

Scott Coffel

SAINT MARTIN AND THE BEGGAR

I'm back to El Greco the hard way,
not through correspondence school or a tour of the Prado
or sleeping with Byzantine exchange students
or my dream of breaking bread with everyone from Abelard
to Zoroaster: no,
I'm back the hard way, like Odysseus or Leopold Bloom,
back to El Greco after ten years of wandering
from job to job, from city to city, ten years
of metaphysical dread and meager health insurance,
ten years of death among the fogchewers and faithhealers.

I hang by a thread to the old cosmology,
loving what I can't believe, believing what I can't abide,
my life in limbo at the tollbooth,
my scarf covering the beggar's genitals
as he cleans my windshield without asking,
the mood of God deteriorating as my Dodge
Colt, unnerved by thunder, races down the interstate past
ballbearing factories, past top secret airfields,
past miles and miles of denatured landscape,
the saint bewildered at the wheel.