

## Wilderness House Literary Review 17/3

*Richard Luftig*  
**Euphoria**

The highest point of Euphoria  
is the water tower that stands  
in the town park square  
right next to the statue  
of a cannon and iron balls  
put there no-one- knows why.

This tower is whitewashed  
every July and will be again  
as soon as the graduating class  
of twelve, down from last year's  
fifteen, finishes painting it up  
with Eliza and Ted Forever

and Go Bulldogs '22 and some  
words that can't get mentioned here  
though at least they'd spelled correctly.  
These seniors have been up here nightly  
with their cases of Pabst bought  
with fake ID's and bottles of Jack,

talking big and looking west-always  
west-out over the one-block downtown  
with its two bars, bank, Dollar Store  
and shuttered grocery. They stretch  
their necks, squint and imagine they can see  
past the tract houses, mobile homes,

fallow fields and empty silos  
clear past Nebraska to Denver  
and Boulder, maybe even  
all the way to LA,  
to mountains, rivers, oceans  
they've read about but never seen.

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But they pretty much know  
where they're all headed:  
to Pierre or Cheyenne  
if they're lucky,  
to study ag or nursing  
or to the community college

for vet tech or cosmetology  
and if none of that can come about  
to the plywood and flooring factory  
two counties over. But for now,  
they'll stay up here, above it all  
in their tower every evening,

for as long as they can, all summer  
if they could, and dream,  
if not of Euphoria, then at least  
some other town where they can  
have a life that holds some future  
to help them pass their time.

**The Five Stages of Yeast**

I.

When my daughter was younger  
she would make beer,  
dark as the basement where  
she brewed it, with malt,  
sugar, hops and Brewer's Yeast.  
The stuff produced enough methane  
to heat a house, was black  
and bitter as bad luck  
but she loved it and brought the stuff  
out for special occasions.  
I grimaced and pretended  
to enjoy the taste.

II.

Now she owns a winery  
and spends hours, days  
on the job. She harvests  
grapes and later sends me pictures  
of her stomping them with her feet.  
Then, she mixes the stuff  
in giant vats that removes all the air  
so that yeast, wine's best friend,  
can make alcohol out of sugar, without which  
Jesus would have been stuck with just  
grape juice. I am duly impressed  
and sip my Ripple with new respect.

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III.

My doctor analyzes the urine sample  
and says I have a yeast infection.  
I tell him that is impossible,  
because I've not been peeing donuts.  
You'd think for the one-hundred dollar  
visit, the guy would at least crack a smile.  
I mean, it's yeast for God's sake,  
but I can't get a rise out of him.

IV.

The sweet smell of flour  
clings to my wife's apron  
like love. Today, she is making  
New York pizza, the kind  
that makes me homesick  
when you fold a triangle of slice  
in half and bite at the tip so the sweet  
olive oil doesn't run down your chin.

V.

*Come here and help me, she says.  
Your job is to add the yeast  
to the water in the bowl and call  
me when it comes to a boil.*  
I open up the packet, add the warm water  
and wait: two minutes, then three,  
then five. Finally, bubbles appear,  
defying gravity, each a geyser  
that rises to the surface and explodes.  
I daydream on the sweet concoction  
of dough and sauce and mozzarella cheese  
that will later emerge from the oven,  
recall God in the Garden of Eden.

*Be fruitful, I whisper, and multiply.*

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### Teleology

*A thing is good if it fulfills its purpose well-Aristotle.*

The wind is gusting  
from the north tonight,  
down from Alberta,  
clearing out the clouds.

It is that time of night,  
when stars seem to chime,  
these same stars that make  
the pitch and peel

of old, plank barns  
shimmer and show off  
in each constellation's  
reflected light.

Then dawn, and even though  
these same stars know  
their daily fate, they make  
their graceful exit nonetheless.

Now is the resurrection  
of the day when lights  
in houses switch on,  
for chores to be done,

kids to be dressed,  
lunchbox sandwiches  
to be made. Weeds  
growing in culverts

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at just the right height,  
separate field from road.  
They stretch their torsos  
in midmorning sun.

Afternoon. The time  
when in these flatlands,  
wind hits hardest  
at the slightest hills,

when even though  
your odometer reads  
that you're making progress  
the land makes you feel

like you're not moving  
at all. Then dusk,  
and the sky moves  
and undulates

with the flight and honk  
of Canada geese as they head  
south to warmer climes,  
leaving you to wish

you could follow.  
Hang on, they seem to say.  
Hang on for just a bit longer  
to learn your true place in this world.