

## Wilderness House Literary Review 8/4

*Carolyn Gregory*

### **In the Company of Books**

What would I do without them,  
the speeches of cereal kings  
and young women who assist Vermeer,  
monographs on hallucinations  
and intrigue of the antebellum South?

Without them, my travels would stay  
with street chatter  
and the hubbub of sirens,  
my view limited to a few acres  
of a big universe.

Oh, books full of dialogue  
and rumination,  
causes led by flags  
or solitary minstrels.

You have offered ballads  
and laments filling my nights  
with sea voyages  
and imaginary landscapes  
when I had none.

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### OLD MUSIC

The skeletons are rattling their chains tonight,  
playing loud music about trust and abandonment

The dancers are not listening to the words  
as they are thrown forward in the beat  
driven by piano and violins

bending low into a tango  
or stepping lightly, hands held with respect

The skeletons slept for some time  
between deaths,  
lay down in their nightgowns,  
grew whiskers and long nails

without news about farms  
or claims they could feed on

to grow young again with smooth flesh,  
fresh as children  
when the dancers first moved together  
in a slow waltz

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### THREE SISTERS IN A STORM

*(after a painting by Andrea Kowch, 2012)*

Near the edge of a cliff,  
the sisters share dinner  
on a windy evening

Late September, the ocean wind picks up,  
ruffling the table linen and skirts

One sister dances with hands on hips  
over yellow grass  
as another plays a fiddle,  
her hair blown out and whipping her head

The ocean waves rise high  
in a northern sea  
where a storm rolls, sky turning yellow

In the background,  
house curtains blow out of every window  
as if ransacked by time

while the third sister sits stoically,  
coffee cup in hand,  
watching her sisters make music