

## Wilderness House Literary Review 6/4

*Kevin Heaton*  
**Country Doctor**

The quest for Quivira parts storied  
rivers where bluestem and switchgrass  
yawn early from wet winters, without  
much guidance from the sun.

I salve aloe into deep cuts, and suture  
fevers onto windy dreams easting  
across the Great North Bend.

Range fires gloat, then hush.  
The moon suits up in butterfly weed  
orange, then turns ashen above the knoll  
where Coronado's horse sparked flint  
rock, and flamed the hills.

In time, dust settles onto sand plum  
roots, and we cellar the little red fruits  
in mason jars. The prairie gathers baskets  
full of loaves and fishes for wolf  
and coyote children.

I pause to place coins on weary eyes  
no longer witnessing horizons, and criss-  
cross two arms at rest beneath one stone.

## Wilderness House Literary Review 6/4

### Threshold of a Dream

Cataracts draw milk cream  
across his eyes, concealing lucid  
  
saline pools seasoned with hindsight  
and dream residue. They spillway  
  
into bottomless furrow trenches  
retracing the errors of his life,  
  
irrigating hoary stubble, and wrinkling  
the crumpled leaves of an ancient  
  
scroll; one page yet unscribed.  
Gnarled, arthritic fingers unfurl  
  
musings long ago folded into a pensive  
hope chest, and pin them to a quickened  
  
heartbeat. Iridescent rainbow beams  
knit kestrel wings to shadow bones;  
  
piercing a tattered veil, revealing  
the limpid essence of immortality.

Midwest Literary Magazine, 2011

## Wilderness House Literary Review 6/4

### Season of Pausing

The day star tilts her weary head in afterglow  
from birthing. She portends a season of pause,

and cleansing. Indian summer sings  
the Vulcan tips of bradford pears.

The molting of leaves and feathers drain  
sap into root kegs for seasoning, and fashion

bolts of down around tender layers. Southeastern  
pines shed their final, brittle burdens; unveiling

spike-haired adolescents poised to smirk  
in the blustery face of bold Moriah. The holly

sleeps with green eyes open, flicking new snow  
from it's daggered dream cloak; dangling

forbidden, crimson berry fruit clusters at winter  
foragers. I sit lap covered by the hearth

with William Wordsworth, as the raucous lips  
of summer take an easy southern drawl.

**Wilderness House Literary Review 6/4**

**Redding Iowa 1909**

I am well acquainted  
with Mister Sanger:

his chivalrous champagne  
smirk of conquest, and slick,

wolfish 'Dapper Dan' design.  
He christens sidewalk elms

with golden rut sprinkle;  
all the while sniffing at fem

awaiting trolley cars on mid-  
town, apple pie, high-rise

corners. His eyes fondle  
for Victorian secrets locked

inside hope chests of nostalgic  
inspiration; buttressed behind

chainmail shields of bird  
plumes and lacy satin boas.

He offers me escort in a voice  
pleading moral turpitude;

promising white-washed  
picket fences portrayed

on cheap penny postcards.  
But I will not attach my charms

**Wilderness House Literary Review 6/4**

to the end of his fob chain: my  
opera gloves remain in place—

my corset tautly laced.

Boston Literary Magazine, Spring 2011

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### In Tall Yellow

Leaf fingers point to the sun  
and sustenance. Giant ebony eyes  
laden with unshelled seed buffets  
in tall, yellow, golden halos, bow  
in reverence along rivers and creeks  
once traversed by wagons, and herds  
of Longhorn cattle.

Wall clouds march across rolling  
shoulders, and the lap of open prairie;  
escorting lightning bolt stomp dancers  
darting this way and that, while  
thunder gods applaud the performance.

Claps of ghost hooves on well worn  
trails westward, echo through green  
valleys on four winds to blue sky  
promises; in hills that whisper,  
but reveal no secrets.