

855 E. Smith St.

Linda Wagner

The curator settles into place in the withered wing back,
Clipping his nails and nibbling saltines—
His winter sweater barely clinging to his bones.
 The chair, the globe, the adding machine
 Remain in the shadows undisturbed
 Except for an occasional dust cloth.

On the wall hangs an old painting
With a fisherman, his insipid shadow
Lays flat on the water-stained surface.
 The frame, with its visibly repaired corners
 And deep scores cannot withhold
 The past. A wall clock suspends the hours.

In the entry, a chair with rich walnut legs adorn
The espagnolette form—gentle curves tempt
Touch from even the most inexperienced virgin.
 Seasoned fabric—which covers the frame with
 Worn foliage and tired ribbons and bows—
 Invites no one to sit.

The hall, where music once flowed in abundance,
Now stands as a canyon where even the
Slightest whispers resonate.
 Wallpapered walls now covered in white
 Stand motionless, aloof, having witnessed
 Birth, death, the Charleston, war, Elvis.

Books carefully placed are utterly still,
Volumes intentionally remain tight shut
Information once needed, now obsolete.

Eternal respite

A drowsy hand-crank organette
Exposes its axle for the most curious of guests
To force air through its perforated rolls.

Outside, dirt roads have given way to paved and
Carriages have become cars that now race past—
Day and night, the din disrupts silence.