

Wilderness House Literary Review 19/3

Benjamin Patterson

Static

You dreamt of an American West.
a flick of horseskirt, eighty-five
hightailing on a barecementsnake.

You dreamt of dust and blood.
a boy emerging, dusted and also
shrapnel-blasted from a creekbed.

You dreamt of a twenty TV screen
museum display, strange flapping
pictures and multimedia dazzles.

Buried, bones reveal the wishes of
the dead, you say. Newagealchemy.
packets of tempo preserved soilwise.

In the loam I saw you waist deep
in shit, or was it loam, flannel pants
repositories for chewedspitgum,

All the conditionalities convened
in one word—death. That is where
paths end, energy stops, a rest.

TV-static was a blanket that you
laid in, drycrumbledandashen.
the West of static, black snow,

Engraved red rocks, rivers, and
their composure was color tests,
a bumblebee of yellow and green

Wilderness House Literary Review 19/3

Strewn through expressions of
shapes of pictures hung damp
on a Western Wall, and who can

Tell me what dreams are.

Wilderness House Literary Review 19/3

The Passenger

I do not remember the past.
all I recall is the dreams
that have replaced it.

the radio is on as a bit of
muttering breath in the
background.

a panel of light lays flat
and indivisible on the
window screen.

In procession, August sunset falls
piercing rays
make dust angular in
their starry bolts

driving in the country,
conspiracies of dust groove
slyly upward.
Soon, white and silty, it
suffocates the wheels,
moves up through the engine,
fog then, exploding from
our mouths

the scent of lilacs fluttered
then, indistinguishable from
the dust like flags wrapped to
tome buoyant and fading
form;

Wilderness House Literary Review 19/3

and that is what I outstretched
towards; my bough over an
ocean of miasma chalk-
just brushes the surface, and
disappears.

I am awake. A square of light
affixed to the window.

Wilderness House Literary Review 19/3

The Dream of Saint Anthony

Three times the tangled bridges of wood,
 In process catching fire, appeared to dispel
 The Lord's shadow through reddened spires
 And phalanges who were really moonlight.

Three times some maddened old men,
 With eyes for faces, built columns across a
 Sea of static and styrofoam, a machine squeal
 Inflated the airless bubbles, their minds erased.

Three times the gears, the contraption rusted,
 Thus a swamp did fill the earth's veins,
 Riveted by the choking-lush July heat,
 An earthen machine from behind the moon.

Three times vultures with menfaces expanded
 Their feathers and saw brown-black talons
 Reaching across a scalding void
 Like the end of all, sludge coagulating, collapsed.

Three times an uneasy premonition of unseen
 Words crawling uninvited into our language
 Petrified the steadfast faces of our clergymen
 Who believed they knew every word of never,

Three times, yet, language disguised as raven-cries
 Burst through the rubber steeples of
 Saint Anthony's Cathedral—unimaginable,
 Translucent, with the speech of Kronos:

Three times, his sons erupted against his chest,
 Driving blood and holy consuming light to
 Fertilize and till before-barren fields;
 Thus men were indebted to war, men boasted,

Three times, though, they turned and fled,
 Their darwinian hallucinations ceasing at
 The altar of Poseidon, strings tied through
 Their backs as if they were small, terrifying puppets.

Wilderness House Literary Review 19/3

Three times, they simply screamed,
 Becoming wind, letting the raw air imbibe
 Their lungs, allowing the gargantuan dust clouds
 Flooded through their skin and become them.

Three times, men wearing the masks of demons
 Gathered legions and ventured into the heart
 Of the universe and drank its sweet blood,
 Raping the confluence of their own souls gleefully.

Three times, the greatest scholars and explorers
 Fell at the feet of their own divine constructs,
 Praying to themselves, allowing the strings of
 Eyes tied to their sharpened spines to speak.

Three times, the world seemed to bend and ripple,
 As what was now called the night, which had
 Not been named, gathered and rolled them
 Between their torchlights and spun.

Three times, owls and deer exchanged faces,
 Exchanged names, but they were inhabited
 By humans, and the real owl and deer still
 Define themselves only in fear, but

Three times, humans lie, attempting to escape fear,
 Although fear is close to the core of their
 Sunken minds, built above a foundation
 Of anticipation, awaiting death, final blackness.

Three times, they explained their existence with
 Graphs or scrolls, evading the billowing, burning
 Captor that extends an endless shadow that
 Lazily, mindlessly stretches above and engulfs
 The machines that they call minds and loves and
 Thoughts and joys and sorrows.
 The shadow is created by them, meticulously,
 Barbarously stitched piece by piece into an
 Undefinable abstraction, in which conquerors and
 Statues may enfold the world's every gaze and
 Movement, making reality a brittle, elastic toy

Wilderness House Literary Review 19/3

To enforce their will upon and then become it,
But that abstraction is a lie, and so is the dream,
Some say, and it is all brittle enough to shatter.

Wilderness House Literary Review 19/3

Timeward

Eyes moist as if in dream,
watching a Horse move with
electric jangles,
metal jostlings,
its mane flooding the airless
 surroundings,
a scale of movement,
eyes black and pained but
 mindless.

that is the auricular, synonym
of ocular, rippled synapses
knotting its white hairs and
poseidon hooves, maybe only
culminations seawise, maybe
phases of motion and other
sequenced cries breaking
the sky now voided any breath.

I don't like this feeling,
 but I cannot
 find it or
 discern from
 grandfather clocks
 turning backwards
and blackened fuzzed noises
and all senses in a blind rush—
how quickly euphoria turns
to unrepairable gears.