

## Wilderness House Literary Review 8/2

*Preston Craig*  
**Rebellion Road**

On the morning of my sixth birthday,  
the hurricane came. As we left,  
photo albums and sleeping bags  
piled beside me in the backseat of the car,  
I watched the upstairs window  
that overlooked the marsh grass,  
expecting some sign of myself,  
but I was small;  
all my things had fit into three boxes.  
I would learn over the years to laugh at hurricanes  
and that an empty house tells you nothing  
of the lives that once went on within it.

Ten years later, I was the first of my friends  
to learn how to drive.  
When I took a girl to see the house where I used to live,  
we stood beside the marsh, and I turned away.  
There are parts of yourself you should not test.  
By sixteen, I had stopped saying goodbye to houses.  
It had been a decade since I sat in a window seat  
and watched the tide come in over hills of mud.  
I have fallen away, year by year,  
from that sort of quiet, artless god.  
I have perfected the art of slipping away,  
so slow and easy  
that it is a kind of sleep.

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### Center Lake Drive

I like to imagine that my parents laughed  
when they bought their first house together,  
that they couldn't quite believe it yet.

I like to imagine that they drove  
down Broad Street and Market Street,  
back when the palmetto fronds were always out,  
that there was a hot July sun  
beating down on the never quite deserted alleyways.

I like to imagine that once,  
they kissed with schoolboy hands,  
and that once,  
they thought the world  
would be made more perfect  
by bringing me into it.

Instead, all I have to hold onto  
are photographs that I have spent a lifetime trying to burn:  
    the birthday of a girl I never was,  
    a red bucket swing from which I cannot remember falling,  
    a towel that became too frayed and full of holes to take to the beach  
        over a decade ago.

But even so, when I think back on the pine-top kitchen table,  
on the nectarine tree in the backyard,  
I wonder if we were a family then,  
    or if, maybe, it was only that I was not yet old enough  
        to have learned how not to be happy.

### Orpheus Before the Furies

*Tunc primum lacrimis victarum carmine fama est  
Eumenidum maduisse genas.*

When you stumble down the stone steps,  
the lyre slung across your back clattering  
against the walls of hallowed marble tunnels as  
you barrel into the halls of dark-bearded Hades,  
we do not quite know what to make of you.

You are breathless, little mystic, your lovely  
small voice coming in spurts. For a moment,  
we think, perhaps you have come here to hell,  
sent to Hades himself ("for something special,"  
as one of my sisters likes to smirk) but no, no;  
you are pure as a novice in your torn linen  
chiton, holy and feral. Sisyphus, seeing you,  
comes to a stop on his great hill. I listen.

They think we merely drive the guilty out  
of their minds. In truth, we reserve madness for  
those who need it – Oedipus, Alcmaeon,  
our darling Orestes. You creatures of fragile  
skin and fragile heart will never know how  
pitiless are all your tiny crimes, will never realize  
that, if we punished all guilt with madness,  
the world would have ended long ago.

So when I see you like this, descended,  
your bare legs stung with nettles and the crack  
of tears pulling your god's voice back to earth,  
I want to hold you close, thin lamenter with  
the shaman's heart, though I know that I  
cannot. You have been taught to fear me,

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to placate me with conciliatory oils to purify  
the shell of your body, with penances to absolve  
your soft, cruel soul. So I hang back – but  
I want to tell you, little wild one,

I want to tell you that we are like you, that  
we have made our home below in darkness because  
the world is cruel, cruel, peopled with the  
children of dirt and fire, raw and thoughtless,  
an unwieldy weapon for the gods. I want to  
tell you that we are like you, that as Odysseus  
and Jason and Aeneas stagger home, sun-brown  
and unconfessing, as the children cry and the  
mountains crumble and the wildfires burn,  
we ache, too, little dark one,  
we ache,  
we tremble,  
we fade