

Wilderness House Literary Review 11/2

Martina Newberry

THE LITTORAL ZONE

Sand grasses, each blade its own chieftain,
fog winding around their tops.

It's a kind of enchantment, you see that?

The air is drunk with salt moisture and
passes out on the sand right in front of us.

I'm afraid to look out at the water--
it's too endless, too unforgiving.

It accepts my regrets but offers no absolution
(which is the hard part).

The sun's crimson looks too much like anger
to suit me and the wind mimics
the groaning of the gulls. Sitting on this blanket,
it is easy to expect comfort from the tides.

Comfort doesn't come though.

My thought is that we are not increased
by the hugeness out there--not at all.

The surf booms and booms again.

It reminds us that vast is not the answer
to composure or conciliation.

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PRIVATE LINES ARE TOO EXPENSIVE

There's a passion in being alone/A grace in a loveless time
— The Black Crowes "Girl From a Pawn Shop"

They all write about it, you know:

loneliness

The poets all want you to see it as they see it:

the curling smoke of a cigarette

the view of the street with no one in it

the sounds of traffic and tires and sirens

and no voices or footsteps except maybe

latelate at night when running steps can be heard

and sometimes shouts as well.

They all want you to know about what's best
to eat alone:

a hard-boiled egg

a cold cheese sandwich

a bowl of soup or

a plate of meatloaf and mashed potatoes

desserts are not for the lonely

avoid ice cream at all costs it will

melt and make a puddle in the dish

which will make you feel more alone than ever.

They will all tell you the same stories:

how the planes roar in the empty sky, reminder

of places the planes are going and that

there are people on them going to visit family

or on business where they will be met by

someone from "the firm" and will be taken

to lunch Martinis first then steak sandwich

and thick ranch fries—food for talking and hearing.

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They all want you to know that the odor of loneliness is
someone else's barbecue
Christmas trees
and suntan lotion
softener sheets
which lonely people don't bother to buy
for the little laundry they do.

They write about the tire
aisles at the Auto Supply Store how they smell
of alone and smell of sad and smell of can't-do-this
anymore-never-could. Try tomorrow; try later.they write.

They want you to see, these poets, how tightly
they hold their demons how they grip the fingers
of the saints who only try to cut them loose
how they glue meaning to nothing
glue love to beer and bread
ride the verbal spirals the cadences
down to edge of the island
and wave courageously at citizens
gathered across the water.

They all write about it. They just want you to see it is all.