

## Wilderness House Literary Review 7/4

*Joseph Wade*  
**Her**

Tonight, I see one of you,  
your face lit by the erratic glow  
of this cigarette's orange heartbeat  
precarious as the blue smoke  
swirling over the line of the shadow  
across the green eye that gleams.  
That green eye that'll fix in sight  
With half the pink smile  
I remember. Is the other half  
in the shadows or have I lost it  
like I lost the sound of your life?  
like the distinct outline of towns  
passed on the sun-touched morning  
when I've passed so many towns  
that even favorites lose definitions,  
but there's the corner in Asheville where the hippy  
swayed and played music that sounds  
like "Darling," and while I miss the fullness of your lips,  
I feel them every time an ice-cube floating  
in lemonade touches my lips on a hot Brooklyn avenue.  
It does so many things to me. Tomorrow,  
I'll have that drink, but tonight, I'll stare at orange  
light that pulses on your face.

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### Expect

I see her skull,  
even as she breaths in the bed  
and smiles lively at me.

In darkness, with my fingers,  
I feel the smooth hardness  
of her jawbone beneath her cheek.

I see her green eyes move,  
and I know all the flesh that connects  
will be cleaned; there will be hollow sockets.

**A Small Song**

Death sings in dripping  
rhythms steady from the gutter.  
They sing the symphony  
of dripping loss, steady  
in the gray room  
where I lay,  
open eyes,  
blinds shut.

**Burn Down Sun**

In the mountain's crack—  
the sprout of a pine  
sapling faint and green  
shakes on a grey cliff face,  
waits out the wind—  
Howling only howling and howling  
under night's single iced-blue moon.

Because the sun will come,  
but I fear the sun will  
burn down  
the valley,  
steam up the rivers  
and burn and burn.

The wind left howling and howling  
over all barren charred trees,  
but the sapling still shaking,  
the last lone dot of green  
in an ash and ember valley of howling.

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**A Dead Girl Named Autumn**

I must brush your  
fidgeting hands from my eyes.  
Don't get ticked off  
and fight to keep me blind.

Slow and stop.

I demand clarity.  
Your memory and your face.  
What are your colors?  
Was your nose round or pointed?

I can feel your cheek. It's warm  
in my palm.

I can see green eyes  
and the yellow flecks in them.

Burst through dirt—a dandelion—  
yellow flecks in every lawn are you.  
Yes, you are in every smiling dandelion.

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### Boston in June

Sky river Styx is full  
today. White clouds  
stream slow and divine  
in sunlight that etches  
their soulful forms into cotton  
bloomed and afloat in wind-run  
fields. They grow dark picking  
forgotten memories to rain  
down on us when we walk  
the streets around Boston harbor.  
Then, as spirits do, they dissipate  
into blue and endless atmosphere  
and leave the sun to its shining  
on all of us so we too may bloom  
after rain runs through our veins.

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### I'm Really Just Pissed About the Dishes

I've left my studio for takeout  
and hated trees and people  
in front of bodegas or in them.  
I am in their mouths judging  
me, the gavel of a tongue click  
in an old woman's cheek.  
"You drank until four in the morning  
and haven't filed the paperwork  
at the college and you're spending  
too much cash and your friend  
sent the text, even they're disappointed.  
Your father's beginning to ask questions.  
They're worried again and so is she—  
They're on to you crumbling again,  
falling apart again, but this is stuff of legends.  
But they'll whisper around the dinner table  
about you, 'so tragic, so talented,  
Such a shame, how can we help poor...'"  
The bed where I lay is wretched.  
Sun and birds and weed wackers  
burst through my basement window  
where the neighbor's old man  
can stare at me through a broken blind.  
For four nights I haven't slept,  
just fell into movies on my laptop.  
I didn't write a single poetic word,  
use soap when I showered,  
or clean anything but a single  
ceramic plate. I've traced  
the same circle of that plate dully  
with the repetitions performed  
all my life, and the dish is dirty again.