Desperado

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Recommended Citation
Available at: https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.3712
Two Poems · Robert Hahn

Desperado

We should not imagine that the world
presents us with a legible face to decipher.
—Michel Foucault

Don’t try to pretend you know anything
out here in the dark where the dunes slump away
illegibly from the black Atlantic,

where the path twists back on itself
like a breathless outlaw covering his tracks.
The landmarks all start to look the same,

the crouched, battered pines, the grey brush
screwed down into the sand. As Hemingway said,
anyone can be hard-boiled in the daylight—

it’s a different story out at land’s end
where the humpbacked whales brood in the dark
all night long without a thought in their heads.

Black gusts pour in over Race Point, and drift
inland, over the scoured, flattened hills,
down in the arroyos, the blind defiles . . .

Darkness falls like a hammer on the badlands.
Back in our room, a clean-cut lamplight glints
on the bottle of Graves in its silvered bucket.

Our motel, at the marsh edge, is dreamily called
The Moors. The Late Show is The Petrified Forest
by Robert Sherwood, after whom I like to think
I was named, with Leslie Howard playing a poet sick of language. He wishes he could die. Bogart is a killer who can't understand him.

He keeps saying, *I wouldn't know, pal,* over and over, sounding minimal, savvy, a genuine tough guy. He means what he says.

**THE INTERIOR AT PETWORTH**

*Turner*

After the mind is emptied
and the empty shell is glowing with light
paper-thin and translucent

after Goethe's theory of color
coffee and brandy
and conversation turned like crystal

after Claude's soft country
and the high plunging sterns
of the Dutch ships

after the mind
knows as fact that those
who have bowed from the drawingroom

will never be back,
when shapeless, dulled shades
drift in the hollow space: