

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/1

Moriah Erickson

Requiem for the Woman in Sunflowers (after "Wild Flowers")

I look at some paintings
trying hard, too hard,
to evoke the unearthly, dreamlike
sensation all my artist friends claim
Impressionists give.

One is just sunflowers, cheerful
and unassuming
until I look closer, searching for
the elusive fantasy. For
behind the heavy-seeded heads
sits a woman
with no clothes on.

She is a black dog in shadow,
nipped by teeth of clay. An afterthought, her hair falls
in a simple waterfall, gravity in a solemn song
against the stroke of any brush. Ever so
slightly, she commands I take one
good long last look as her flesh all begins to rot
and hang from the angles
her body hadn't felt or seen before.
She is not young and round, a whisper
of fertility and innocence like I thought.
She is sharp menacing blades
unsheathing themselves in my eyes,
the glint of reflected sunset sears red-hot on my delicate retinae.
Her ribs jut from beneath her breasts
as she grows thinner, and her eyes,
still chaste beneath her lashes, grope me, hungry
for my youth.

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Entranced as I am by this
performance, her smile is what captivates me.
The slow drip of melting wax,
her lips peel away from her teeth
in snarl.