

John Raffetto

COLORADO CENTURY

I was trying to plow granite soil
with wooden blades;
thin atmosphere exhausts me
as I fight the horse to a stalemate.
A hard wind throws sand
And sunlight into my eyes
Blinded by fatigue.

Why am I here?
No wife or
Children to help.
The distant mountains disperse rain clouds
Grasses form short interruptions
In taupe starkness.
The train is beyond sight
Beyond home

I am tired
weak
As I sit in a wooden chair
In a dark room
Counting lifetimes
into one.
How far did I go
until today is finished?

CANYONLANDS UTAH

Mysterious
 red moonscape
alone
with smooth light
arid winds in radiant silence.

Time evaporates
as stars move in slow circles
 as vacant light
penetrates a desert canyon.

A swamp of green fossils
wash voices
beyond the promise of the day.

TROUT RIVER NEWFOUNDLAND

Western outpost
of sailors
and fishermen-
now idle.
The salty cod vanished
in greed waters.

Fishing shacks
faded maroon paint
peel off into the wind
near the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

Weathered lobster traps and buoys
stacked neatly,
wait for another season,
as a man with red calloused knuckles
slowly stretches a fishing net to dry-
stares at the man with the camera.

The cramped grocery store
has frozen ham steaks
and canned vegetables-
along with bandages and tobacco.
Elderly men sit
near the door in wooden chairs
and observe all,
saying nothing
only a barely perceptible nod
as someone passes.

A man repairs a pick-up truck
in a beat aluminum garage,
stops to watch
someone walking
on the muddy gravel road.
near an idle lumber mill.

The majestic fjords draw tourists
who pass through town

quickly
and leave
with photographs.

The one story school braces for September
as children will soon gather,
later to flee for jobs and city life,
all who remain
just sit.

FRANKIE

I told that punk Sinatra
Not to bother me
With egg salad and chopped onions
Mange you bastard
I'll get you a Jack Daniels
And we'll toast
A salute!
Motherfucker.
Nelson Riddle is dead
So are Sammy and Dino
No thanks to you and your
Booze and cigarettes.
My women are not for you.
Blonds, Red-heads
And sultry black women.
One looks like Billie Holladay
With no needle marks.

Ha!
You seem interested Frankie
While you struggle to remember your lines.
I'll repeat them for you
Until you fade from washing the dishes
Now go to bed
alone
and get the fuck away from me.

NIGHT MUSEUM

2 am

A cacophony of silence
follows moonlight
an empty train makes all stops
the pace is swift
along narrow streets
no one to hear the fury
or witness
lost apparition of
grandfather spirit
who watches and calls.

2:30 am

Into the night museum
of long musty shadows
alone to wrestle blindness
the supreme force
upon stark galleries
where hallways extend
beyond misty rooms
as blank faces
watch my
slumberless mirage
as a clock ticks.

3 am

Time stands motionless
a Magritte echo
floats past
silhouettes
I recognize
yet don't know
endless in a silent tunnel
where distant light offers hope
through a tangled
pornography of memories.

3:15 am

I ramble on with dead people
alpha ghosts and beta dancers
who pace back and forth
soft snow
covers me in sorrow
as frost forms on my exposed limbs
smother eyelids that never close
a rapid heartbeat
a shortness of breath
a tasteless desire
while lonely eyes of
gray faces
scold me good-bye.

3:30 am

Tears of childhood engulf streets
the silent streets
moonlight mist of a
willowy figure that
disappears in
amusement park
mirrored arcades
barkers call to unanswering dead
who laugh a cold laugh.

4 am

The night museum has no gifts
only burning
escape through
cloudy exits.

A long white moon
swallows all
insomniac dreams
welcome the forgotten
and forgiven
the desperate
and desolate

How far can you go at 2am?
Apparently farther than imagined.