

LAWRENCE REVARO

The Problem with Pornography

The problem with pornography is not just the loneliness, the feeling
of being
drunk at the laundromat
while the machines jigger patiently.

It is not just that cunning
hand under the mind,
the slow hot push that feels like shame.

And it isn't the moment you close your eyes
like fists, to coax silk
from a mass of knots.

It is mostly the looks,
their looks. Nevermind the poses and lovely curves. People with
exceptional
parts play their parts poorly

sometimes. It is how they look directly
this way, longingly and knowingly,
though you know they don't know. And you wonder what *they* long
for,

straining to hold still for
the next *click*. You think maybe
their lives went wrong. Drugs,

hateful or lustful parents, reasons emptying out of childhood like
buckets
of naked sexless plastic dolls.
But you should know part of what they long for.

They believe they have something to give. Relief, a thimbleful
of joy, a squeeze

84

of fantasy, a hand
slid coolly to the small of your back, the voice of a cocktail waitress in
your ear:
Would you like another?
You think, *Yes, I would like another . . .*

The problem is just this looking to fill, a question
of emptiness at bottom. Here
childhood spins into a depth, a fall, its freedoms become

lessons of collapse. You run away. You run away, but you end up
poor, working a crappy job, and nights
conclude at the laundromat.

The porthole views twist and chug. A little desperately, you wonder
about the soul,
hoping it is not a luminous essence, a vapor caged,
not that ghostly silver veil

wedded to the decay of being inside time, not the menacing glyph
of self alone. You dream of empty homes, the slow creaking shifts
that grace them on windy days,

and that the soul is such a sturdy envelopment,
all its meaning inhabited even with the body gone. That it is the emptiest
swept structure, a sound life ever echoing in its hull, never filling it
quite.

That it is the feeling of being held, not fixed or gripped, by a gaze that
tenders
helplessness without shame.
And that it partners us—

without longing, without knowing—
to a certainty
we too may be cleansed.