

Wilderness House Literary Review 13/2

Tom Evans

**On First Going To A Laundromat
After The Separation Subsequent To My Divorce**

'It'll all come out in the wash',
my father's standard response
to my various *mea culpas*
over the years, while rarely true,
was comforting nevertheless.
What I wouldn't give to hear that now,
but he's gone, and for some things, it seems,
there can be no forgiveness.

I have nothing against laundromats,
they're what I'm used to,
a necessity despite my mother's
warning each time I left the house
not to air one's dirty laundry
in public. What else was I to do?
Besides, didn't she also say that
'cleanliness was next to godliness'?

Wilderness House Literary Review 13/2

This one, on a sunny Sunday morning,
the first I espied beyond the city line,
would serve for now; it held no echoes
of my past or inkling of my future,
as far as I could tell, although the way
things had been lining up lately,
I proceeded with caution.

One couldn't be too careful.

Already bereft of my children
it might seem I had nothing left to lose,
nevertheless I kept vigil over
my laundry as it tumbled in the dryer,
making sure all was right, though I probably
would have done it anyway, as I
enjoyed seeing my personal things
in a different context.

I suppose it was not unlike seeing
one's household furniture outdoors,
as Thoreau has it in *Walden*,
'a real housecleaning,' albeit in this
case infinitely more prosaic,
not all that surprising given the
conditions we are forced to live under
in this wonder-working province.

Folding laundry, that's something I'm good at,
nonpareil in fact, according to my
ex-mother-in-law, who declared she could
just watch me do it for hours, aided
in part by the exhilaration I feel
in a clean, airy, well-appointed
establishment replete with an adequate
number of extended folding tables.

Wilderness House Literary Review 13/2

As with a visit to the doctor or dentist a book is requisite, the reading material left lying around such places being abysmal, though it proved to be difficult to concentrate what with the slippery hard plastic chairs provided, and the constant flow of traffic of all sorts of transient denizens:

College kids slumming it, used to Mom doing their laundry, newlyweds living on a shoe-string budget, the vast majority apartment dwellers, or living in low-income housing, most aspiring to do better, to one day get a house with a laundry room, an apartment with laundry facilities, and finally, out-of-town visitors.

Cheer tide 20 mule team borax
lux biz duz bold oxydol wisk
gain rinso fab breeze dreft,
America's obsession with cleanliness,
as if to assuage a collective guilt
for their original sin against the
aboriginal. But it won't work, and
the surfactants have polluted our streams.

Then I think back to my children in their swaddling clothes and ask, 'After such knowledge what forgiveness?'