

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/1

Steven Sher

Living Among Angels

One is summoned when
I'm tired and have trouble
staying in my lane, straying

onto the shoulder over
the white solid line, passing
into shadow that has fallen

by the road. An unseen
hand corrects the wheel.
And when I succumb

to recurring grief, the scream
that will unsettle sleep,
one is sitting on the bed's edge

testing the limits of my dream
until I rouse myself
and blink in disbelief

at his fading form, first light
of dawn, demanding
one last blessing before he flees.

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/1

Winter Light

In the distance through the trees
grown bare, a city, hidden many months
behind the leaves, rises steaming from the river.
Amid the clarity of December,
people miss the haze of summer,
prefer the ambiguity of autumn
and the surging passions every spring
to the certainty of winter—
drawn desperately to mystery
without expecting it to last.

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/1

Guiding Hands

When we are young,
they hold us back.

But as we grow, their grip
will seem at last to give

yet measure what's to be,
like sifting sand, shaping us

as the sea will build,
wave by wave, a beach.

Finally time to set us
free, like sails they open,

filling with a steady
wind, and dread

this thrill of
feeling us go fast.

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/1

During The Trial Of A Former Vichy Official, October 1997

One survivor claims she cannot breathe
the courtroom air, the same
as the accused. She cannot
bear the sound of him
talking his way into her past,

breaking down its boarded door,
forcing light inside.

He remains before the world
aloof and orderly, his manner
hinting at superiority.

She must exchange the scream
filling her lungs for something clean.
For as many days as the trial lasts,
she stands before her memory
as if an open grave.

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/1

Now Coming To A Small Town Near You

The souvenir and gift shop
A swastika in the window, watchdog
lunging for our throats, rips innocence
to shreds before they call it off.

The old Jewish cemetery
An army on the march again
routing the dead: breaking headstones,
trampling graves, astride the chests of dust.