

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Ellaraine Lockie: Three Poems

Ellaraine Lockie · Wednesday, February 12th, 2020

Nomenclature in Montana

As children, there were no body-part words
for what the cows, horses, pigs, chickens
cats and dogs were doing
But we all knew they were making babies
And that it was as good and happy
as a 60-bushel wheat crop

This simplicity moved right into our farmhouses
where language for bodily functions became necessary
My father used *Pisshole* and *Asshole*
when he told stories to his cronies
My mother preferred a more refined *Number 1 Place*
and *Number 2 Place* for my brother and me
Like they were addresses

I didn't know anything about *Number 1 1/2 Place*
until its basement flooded red after I turned 14
Exploration led to the discovery that *Number 1 1/2*
was multistoried and that an entire finger could visit
And that it would receive and even welcome houseguests

No one talked about this kind of real estate back then
I didn't know the word *vagina* until Junior Class Biology
I learned I wasn't alone when the boy sitting behind me
whispered to his buddy that it was really a *twat*
A word I'd heard before in the halls
and thought was the past tense of *twit*

But I like thinking of it as my little piece of property
How its value increased exponentially when it served
as an annex through which two daughters passed
How it's slowly becoming a historic site
Who knows how many men who slept there
will prove to be famous

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City Girl

You are SO a city girl
Carrying a plastic bag for your dog
 yells the farm neighbor from her pick-up
 Out for my prairie walk with Jiggs
 Who is leaping through cheatgrass, sagebrush
 wild flax and clover after a barn cat

She smiles, waves and drives off
 before I can tell her I'm collecting wildflowers
 to immortalize in handmade papers

Before I can tell her that a city girl
 wouldn't kill a five-foot rattlesnake
 Or shoot a machine gun
 Or slap her soon to be halter-broken
 horse's snout when he bites her
 Or be addicted to every single evening
 watching the sun set in the colors of essential

Or that even the city girl in me knows
 that shit happens on the prairie

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Why I Don't Shower

I'm a bath person. I've never showered in my own home. And hardly ever anywhere else. Only when a bathtub is non-existent. Then only when my husband says it's either a shower or a separate bed.

Like in Berlin, where I accompanied him on a business trip. There a week with a closet size bathroom. The shower like an upright coffin. After five days of cowboy baths, I prepare for the real thing. Lock all the windows and doors, so as not to wind up a Hitchcock corpse sitting in some psycho's rocking chair.

I skeptically step into the shower stall. Turn the control handle. The first blast rates right up there with a Montana blizzard. I make three minutes of adjustments to the temperamental handle until it agrees to a tolerable temperature.

I soap up, down and around—once for each disregarded, dirt- collecting day. Now to figure out how to shave my legs when there isn't space to bend over. The only sensible solution is to open the shower door and stick out one wet leg at a time for the shearing.

Stork balancing not being one of my strengths, I fall into the fiberglass wall repeatedly. With each imbalance, a new red line paints itself down a leg. I now see why German women don't shave.

Next is my hair. I bend my head forward, flip hair over head, and water fills my ears. When I squeeze the shampoo tube, hydraulic force flushes the contents into my eyes.

Eyes burning and closed, I reach for the control handle but grab a steel cord instead. Something comes loose, and the hand-held showerhead hits me on my left ear. Then the water stops.

The control handle hates me by now so refuses to entertain even pathetic pleas. I stumble, soapy and nearly blind with a slight concussion, out of the stall. Slip on tile where water has escaped during the leg shave and land on my tailbone.

I crawl naked to the telephone in the freezing bedroom. The desk clerk says the shower is on a timer. But if I wait awhile, it will reset.

I limp back to the bathroom. Settle my soap-caked, bleeding body sideways on the towel-cushioned toilet and baby-talk the control handle. Just when the rash on my chest begins to itch, water emerges from the spigot. So I start the temperature guessing game all over again.

Determined this time to rinse and be out of here in record time, I am. Because suddenly the water turns scalding hot. I scream, and a man in the next room yells an apology for turning on the cold water tap in his sink.

Boiled, bruised, anemic and hearing impaired, I'm ready to see through stinging eyes the Berlin sights. Of course, they don't care one way or the other whether I'm clean. But at least I won't go to bed in a roll-a-way when I get back.

(Featured photo by Alexis Rhone Fancher)

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