

Wilderness House Literary Review 8/1

Sy Roth
The Ort

The kitchen table,
Its smooth laminated countertops,
even floors, if that stoked her need,
became her pecking ground.
Coops of memory awash in scarcity.

No scraping talons clawing at the ground,
no head bobbing forward and back,
only that extended pointer finger
like a frog's tongue darting out snaring its prey.
Every scrap had to be pecked.
Nothing to be left behind,
Nothing wiped from the table tops into waiting receptacles.
Zeroed in on the ort,
she attached it to her tongue-moistened fingertip,
then it went, deposited gingerly,
eyes alight with memory, into the mouth.
There are children starving in Europe
she would remind us.
We marveled at the stabbing finger each time,
the ingestion of the bits and pieces that we cavalierly
dropped and wiped without conscience from our lips.

She eyed each microscopic piece with sadness as she pecked,
memories revived with each bit,
clucking mightily at the waste.

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Hinnon

Neither meadows, nor lowing cows, nor dew, dare enter the valley.
Fear hovers like a thick coverlet there.
Wings whip ripples into the airless void.
Ice crystals shatter the stillness as they
fall under Monday-morning's sun-glare.

Movie eyes question the illusions.
A leaf in a swirling wind hangs in the deafening silence.
Blips detect a life form that others pay nodding homage to,
and then imagine Budweiser horses prancing away on a dusty trail.
They march to Gehenna to sacrifice their children
using empty voices, mouths full of inanities,
to butcher them on the altar of nothing-to-say.
Their sounds scoot in and out of rooms.
They walk the prison yards of their minds where
Good News echoes without a dram of meaning.

A cat, warmed by the sun, licks its paws
on a windowsill overlooking empty streets
and finds greater peace in another world.

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A Cyclops Stares at a Raging Ocean

A Cyclops stares at the ocean, a remnant beside him.

Odysseus has beaten it to a pulp.

A fine dusting of ocean spray mists the gazing eye.

Bay window once pleasure isle to coffee sipping and cabernet, and

warm suns wrapping a tranquility blanket around him,

now a monument of shredded wood to an edentated Goliath.

Fireplace rests in the center of the hollow, where memories reside of
crackling embers of bygone blazes swept away with the drifting sands.

Doorways open to abysmal chasms framing an unsmiling Jack-o'-Lantern.

Clenched in remorse, pocketed hands buried deeply in jeans.

Memories of what cannot be.

House fades into oblivion.

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His Hand

Disconnected hand thrumming fibrously across his chest
dances in the shadows cast by a violescent night sky.

Hand a dormant reminder of a disconnected brain
awash in the then,
sparkly remembrances fired by the few synapses left him.

Grieved hand once launched satellites of words
that circled the globe with spun gold,
brandished scrolled vellum instead of swords,
purified nighty-night beds with bubbling princes and dainty princesses.

The hand twitches autonomically
dit-datting a message of passed youth.
Hand, miniscule reminiscence,
rushes to close its doors.

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Content to Circle

Incarceration in a watery globe,
her world circumscribed by interminable circles
starting where there is no end and
ending where there are no beginnings.
Navigator of endless glass walls, uncovering nothing,
discoverer of a stretch of perpetual waters,
her reef-white rocks, and algae-capturing mesh.
A world gyres from without.
Mideast fades into another Arab spring,
they rattle their nuclear sabers, and face other fiscal cliffs.
A million tentative turns as she grows old
on her merry-go-round of tepid water.
No ah-has for this spindly, wire-legged tawpie
as she circumnavigates her convex world
where Brobdingnagians approach curiously to spy on her.
No time to brabble when she seems content to follow her circles.

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Teasing Them Answerless

Celestial beings mischievously play footsie with little men,
teasing them answerless.

Before Adam's apocalypse
the earth, with bated breath, lingered in the vast expanse.
Apples fell with silent thunks to the ground.
A train blew a plaintive whistle,
Gnostic challenge pinging from one star to the next.

Shadows dress walls interrogatively with cosmological demiurges of light.
Angels created it, hidden under the streetlamp of ego
where confounding evil finds deeper shadows.
Was there use for the other in an ephemeral world?

Human heart begs it, for
the end is the beginning of the phenomenology of life.
Adam inquires, telegraphs questions across the stars--
searches forever for the pearl,
answers to the destruction of the Temple,
talk of the unknowable.