

## Wilderness House Literary Review 7/4

**Time On Its Own** By Kenneth Frost  
Main Street Rag Publishing Company  
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*Review by Dennis Daly*

Kenneth Frost writes poems with imagery that touches our nerve ends directly and demands our immediate response. His surreal juxtapositions are delivered for the most part with a slow jazzy beat. There is a poem for everyone here. Frost's subjects range from landscapes to metaphysics, from spiders to theology. I read the last poem in the book first and I'm glad I did. It seems to set everything else up. I think it comes very very close to, in fact I think it caresses the relationship-conundrum between artist and art. Since this is a posthumous collection and the poem is short, I'll quote it in its entirety. It's called Suddenly and here it is,

*there you are  
in the  
electric  
eternity  
of a dream.*

*Who shall I  
tell them  
you are  
with your  
long hair,  
embodied light?*

The poet's question in the second stanza boasts of creative power and intimates a plethora of alternatives, yet the poem's feel is weightless and lovely.

The longest poem in the book entitled The Figure Skater delivers enough gravitas to anchor the collection. Frost magically turns a female skater into a creator of universes and an archive of memories. The poem begins with an unstoppable locomotive barreling down the tracks toward the proverbial innocent maiden bound to the tracks by some dastardly evil doer. It's the train's headlight that the poet finally focuses on and merges into the athletic performance. The weight of the skater's momentum changes into pure energy and flashes out little zodiacs. The next movement of the poem crests with a Jesuitical question and then enters Oklahoma in the thirties. Sound a bit strange? Here it is,

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*...how many angels  
On the steel-tipped  
Infinity  
Of her skate-blades  
While her esprit woos  
The fortune  
A dust bowl  
Remembers  
In the whirlwinds  
Till a star leaps  
Out of the coils  
Of gravity.*

The poem ends with the skater “escapading” and scattering apparitions like mercury. I like the poet’s use of the word escapade (think ice capades) and the hint of danger it introduces.

The poem Buddy Rich on the Drums conjures up a more up tempo beat as it should. Frost pieces together one inspired image after another. He has a personified heart taking dictation from thunderstorms. Those same thunderstorms crumble static in a god’s throat. The poem ends in a holy froth mimicking that fiery drummer perfectly. Here’s the last stanza,

*whipping his head  
so fast his tongue  
stutters his own  
drumsticks to point  
backward and gulp  
the lost divine.*

Another poem that deals with the nature of music is He Floats out. To Frost the artist-musician literally becomes his notes and he seeds the environs around him with apparitions. Listen,

*... the rooms  
around him  
wander  
and a strange tree  
of dreams  
takes root  
on every  
windowsill.*

Frost’s title poem, Time On Its Own, drifts through the imagination with mystery and speculation. The poet seems to be in a competition of sorts with an omnipotent and undeterred adversary. The poet searches for himself in the universe and Time also searches for him, sniffing him out from under the world’s detritus. In the penultimate stanza the poet makes an interesting argument concerning risk taking that I found myself nod-

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ding to in appreciation. The poet says,

*Somewhere beyond  
my centipede of echoes  
someone insists, "Climb higher, a circus dive  
will pull along  
cold feet."*

The poem *Girl in a Singles Bar* looks through a glass of scotch darkly and perceptively. Frost's protagonist girl sees her life through a lens of despair and regret. She wants out. An advertisement poster offers a jet plane, which captures her imagination. But reality intrudes and with it comes a heartfelt crescendo of regret. It ends this way,

*I put my glass  
Against the wall  
To bug this ark,  
"What have we done,  
What have we done  
To one another?"*

Year ago I read *The Interlopers*, a short story by Saki, and liked it very much. Frost's poem *Closing In* somehow brought back that memory with its own mesmerizing rendition of the same terrifying image. Saki never actually describes his wolves, whereas Frost draws you inside their killer eyes, through dreamlike tunnels into their essential nature. Of course the poem is about something else—the nature of memory. It worked for me. The poem concludes,

*wolves' eyes draw  
their prayerbeads  
through whispers  
their memories  
corner.*

Well done. And efficacious as hell