

Wilderness House Literary Review 20/4

*Grace Lynn*

**Transgenerational**

She wants to go  
where no one freezes  
when the doorbell rings.

When steak is sliced, she wants  
the stink of blood  
to focus her hunger.

As a girl she saw  
her great grandmother's breasts.  
They were acid yellow stars

rolled into the sarcasm  
of a dying neighborhood  
that served pounds

of knish, horseradish and tongue,  
but never mentioned  
rationed years enclosed

in barbed-wire.  
But the blue numbers  
tattooed on her forearm

flickered if her shawl fell  
over warming drawers  
stocked with cholent and kugel.

The girl wants a parakeet  
that talks not Aramaic  
but its own foul dialect.

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Winters confine her  
like her great grandmother's ghetto.  
Her identity is a brooch

fastened to a tichel  
her great grandmother in Kraków  
wore on the Sabbath.

At the urinal  
in Yankee Stadium,  
she glimpsed her father's penis

when he was not looking  
and wanted circumcision  
to mean

nothing.  
She wants to reach  
for giant raisin cookies

in her great grandmother's jar  
without thinking  
crematoriums,

Auschwitz.  
She wants the rainbow glass  
of a smashed window

to tell no truths.  
She wants an empty locket.  
She wants different shoes.

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### The Need to Stop Entropy

Comes upon me in my young years  
like the settling of an apartment,  
the cracks so gradual  
I can't remember its ceiling level,  
its corners square.

No one worries but me  
the chair creeping from its place  
like boys playing Little Red Rover  
on the felid I plow every odd week.  
Everything is sliding from its spot:

the vacation photos in their frames.  
The climbing plant bending toward the bulb.  
Tartan skirts my daughter drops reckless on her rug  
to fade a little each day.  
At least I have my writing room.

Nobody but me rearranges a shelf.  
The tulips stay pink.  
The new pens on my desk wait  
ordered as vertebrae,  
dominoes in a line.

**While Nobody's Home**

If this poem flirts,  
appetites hug her thighs

like skimpy skirts.  
If this poem comes

dressed as metaphor  
begging for Godiva: give

her truffles so her ruse rips.  
If this poem moans

in your wet dreams  
as she stalks

you in bed, brandy  
brining her tongue,

a chorus of violins  
between her knees,

make her slink  
out of her bra, demand

to be touched between two  
and four p.m. when your kids

swim at the public pool,  
your wife's at the nail salon

or gone shoe shopping.  
Caress her lines

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until her rhythm pleads  
for repetition: finger

again, revise me, explore freak  
positions of sweet exclamations.

But whenever she grunts,  
quit, at an unutterable speed:

leave her wild end rhymes be, learn  
the limits of her stanzas' arithmetic.

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### Guess Again

This is beauty I see:  
the sun going down  
scrubs the snarled  
and faintly henna  
willows and the wind  
smacks them as it  
might send a cloud  
passing so quickly  
into night. A moon,  
full and flat, and stars  
a cattle car passing.  
It is the ocean,  
not a locomotive.  
A line of hills  
hidden by fog.  
A race of raindrops  
at low altitude  
to hint a distant place  
or a non-human race,  
non-anthropomorphic wings.  
An unbroken seashore in lilac.  
A second burnt raisin  
crept into by a cape  
reaching beyond a trail of white  
washed fences, upside-down archways,  
apples, limes, tomatoes, poppies, carnations.  
Dolomite crags end in turrets  
that outline the neck of a ravine, linking  
a blustery railroad with the port of Capri,  
Faraglioni and columns of apples and limes  
heaped like tomatoes and poppies  
in impermanent geometries. A path  
jogs up the face in stretches, connecting the harbor

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with tuck-traveled roads  
fading into into shadow.  
As we pass through, grass  
is singing, nests buried  
in every puff of air  
hang on  
for dear life. The low sun  
creaks on the coastline  
like golden eggs of light.

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### Ghosts

When I walk this street,  
nothing touches my feet.

When I sense a wall,  
there is nothing at all.

When I look for a face,  
there is only space.

What I press  
is emptiness.

When I listen for laughter,  
I hear silence echo after.

When I hear crying,  
it's emptiness dying.

As I reach for you with my hands,  
you slip through like sands.

Bodies over there  
are less than air.