, the mash of leaves on sidewalks,
The tree' skeletons – parallel our lives,
Our own blood unflowing like rivulets
In the dead of winter, but with no hope
Of renewal the first mild day in March.*

*Say the gloom's psychological, say spring
Will always come like saviors in the myths,
Say we shall be reborn in the sweet bye...
Or say bye-bye to breath and reach and touch,
And say you have no regrets, but don't miss,
Under November's dark clouds, the sunset."*

The probabilities in any natural living place, person, lend to our understanding of who we are and who we will become and these sonnets speak to the presence, the demise, the ever present life and the possibilities con-

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/2

tinue to plague the future, these sonnets use form to steady our walk. The sensitivity of words,:

*“Without an invitation you barge in
To assault me or to insinuate
Yourself into my mind’s cinema, then
Send your badass hit men to execute
Me with an Uzi or on the gallows,
To suffocate me under a pillow
Or in a car trunk or, alive, bury me.
Why are your plots so melodramatic?
Yet they play so damned authentically...”*

Just as Neruda sings his poems and we love them, you will also love reading these sonnets.