

Wilderness House Literary Review 19/2

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Still Life (Tail End of the Millennium)

Used condom, spent cartridge, small piece of glass
from a larger piece, shards of your childhood, splintered

totem pole of your family, a baseball bat
fractured on the pit bull skull of your yard. Somewhere

a cassette tape unravels its wild Medusa hair,
the incoming cars from the airport burning oil,

spitting up prehistoric carcass,
the small potatoes we serve for Sunday dinner, the cold

leftovers we tell ourselves
will someday inherit the earth.

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Live Streaming (A Public Service Announcement)

A car roars down a road in a commercial, a red rock canyon.
There is dust but the paint job gleams, survival of

the fittest luxuries.

Peregrine falcon and lizard

have their own means of transport
climbing air climbing stone.

Is your tongue dry? You may live in California.
One day you may die from drought.

But before then so many animals will die.
Animals so much better than you.

Or worse. This isn't Sunday School.

And I am no god. I am not going
to umpire this. You need

to make your own calls.
Don't think for us all.

You just need to do
what you need to do.

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A Cautionary Tale

Far off a tractor coughs
as the swoop of the pirate ship
blurs like a swinging blade
chopping off the heads
of little children freed from classes
to take in the county fair.

No rain, but even when the day is fair
somebody always coughs
no matter how high their social class.
We are all on board this same ship.
No matter if we turn our head
these swine-flu germs still wield a nasty blade.

One boy must style himself a true blade
as he escorts his tattooed lady fair
towards the gray and braying head
Of a *shoot-the-donkey* game. He gladly coughs
up ten bucks. How else to prove his marksmanship
than by shooting pellets at an ass?

But we all like to think we are class
acts, the sharpest blade
in the tool chest. The ship
that can charge the highest fares.
The flower in the kalishnikov's
barrel, pointed straight at the buntist's head.

Yet others prefer more to think ahead.
Those who sit in the front of the class
are not so keen to make a silly cough
or show off their favorite hand-tooled switchblade.
These latter are the types whose grades are only fair
and don't end up owning, shall we say, a Volvo dealership.

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Yes, those are the unfortunate types whose ships
never do come in. So, no wonder (is it?) that they head
to such paltry haunts as the midway of the local fair.

But even ye who seek just a little bit of class
might as well turn your neck to meet the blade.

We're all just sheep to the slaughter. Just a little cough

and it's suddenly over. Life is never fair. The ticket for your ship
always reads second class. Ah, the sudden blood on the saw-blade
as they customize the coffin so it can fit your silly head.