

## Wilderness House Literary Review 8/3

*Michael Lee Johnson*

### **Maple Tree Night and Snowy Visitors**

Winter tapping  
hollow maple tree trunk-  
a four month visitor about to move in  
unload his messy clothing,  
be windy about it-  
bark is grayish white as coming night with snow  
fragments the seasons.  
The chill of frost lays a deceitful blanket  
over the courtyard greens and coats a  
ghostly white mist over reddish gold  
maple leaves widely spaced teeth-  
you can hear them clicking  
like false teeth  
or chattering like chipmunks  
threatened in a distant burrow.  
The maple tree knows the old man  
approaching has showed up again,  
in early November with  
ice packed cheeks and brutal  
puffy wind whistling with a sting.

**I'm the Shadow Shredder**

I take your ghost pile  
your multi dreams,  
twisted thoughts  
moss that tangles,  
these are desperate nights,  
I shred them.  
The devil is hell in your brain.  
Give me your depression  
in a handful of spit,  
I will Drano it.  
Give me your mass ruminations,  
I will vacuum it flush for free.  
I'm a writer of depression.  
I'm shred man, shredder man.  
I park free inside your brain.  
Toss me bushels of anxiety  
and I create a rainbow  
you, alone, to cross over the bridge with.  
I'm your friend, weeper night.  
I'm your prayer partner, no, don't send darts  
nor daggers. Hearts, winner of cards, decks.  
Toss your fears, I will cultivate them to grace,  
charity, Christ.  
Fish for your life, no one bits but carp,  
suckers, bottom dwellers.  
Revisit your theater at night,  
your ghostly tears.  
From me I give you Christ, salvation to you.  
I'm the shredder man.

Poem From My Grave

Don't bring the rosary beads  
it's too damn late for doing repetitions.  
Eucharist, I can handle crackers and wine;  
I love the Lord just like you.  
Catholicism circles itself with rituals-  
ground hogs and squirrels dancing with rosary beads,  
naked in the sun, the night, eating the pearls  
feeling comfortable about it.  
Rituals and rosary beads are indigestible  
even butterflies go coughing in farmer's cornfields-  
Cardinal George, Chicago, choke on the damn things;  
some of his priest think it a gay orgasm or piece  
remote found in naked scriptures-Sodom and Gomorrah  
But my bones in ginger dust lie near a farm in DeKalb, Illinois  
where sunset meshes corn with a yellow gold glow like rich teeth.  
My tent is with friends we say prayers privately like silence  
tucked in harvest moonlight. Farmers touch the face of God  
each morning after just one cup Folgers coffee Columbian blend,  
or pancakes made with water, batter, sparse on sugar.  
Sometimes I urinate on yellow edge of flowers,  
near my tent, late at night, before the hayride,  
speak to earth and birds like gods.  
Never do I pull rosary beads from my pocket.  
It's too late, damn it, for rosary beads those repetitions.

**Clock on the Wall is a Crooked Clock**

Clock on the wall is a crooked clock.  
Soon the sun will cease being a light bulb for the world.  
Transistor technology draws its last drop of energy-  
tin cup beggars, quarter hounds, technology jumps  
into silver solar power.  
A speechless shadow transcends earth, blankets  
with meditation, mumble scribbling with a black felt pen-  
everything is in present tense.  
We're all prophets of silence.  
We're all a Jesus , sorted winds,  
sprinkling vocabulary across the seas.  
A new crop of creatures toss in a shaker new world.  
The world now is a cylinder tossing out joy.  
All is quiet, a new religious order forms from our groins.  
We're all handicap stickers now, impacted  
with the swelling of new songs, burning testicles,  
naked napalm Vietnamese children,  
waiting for the end, the politically created war.  
Dance into the night with silver slippers,  
dance into drench tunnels.  
This poem is a late poem,  
clock on the wall is its own diagnostic ear.  
We're all a crop of creatures, undisguised, naked in foliage.  
President Nixon and Johnson graze at the bottom of my urinal.  
War is a diagnosis to its own ending.  
The wall is cracking, it's own atomic bomb ticking.  
Soon the sun will cease being a light bulb for the world.  
Clock on the wall is a crooked clock-  
and love is my literary genie.  
Soon, you my children an image lost  
in the face of the sun.