Cultural Daily

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Ellaraine Lockie: "Reading at the Little Joy" & Two More Poems

Ellaraine Lockie · Thursday, December 13th, 2012

Ellaraine Lockie is a widely published and awarded poet, nonfiction book author and essayist. Her recent collections have been awarded Best Individual Collection from *Purple Patch* magazine in England, the San Gabriel Poetry Festival Chapbook Contest and The Aurorean's Chapbook Pick. Forthcoming is her tenth chapbook, *Coffee House Confessions*, from Silver Birch Press. Ellaraine also teaches poetry workshops and serves as Poetry Editor for the lifestyles magazine, *Lilipoh*, and Associate Editor for *Mobius, the Poetry Magazine*.
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Reading at the Little Joy

Daydreaming on a winter evening
in front of the host bar on Sunset Boulevard
I'm already lost in the drama
that waits with closed mouth
on the other side of the locked door
When two young men stop
and one asks *How much*
I say *Oh, not much longer*
Maybe ten minutes
He looks at his buddy whose eyebrows
squeeze together under glasses
I ask *You guys wanna read*
The head with glasses turns to the other
Well, what'aya think
But not before a long look at me
And through car light reflecting off his lenses
I see a woman in black wearing mini-skirt
lacey tights and cowboy boots
Weight on one hip with jaws working
a pack of Wrigley's Polar Ice
and leaning against the Little Joy's wall
And in one snap of gum I'm rabbit-aware
of bodily discharges that stain
the sidewalk and air

Music in the distance with the throb
of a slow leather whip
And an empty needle in the gutter
The first guy says *Too whacky*
And they continue to the next corner
Eight minutes left
before I return to my native language
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Breathplay

When you find my body hanging . . . with a tight noose around my neck, do not look for a murderer.—Note found next to a strung-up, bottom-half-naked body of a young man
His haunting could have begun in the text
of erotic history from four hundred years ago
When men hung publicly
grew erections with the tightening rope
And wet spots appeared on wool knickers
right before the snap
Observed by physicians
who applied the concept to impotent patients
Writing the second entry on autoerotic asphyxiation
in a saga continued now in recreation
of the sexually bored
Like Him, after sex with a *Playboy* page
the cutest cheerleader, the steady girlfriend
and a call girl or two
An addict after the first euphoria with himself
a rope and Russian roulette
When he got harder with each obstructed breath
And release burst the seams of need
that even two women at a time only bulged
Before the police came
the attorney parents who found him
would have removed the black crotchless panties
fallen from his hand
and puddling the carpet beneath him
Would have rewritten the slur of perversion
into the clear print of suicide
Author's Note: *Up to 75% of children 9 to 16 know how to play "the choking game" . . . 25% of parents know what it is.*—Dangerous Adolescent Behavior Education Foundation
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Humanitarian

I
The boarded-up homestead house hadn't had overnight guests
for sixty years who didn't slither on their bellies
Forty miles from the nearest Montana two-bit town

on a trail traveled now by tumbleweeds
lone cowboys and critters
Humanitarian to make meth here instead of contaminating
a populated place Jimmy and Meadow justified
in their gas masks and rubber gloves
Their big hearts beating with the bubbles
belching on top of the brew
Recipes taught in the state penitentiary's chef program
Using lithium battery strips, starter fluid
Sudafed®, drain cleaner and gasoline additives
Combined with anhydrous ammonia
siphoned from a nearby farm's tank of fertilizer
Willy's concern stretched no further than his wallet
his big city plans to thicken it
and the watchdog job on a hill outside the old house
A businessman who knew how to bypass Montana's
two-package maximum on Sudafed® sales
How to avoid explosions, fumes, fires
And how to keep his oily skin free from the rot
starting to spot Meadow's face and teeth
With two trunks full of crystals they drove away
leaving 2500 pounds of toxic waste outside
and a cat urine stench that scared prairie dogs off the prairie
Inside they left butane tanks, spilled sulfuric acid
and partially full buckets and bottles
that proved to be more venomous than any rattlesnake
To the rancher rounding up stray steers
whose only lesson about methamphetamine
was billboard-taught before he began the clean up
Before plastic melted his hands into ladles
Glass shards shined like cut diamonds in his coal-black vista
And words like *humanitarian* became eternal
whispers in the loud silence after the blast
II
Meadow's kid sister in Great Falls
would get charity chunks of the crystals
Just long enough to see her through high school
and the waitressing nightshifts to support her bastard baby
Not like before when she didn't know the diet pills
that had her slim body swinging from stars
and from under the Bisons' football captain
were in fact powdered methamphetamine
Supplied by the captain who wouldn't admit his Caucasian
contribution to the half-Cree baby
The sister never lived long enough to lose blackened teeth
because after two bumps smoked off a lightbulb
she became the Sacagawea in her term paper
Only she rerouted history by using a stolen aluminum rowboat

instead of a cottonwood dugout canoe
The hailstorm raged and she and her baby navigated the rapids
rather than dry land beside the 87-foot falls
Their crushed bodies a constant reminder to Meadow
that the best definition of *humanitarian* came from Willy
III
His trunkful of crystals would sell for five times as much
and still be a *steal deal* in L. A.
Where Willy became instantly popular at Echo Park parties
He watched through dollar-glazed eyes
the cadaver-cheeked intellectuals smoke glass pipes
Their words sharpening like the needles
that Willy's teenage customers jointly shared
so they could stay awake for a week straight
Willy watched the twitching hands of ninety-pound
housewives as they reached for pill jars
Their husbands too busy to care
He watched through steam in bathhouses
men buy his wares who prized *crystal cock* over Viagra
He watched with naiveté as the street gang
busted down his loft door
And with not so much as a mafia-polite payoff suggestion
put a silent bullet between his eyes
A humanitarian act that Jimmy
Waiting to build the next meth lab in Montana
will define as undependable

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