

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Florence Weinberger: Three Poems

Florence Weinberger · Wednesday, February 6th, 2019

A Turner For Our Time

Maybe Turner, whose Napoleon was a bloodied shadow
on a phantom horse, hovering over the death of his men,
could have abstracted Iraq into its true colors, substituted his oils and intuition
for the missing facts and photographs.

Popular before he veered from pretty trees, soft lakes
and pastel skies, Turner took the cash,
like those pandering novelists whose pages turn of themselves,
went off to repent,

and painted what he saw in his own name,
braver, derided, finally forgotten in his own time.

Look twice, how his light lights the corpses, glints off the hooves
of their steeds, shines up the knives that gutted them. Their shapes destroyed,
their numbers can only be surmised.

That Turner, whose smears are rust, whose red streaks could be
viscera or tanks stripped of nails and steel and left at the side of the road,
whose charcoal slashes outline ghosts,

might be more ours than all the banished cameras,
the muted journalists.

*

The Limits

Sometimes it's the grip of the tide
that sucks you down, or it might be
the skid of the earth unsettling you.
The wind strips the kite from your hand.
Sometimes you're holding the wheel
just right when you're hit from behind.

Some things you will learn: to weigh
and measure, cook a roast or bake a cake,

not stray or linger outside of the lines.
 Fingers can be taught, you can
 train your eyes, subdue your body, your
 brain, keep to the ways of predictable grace.

You've done this for years, get in the car,
 your eyes and feet now your servants.
 You can stop at the light you've stopped at
 a thousand times, scan the dark highway
 on a clear night, move with familiar skill
 into the right lane, slip smoothly into the left.

Days later, awake at four in the morning,
 it will chill you again. You'll recall the hit,
 then the spinning, you don't know
 if it's you or the ground, the spinning,
 the endless spinning, and your hands
 as useless as everything you know.

*

Shoe Confessions

If only Neruda had glorified pumps instead of cucumbers.
 If Keats had immortalized one pair of wedgies.
 I would not need to dredge memory for metaphor.
 My baby shoes, never bronzed, are history.

I turned thirteen.
 My mother bought me the shoes I loved best.
 Some dark green nappy fabric, cinnamon leather trim.
 She gave me grassland and ground.

I grew tall and taller, bobbed on stiletto heels.
 Some saw my eyes, some looked below my knees.
 A man fell in love with my notorious instep.
 A man stroked my boots while we watched *Tosca*.

I danced in red shoes, left them on a doorstep in Calcutta.
 Aroused a foot fetishist passing by.
 My husband, a voyager, wanted to be American.
 Ate fried Spam. Left me his collection of blue suede shoes.

(Author photo by Alexis Rhone Fancher)

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