

Wilderness House Literary Review 12/4

Peter Leight

Private Room

If my hands are empty it is only because of something that isn't there.
I'm leaning forward,
not too far,
as when you reach out without touching anything—
I'm still unpacking,
taking things out,
isn't this what love requires?
Making my own lap,
curved like a mound building up and leveling off.
I'm putting the keys to everything I need to open in a drawer I'm not going to open,
even though nothing is preventing me.
I often turn on the lights when it's still light
so I won't be surprised,
placing my hands around my neck like a kind of capture,
except when I'm desperate I avoid public places, although I'm almost never desperate in public places.
I have a drawer where I keep things I don't have any other place for.
I like to touch my face in case there's something there, a mask that covers the bulb but not the organ itself—
not uncovered isn't the same as covered up.
It takes time just to walk from one side of the room to the other,
I'm listening to my breathing,
sitting on the bed
or in the chair
next to my desk—
please leave the furniture out of this.
Not even moving my lips—
the only secrets I have are the ones I don't even know about.
There isn't any empty space that needs to be filled in
or empty space I don't even notice,
when I can't reach something it's uncomfortable, I try to change my position so I can't reach it more comfortably,
I think I'll use a different hand.

Wilderness House Literary Review 12/4

I'm cooperating with myself,
I hardly ever do anything without discussing it with myself,
right now I'm introducing my left hand to my right hand, like a form of
neutrality—
I don't want my happiness to be at the expense of someone else's.
Pulling the blinds, as if I'm preparing for something I'm not even aware of.
I often close my eyes and turn off the lights at the same moment in order
to synchronize the darkness
and the absence of vision—
I'm not saying there isn't any deprivation,
it isn't a lineup where you pick the one with a resemblance.
Pilot
When you're a pilot the world is open in places
and closed in places,
it is often better not to expect anything.
Open and closed like a trapdoor you drop through,
or a hatch you climb through,
of course you're not unwilling, though if you're willing you're not much of
a pilot,
if you're following yourself
you're not even a pilot.
When you're a pilot you keep your eyes open,
you never say we'll see,
or I'll explain later,
you need to have some power—
you're not afraid of power as long as it belongs to you,
holding onto the handle, your hand curved around the handle, nestled in
the handhold on the handle,
you're the one who moves the handle.
You never show your palms.
Sometimes you steer by where you don't want to be.
Every day is a pilot project,
you often switch sides in order to find a position you're comfortable in, or
change the way you looks at things
to find something you want to see,
everything is quiet
but the pilot is veering.

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And did I mention the overwhelming tenderness that wells up in the heart
of the pilot at high speed?

A pilot isn't influenced by clientelism,
it doesn't matter if you know the pilot,
if you think the pilot is waiting for you the pilot isn't waiting for anything.
The pilot isn't shopping around.

Not copying,
copies are too easy to spot.

When something is in the way
the pilot moves it out of the way—
it isn't just the ability.

Moving the handle from side to side as if plowing an empty field,
while the wings rise in their cases, rising and flapping like the pilot's ap-
pendages—
these are situations everybody is in.

When you're a pilot you're not thinking I didn't mean to,
you're not even sure what you're hoping for.

Sometimes you sit in the cockpit with your hand on the handle, obsessed
with the readouts, buttons, dials,
turning the knobs until they stop turning,
taking out the pilot manual
and reading the small print at the bottom that tells you you're responsible
for everything that happens.