

1988

Black Licorice

Richard Latimer
Denison University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.denison.edu/exile>



Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Latimer, Richard (1988) "Black Licorice," *Exile*: Vol. 35 : No. 2 , Article 25.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.denison.edu/exile/vol35/iss2/25>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the English at Denison Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Exile by an authorized editor of Denison Digital Commons.

Black Licorice

"There is in the soul a desire for not thinking.
For being still. Coupled with this
a desire to be strict, yes, and rigorous...
And I forgot that."

— *Raymond Carver*

This snow squall has stopped, and the moon has come out.
I don't understand why I sit in the pantry
listening to a weather channel radio.
But I'm alone, and I enjoy its monotone and static
droning off these white-tiled walls,
its conversation clinging to me like sand.
I know the weather from Martha's Vineyard to Norfolk.
And lately, I've become interested in the cold air
pushing in from Canada. Understanding these frontal patterns
is a hard subject. Really. But mostly I'm interested
in the company of something that doesn't think, listen,
or have anything to do. So I sit here before dawn
and learn about tides, wind shifts, and barometric pressures,
stupidly gazing out the window into darkness,
imagining the weather from my seat.

I came out to this place to get away
from everything, especially the t.v. and the newspapers.
Yesterday I lay in the field with my eyes closed,
listening to the wind in the cornstalks.
The same wind that blew in Ottawa the day before,
but a different wind I'm sure.
One that somehow was changed by everything it saw.
I even let myself imagine that I was home,
standing, my back against the fire,
watching Saturday morning cartoons.
But when I heard the bay water white-capping,
I opened my eyes and went inside,
sat down with this weather radio, and believed
in my body's desire for not thinking; left myself entirely
in the keep of the reported snow.

Then it was the blind man at the docks
who fished for flounder next to a bottle of Jim Dickel,
smelling the way liquor smells coming out of a body
the next day, his pores wide as pennies,
undulating with sour mash. "Pay Attention," he said,
"The sky's so dark its gotta snow."
So I asked how he knew what the sky looked like,
him being blind and all.
He said that whenever it was going to storm,
the air tasted like black licorice.
I looked around and made a note of everything,
but this association fell from my body like peeled paint;
went straight home - got drunk - and passed out.

Richard Latimer