

Exile

Volume 47 | Number 2

Article 8

2000

Joanna

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Recommended Citation

Kroner, Katie (2000) "Joanna," *Exile*: Vol. 47 : No. 2 , Article 8.

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Joanna

You tell your life as if it were an epic
and I suspect that like Herodotus
you are willing to spare the truth for a good story.
Passing through one-hundred weeks in as many words
you linger on the shell of a clementine
the near-ellipse of its segmented fruit,
beaded juice and sticky fingers.

By the end of the Greyhound route
that winds itself out into the day's second twilight,
rocking us to our separate destinations,
I know as much about the women you love
as I do about you, and more about your favorite foods
than even about them.

Your tale always pauses for your appetite.
Pain, you say, is the essence of taste;
sharp, or tart, or spicy enough
to leave your dinner guests wiping their eyes
are your specialties. From what I taste of your stories,
they are also your life.

I expect your skin to smell of rosemary, or paprika,
or oranges, and suspect that the furrows in your face
are lined with your living:
the dust of gay-pride marches,
the bite of garlic on an unsuspecting tongue,
the music of soft-shoe and swung-eighths,
like dark chocolate, sweet and bitter in their timbre.

—Katie Kroner '01