

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/4

Katherine L. Holmes

Gothic

In the no-wolf's-land of Sunday and churchbells
agnostic girls screech unheeded or unheard.

One of us was a baby bawling in a photo and the arms
of a tickled-pink grinning godmother.

That girl keeps uttering ear-splitting dodges
to the effect of ringing my doorbell and running
as the Sunday thunderstorm starts.

It's all like Beethoven being slated and having
no energy to switch past the day's 3D theme –
a composer's last storm and his balefulness
strong as churchbells.

Yet the listeners go on living.

Uphill in the no-screacher's land of the coffee break
plain packaged condoms can be selected
at the bottom row of a college candy machine.

On Saturdays, grown girls get off a bus and trudge between
stone mansions with stained glass and obsolete bedrooms
along a downhill road marked "Dead End."

One can glimpse flags wafting below for freighters
that materialize on unswimmable waters.

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/4

The human erase

Each one of us came
from a bad family however someone else
looked at it.

When they dig
archeologists find pottery poetry pillars left
by the kind of people

journalists examine
at the peaks of the pyramid or the scion
tip of a landslide

down to a heartbreaker
Mark Antonys and his forgotten cousins nullifying
Nero who didn't add up

to a hill of births
the sisters of squanderers disguising lineage
behind masks of Mrs. and Darling.

Black sheep are missed
masts hovering with the clouds or at colleges
a voyage away

from the grandchildren
who receive bequests like bottles bobbing
on the waves of old wedding gifts and dishes
parted from scenes

in home movies
a mope-mouthed mother with children skulking
at the cheese-ready camera

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/4

in the "no room"
at the historical society when there are reels
capsulated deep in the Mormon earth (what will
they dig up next)

not a skeletal lookalike
not that family trait hanging from the tree
caught into not that

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/4

In the neighborhood of obligation

never the relatives for the drop-in
visit

across the defunct railroad tracks
busy or away

backyards reproach along a creek
regression is an impulse

a prowler supposed to keep schedule. Knock
and it goes unnoticed

to the silhouette circling the kitchen.
Knock and enter

into the inviolable invite of advanced age.
The droop-in

when there are plans to see a matinee. "I don't
really like movies."

One says a nine-decade-old new thing. The other
limps out-of-hearing.

Chitchat and sitting like memorabilia on a chair.
Out of storage

the stuffed doll adjunct with us was sewed by
someone other

than in dutied memory, blurred by a favorite.
Age an aristocracy

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/4

like cinema cresting to an exultant decade.
"I'm sorry. We're leaving soon."

Loath to ask about the pullover hat in the living room
the less and livid hair.

A doe enters the shush of Sunday driving
leading its youngster

across the street. My sidewalk scream extends into a
delirium of screeches

and the third deer keeping cars at a pause before
the entrails of dinner

no fawn teardrop markings on the sidling fourth
finally on a bend of lawn

vanishing as the cars continue sedately towards oncoming
columns of newspaper:

It is better not to avoid a deer in traffic because
of collisions between cars.

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/4

This first snow

The accompaniment this autumn:

a sky-octave of blue that bares
gnarled vulture necks and leaves;
a preponderance of skull-yellow
the shredded tickets of Halloween
whose oakfronds are fingerbones,
the lie that foliage is litter.

Closing signs on the Woolworth windows,
racks of clothes raked over;
sentimental mulch and overstayed cars
sarcophaguses under cloud cobbles.

I've never noticed fall so ugly
frittered and scraggly as grief.

The swansong this autumn:

these leaves the strength of rose hips
bright as a future's future
and last-minute turnings, petal marzipan
melting as snow on the tongue,
vivid as love on the tongue and wistful,
anachronistic as purple is;

a fervency so immersing
I could fall

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/4

into a northwest rainforest drizzling
December nearly two decades ago;

the go-go gratuitous drumbeat
of wet eternal greens,

primeval plumes and calm callow love,
its prisms on wood and wall;

memory refracting still the swan
on the rainforest pond
and the seldom serene snow

on the singlefile bushes
like this first here and the
too-soon sounds of flight.

For the first time
I am sad at a first snow
since the winter will be bittersweet.

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/4

Ekel equals equal

Switch the infant
foundling or changling
the ambitious wet nurse's
did they expect an identity crisis
during the epic
whether or not father suspects

they stare through homogenous glass
following the nurse
who weaves among nametags
baby baby is this your baby?

A forefather stands with pastel ribbons
at the starting line of equal
(incubator babies disqualified)

"Four x minus y if y is 50 percent
ekel z"
said the farmboy turned teacher of algebra
Boys snicker shekels and z's
girls configure his frame.
"E-quals", spouts someone of the back four
half-below their desks.

Logic came to each with geometry
and at graduation everyone wore
equal squares on their heads.
Much had happened
because.