

Sacilè, Italy
Seated by the Livenza

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fa caldo

© It was, after all, lunch and i was hungry. I'd sat down in the food court in front of the jewelry store. It afforded a large plate glass window so passersby might be lured by the gleaming goods beneath the intense lighting. As i unwrapped my sandwich, i glanced from time-to-time at the displays: watches, rings, and necklaces—all the trinkets displayed that are, first, to inspire want, and then, to answer it. There was an Asian woman working behind the glass counter. She was doing some by-hand tallying, inventory of the items in the display near her.

At this time a dark-tanned Italian woman entered the store. She and the shop woman began to speak. The dark woman was wearing a short plaid-skirt and yellow tank-top without bra. Her hair was dark, full, and radiant. Her body was strong and fine. Contoured to perfection. She moved her hand and body in mannerisms that were fluid and dancelike. Her teeth were white like ivory. Her lips rose-red. As i ate my sandwich, i watched them talking, laughing and sharing in the rituals of feminine exchange; there's a mischief of energy in beautiful women confiding.

The dark woman gazed at me through the glass. Saw me, and nonchalantly flipped her dark hair across a shoulder. The hand slid gently through her hair and slipped to her side: a single silver ring adorned it. Her hand passed gently across her exposed skin just beneath the edge of her yellow shirt. She caressed the firm dark skin with her fingertips. She glanced my way, at times holding that gaze much longer.

At that moment i realized i had been drawn far deeper into that exchange than merely watching them talk. I had been deeply moved by the movements and presence of the dark-she: i was feeling her movements inside me. The passing of her hand over her skin was rhythmic, supple, and sensuous.

I sifted long at the stretched yellow garment over her breast, the rise, the ample shape. How the lower arc and its pear-shadow met on the flatness of her stomach, and their movement as she spoke. The attentive nipple pressed its form into the yellow cloth. The mesmerizing beauty of their form seemed archetypal. For if i saw this shape in a fruit at the morning market, or as a rock near a running stream as i walked by, i would not feel as drawn by the significance of its presence - as a woman through a glass.

I became aware of where my glance had too long settled and sought to look away when in that effort, for the first time, i saw myself reflected in the glass. Saw

myself drawn to her form. Her right breast was centered in my reflection at eye level: nipple-for-pupil.

Now i could observe myself observing. I became keenly aware of an alignment: self, image of self, glass and dark-she. This would be the geometric form of the occurrence in space, but several aspects of time were at play.

Years past i had seen, felt, even worshipped the shape of the feminine form driven by youthful curiosity, untamed desire, and the need for the gratification flesh alone answers: all passing flames emitting vacillating moments of lost heat. But this moment was unlike the frameworks of youth – when want was the catalyst. In this moment the eye was shaped, like a lens, no different from the earlier wandering days.

But now, the deeper, the rooted aspect of seeing was sourced in a far delicate time: in the moment, aware of the waning energies of youth, and in solemn knowing of the narrowing menu of the approaching years. The alternate aspects of time within continuum that shift perceptions – there danced, projected on her form – through the eyes – the march of women once known, once shared in all the roles ever played.

But the image of myself reflected remembers all that went before, beneath the scant lines and rising gray. Did i desire her on the other side of the glass, or did i desire to remember the feeling of desire, that a man feels in himself for a passing form dressed in feminine mystique?

That something in her, middle-aged was she also, was emitting the waning light of her sensuality. I caught it inside me as if the lone beam of two lighthouses from distant promontories aligned in the fog. The touching of these beams equally immersed and reflected the intensity of their origins.

Though i continued to gaze upon all that she presented, my vision was now more drawn to my image in the process of watching. I gazed upon myself with dark-she as the backdrop of the introspection with the mystery of glass between us. I felt a tepid sadness upon myself watching there, the observing, the decoding of form. The lingering of waning want in the eye. I pondered the space between the image of self and the self that looked out, apparently unseen, but nonetheless present in the emotive and the primitive.

The space between these two – narrower or wider than the assisting glass: am i the form of the self in that moment? Is my thought, my pulse and feeling evidence of being?

I recognized the alteration of years in the reflected self. In the shift of want from playful youth to the solemn narrowing of choice. There was also present the humble knowing of the power these things in the body hold: their force over weakness, judgment and at times perception itself.

I was, however, thankful that still something inside me, the masculine presence, had been moved, rose to testify of the existence of nature, however much the matter of reason sought to categorize all things.

She smiled at me through the glass and what a smile it was. I was bathed in the warmth of our human bond in a moment shared. I struggled to smile back, so entranced was i by the multitude of dimensions that life had offered upon the mere gazing at a woman's form. For in her, the passage of time in all our lives was given poetic credence: Woman is life.

She presented beauty in the waning splendor of its promise, and it; the waning pulse of supple youth inside her: it was the waning flame of a candle. The hue of an unpicked apple at harvest. The lone lighthouse beam that meets not another and travels endlessly on through the night and the fog - unseen.

It was this that drew me most. Spoke to me most in a place so deep inside that rarely have i heard a voice there. In that unending, expanding moment of passing presence, i was brushed by the sad truth of design.

The glass could not reflect that. The heart can barely reveal it. The brilliant beauty of us in passing years through stages of light promises a fulfillment that can never be answered by what first drew my eye to her sensuous presence. Oh, there was still that poetry there. But now i know - there are finer rhythms of time writ deeply into the mysteries that we all become.

She departed the shop. Later, we passed closely by, our hands brushing playfully under the glittering lights of the arcade. She smiled and looked into me. I looked into her, nodding in affirmation: Yes, i have seen you.

Lower case i: I was feeling insignificant on that day.