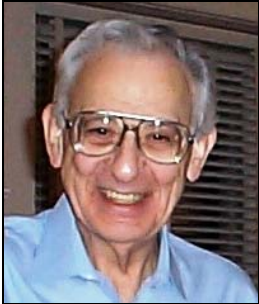


Thomas Zvi Wilson (1931 -)



One of the most beloved poets in the Kansas City-Lawrence area is Thomas Zvi Wilson. He and his wife, poet Jeanie Wilson, have lived in Shawnee since 1992. They host the Writers Place Poetry Reading Series at the Johnson County Central Resource Library. Tom Wilson has mentored a generation of area poets through editorial exchanges. He also has supported the Kansas City Writers Place as a board member. Like Wilson, most poets work within a community or educational group in order to craft their writings into the best possible form. Perhaps this poetry collaboration is less known. Most poets, have editing buddies; poem-making is a shared art.

Wilson's background as an active artist is evident in the structures of his writing. He collages layers of images onto a canvas and then reworks them until each shows clearly. He also balances the outer details of a scene with inner reflection. And he understands how light plays over the entire scenario of a painting or a poem.

In "Klieg Lights," the narrator, a man very similar to Wilson himself, watches the sun rise from his porch. This is an early summer poem, when sunrise comes sooner each day. The poet, however, conflates the sun with Klieg lights, which are bright carbon-arc lights used to illuminate movie sets. Artists also use such lights in painting studios, and so the poem also has the quality of a still life. This is a human poem, where neighbors remain "nailed" to mattresses—so are passive to nature. Even the wind is personified, as the narrator looks for it to "snore." Then comes the true action of the poem: penance. The narrator counts his "sins" and hopes for forgiveness. He sees his yard as a "stony patch of garden" not too distant from Eden. He stresses his audit of "pleasures," including the volunteer weeds.

KLIEG LIGHTS

***Moon surrenders so sun may rise earlier,
turn on its Klieg lights while neighbors
are still in pajamas or robes, nailed
to their mattresses.
The wind is asleep, not even snoring.***

***I count my sins on the porch,
in cushioned silence and solitude,
audit my pleasures, pray that
in the end, though undeserved,
I'll be forgiven, and mercy will
be sprinkled on me like volunteer
weeds on this stony patch of
garden and this pleasant peace.***

Education: This poet was born and education in New York City, moved to Arkansas in his early forties, and to Kansas when he was fifty (1981). He is also a painter and sculptor who has exhibited in New York and other venues. His work is in twenty-five museum and university collections.

Career: Wilson's books are *Deliberate and Accidental Acts* (BkMk Press 1996), runner up for the Thorpe Menn Award; and *The Door into the Dream*, with Jeanie Wilson (Mid-America Press Inc., 2006 <http://www.midamericapress.org/press/>), a *Kansas City Star* Notable Book.