

## Wilderness House Literary Review 8/2

*Jared Smith*

### **Today so Cold Each House in the Valley**

Today so cold each house in the valley  
is sending plumes of smoke into the air,  
pushing its way across the razor's edge  
of virtual reality, hazing into distance.  
No animal tracks fleck the fresh snow.  
Yet life moves even so at twenty below.

You are sitting downstairs at the t.v.  
and I am in my study on the computer.  
The dogs are sleeping or played out,  
our daughter at the movies with friends.  
Temperature going to five below.  
If no one answers ads ads are meaningless.

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### Shivering Between Between Beings

What we build endures  
from the fleet hooved animals  
grained grasses  
spaces between stars  
endures beyond understanding  
white within darkness  
in the primeval without words

There is a web between  
what we build and the ephemeral  
tight as a seine net  
as sanity itself  
it is woven from the waters  
and all nourishment they carry  
in silicate-like chains of sediment  
unknown to our minds or thought

Beneath this thin parchment  
cover of impermanence  
eggshell white  
fragile,  
endures beyond the hands and words  
this framework a city of broken fingers  
parched breastbones dried pelvic thrust  
endures a meaning outlasting flesh  
whistled down alleyways

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### *II*

Does something speak in the grasses  
sifting sunlight  
in an early autumn meadow?  
Does a mountain stream soothe,  
or air fill the fragrance of memory?  
Does the silhouette of a woman  
gazing sadly from an open window  
unlock something not of bone or flesh?  
Is the artist with her brush aware of color  
finding a home within yourself?  
Has not this always been?

There is nothing of matter.  
A candle burns on a table  
in a shadowed room.  
There is no one present.  
It burns in a pewter holder  
tinctured by time.  
The shadows are its flame.  
An open book lies on the table.  
What we build endures.

*III*

The distillation of grasses  
and the web woven the stones  
the waters filled with sun  
and the spaces between stars  
becoming solid as bone  
buried deep unseen within flesh  
coming upon flesh  
become bone filled with stars  
and in this too the bone endures  
from shape to shape and time to time  
lost without memory of words.

It takes a long time to break into the sacred  
from the grasses  
    though they are filled with sun,  
        as are the arches of an abandoned barn  
gone to weather where men once worked  
where shadows play across spider webs  
where horses have wandered from their stalls  
long ago and the air is heavy with mold  
and words spoken to men and beasts are dust  
and what endures is hardly known  
though built of the transference of time.

A hawk rises from a neighbor's field  
turns sideways into wind  
    catches the scent of flesh  
bumps up against an unviabable net  
turns toward the sun dips down  
screaming into wind that lifts it  
finding spaces between the words  
that are beyond its ability to speak.

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And the flesh...

it shivers between beings.

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### Bobolink Trail

Bobolinks were blown along Boulder Creek  
again last week like the year before about this time,  
their black white feathers wound about each twig  
each gold capped head enamored of the sun  
twisting about and capping each green clipped leaf  
going golden and themselves between each branch  
unable to be discerned between each temporary perch  
being there and gone at once as the autumn wind.  
So many thousands in a stream of feather shadows.

We sit in coffee shops and argue again the old  
familiar testosterone saws about abortions, marriages,  
who wears the pants and who takes them off of whom,  
of missiles tending fields along the Yangtze--  
another turn of the world from where we are but  
knowing that the world is round we know it comes  
again 364 times before the seasons complete their change  
imprinted over each of us again and again in places  
that can't be measured between space and time.

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### After Our Argument

After our argument I drive alone  
up canyon into stone mountains,  
moon so bright I hardly need headlights  
under temperatures well below freezing.  
I stop outside Nederland above Barker,  
walk to cliff edge and look out over ice—  
every shade of gray and white without motion  
and moonlight painting caves and indents.  
In places a yellow room opens beneath ice  
and people set their tables, turn up music,  
roll back chairs, hold each other lightly,  
brushing lips against what is illusory.

Up here I can see each stone clearly,  
each dried weed stalk fallen against winter.  
I empty my bladder among them,  
fill my lungs with distant stars, climb  
into my car and head on up mountain  
to where our road diverges from blacktop.  
Our house lies 23 miles east of here  
where you warm leftovers on an open range.