

JOHN GRIFFIN

HEADLANDS

From Ocean Boulevard, the sea is steel grey.
The bank of cloud above is very dark.
Between the two, the open sunset sky
is pink, smoky and darker slowly as we drive.

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A million years of wind that snuffles and snouts
over the cliff has forced the pines to creep low
like a patrol, over the brow of the nation,
peering from trunks like bulwarks, across the sea.

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One quick season is given to the silver grass
that ripples under the picture window; ten years
already, racked and rugged, for the trapped sailor
out of his mind, incontinent, and staring at the sea.

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Someone from the town above has tipped
the clippings from a garden in the scree
above the cove. Such wild seeds and weeds
are bursting blue and yellow on the slope.

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The kiosk stands marooned in scruffy grass,
laid siege to, noisily, always, by the wind.
The morning seagulls shelter in its lee, awake
for the baker's van, for crumbs thrown out like gold.

The lines on the rock are simply quartz
intrusions, glistening sometimes, straight.
The only aliens here are ants. They drive
survival, direct arrows into the grass.

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Here you can see the rusted last intentions
of forgotten men who traded down this coast:
a bolt, a pin, driven deep into the rock,
the cables and pulleys all a century gone.

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By the outlet, sea the colour of bruise
froths and slops. All up into the air
dancing, always at dance, the seagulls churn
and lift, squabble and glide and dive.

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One morning's surprise was a beach
littered with motorbike jackets, torn
apart, leathery fronds and long straps
stretched to the water, stretched out to dry.

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In the brown chair, a young man moves
his wheels to face the legless wind
which runs without cease. He has hands huge
from turning wheels, and waiting above the sea.

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Well, Mrs Annie Fewster, I shall not
complain about the rent, for I intend
to gather up and take away these views
and use them any day I feel the need.

JENNIFER WOODHOUSE

TWO SONGS FOR SURABAYA JOHNNY

What a gift the changing year has brought,
be it in borrowed beds, on borrowed floors, in borrowed cars,
beneath the most Brechtian of moons and stars.

The city sleeps, the city wakes and roars;
fires singe the hills with their October passion;
your image burns before me like a genie —
I have no formula to make it fade.

*

Only the inland seas of deeper longing
that lie, flanked by deserted shores of self,
concealed in you, in me, where no-one travels
and questions flow from silence into silence,
can make me falter as we make this gesture —
as if the littoral could fathom oceans,
or love reverse the drift of continents.