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Desire, Power, and Intimacy: A Review of Alexis Rhone Fancher's Enter Here

Lisa Segal · Thursday, July 13th, 2017

Enter Here
Alexis Rhone Fancher
KYSO Flash Press, Seattle, Washington
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Alexis Rhone Fancher's newest book, *Enter Here*, interplays desire, power, and intimacy. Her images are startling yet subtle, allowing the language of poetry and prose to both shock and comfort the mind and heart. She moves between majestic writing and down-to-earth slang, buzzing the reader with the skill of a master poet. "Tonight I Dream of My Second Ex-Husband, Who Played Piano Better Than Herbie Hand-Cock" begins:

> Naked and unperturbed, hard-on the size of an Eagle Scout's flashlight, he watches me sleep, standing at my bedside like he still lives here. Framed drawings of me, seventeen and naked, hang like cautionary muses above my bed. His eyes devour them like that sweet girl still exists. Like he didn't grind her into extinction with each lie, each humiliating indiscretion. In this dream he's twenty-five, and almost sure he loves me.

Oscillating between the past and what the narrator still wants, the poem ends in an abandonment to desire:

> When I reach for the dildo on the nightstand, it starts itself.

Enter Here flings open bedroom, motel, and car doors, reclaiming the power of female sexual desire. There's no equating of inner turbulence with female weakness. In "Roman Holiday," the narrator and her sister travel through Europe:

> We stroll Villa Borghese like lovers.
> The air reeks of jasmine.
> We have just viewed the Caravaggios,
> and are drunk on art and our own power.

The narrator then lists their sexual conquests in a way that reveals much about the sisters, and the poem closes with a free-spirited conclusion/suggestion.

The poems of *Enter Here* are about a noir Los Angeles whose inhabitants share an interest in danger and are equals in the quest for dominance. Rhone Fancher writes of the power of the female body and female desire. Girls and women are freed from their roles of muse or keeper of the hearth. Her females claim their portion of power's pleasures and rewards, and troubles and consequences, redefining the roles of hunter and hunted. From "Spreading My Legs for Someone (Posing for Pirelli)":

There was nothing on the agency man's glass-topped
brain but my nakedness.
He wouldn't meet my eye.

But, as in the last stanzas of "the cool wind comes through me like Jamaica," love haunts the hallways:

> if she loved you as I do,
> you wouldn't be here.
>
> I wouldn't taste like you.

Rhone Fancher's poetry captures the cadences of speech, culture, subtext, and humor. "Tonight I Dream of My Last Meal with My First Ex-Husband, Who Was both Fickle and Bent" concludes:

Never could made up his mind. His dick (did I mention?) was slanted to the left,
like his politics. A girl could get addicted to that bit of kink.

Enter Here's last roar of a poem, "this small rain," ends in this whispered admission:

> in this drought-wracked city,
> this small rain scans the heavens,
> looking for a monsoon,
> searching for *su salvador*
> in the reclaimed desert sky.

Rhone Fancher's superb photographs share the pages with these magnificent poems. Her book is beautiful, the whole of it, with an arc so powerful that when you find yourself holding a whisper at the end, it takes you, one last time, by surprise. Accept the poet's invitation. Follow the directive. *Enter Here*. You'll be glad you did.

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