

1980

X

Scott Ruescher

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/iowareview>

Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Ruescher, Scott. "X." *The Iowa Review* 11.2 (1980): 202-203. Web.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.2617>

This Contents is brought to you for free and open access by Iowa Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Iowa Review by an authorized administrator of Iowa Research Online. For more information, please contact lib-ir@uiowa.edu.

“X” · *Scott Ruescher*

In colonial Virginia, it wasn't uncommon
for someone like X to believe
that W's life was not quite as rich,
or, all things considered, that Z's was a total loss.
The Blue Ridge Mountains west of town
echoed his gossip till everyone knew
better than to try to befriend such a man.
X even noticed that Y's life was led
by social forces beyond Y's control,
that Y was therefore not worth talking about.
But V had a talent for going unnoticed.
X's unlucky neighbor, he lived in a cellar
with fellow hermits Q, R, S and T.
And they made damn sure that X didn't hear
whatever it was they were doing down there.

So centuries went by without much change,
except, perhaps, that the mountains lost hair.
X's beliefs remained much the same,
held the same water for crazy men later,
handed down from year to year.
As long as they were at all reinforced,
by a weakness shown in this face
or by a problem shown in that,
the Xes were eager to wave their gavels.
By then, there was power in numbers.
It wasn't likely that they'd disappear.

But lately I have attended a church near there,
a white frame church at the foot of the Ridge.
The preacher goes by the name of U
and carries on about the sins of the Xes.
From what I gather, the preacher believes
that all of our neighbors' lives
are lived, after all, without our permission.

Deeper, he says, than little ditches,
we are each of us wells connected
by an elaborate system of underground streams.
All one has to do to realize this
is to lower a bucket into one's neighbor
and pulley up from the well-bottom there
a water that tastes much like one's own.
And next year the national forestry service
plans to plant seedlings at 4000 feet.