

Jeffrey Alfier – Two Poems

Winter Sea

I was wrong about vanishing back then. In dawns
cold as today's, we wandered this strand north of False Cape,

gulls treading miles of daylight above us, heady days
before we'd ever dream our love would fray apart.

Last night, heavy rain rebodied footprints
inscribed under a now vacant sun.

Fresh fog gives the coast the texture of medieval paintings.
Sea oats beckon me over the dunes in a landward wind

brackish with salt, the tired slats of the boardwalk
bending beneath my steps. Driftwood crumbles

under me like memories this ocean never wanted.
I watch fishermen climb the aggregate stone of a breakwater,

casting long poles as if witching salt from the sea.
An indistinct figure's stare toward the horizon

says they suffer the phantom pain of an unredeemed life.
My eyes follow a woman in a wetsuit taking to the surf

as if it were decidedly her realm and hers alone.
A cormorant takes a sharp turn, dives for the shallows.

Someone waves from the dim sketch of an outbound ship,
their farewell still crossing the sea.

Overwintering

We met on the AMTRAK out of Cut Bank
and rode toward the gaining dusk of Fargo.

She stared out her window with the trance
of a mother lacing the boots of her child.

From the Fargo platform I watched her drift down
an empty street of neon sparking tavern doorways,

homeward perhaps, out by the Red River
whose surface now shimmers with snow

swept up by highbeams in a gust of light.

Jeffrey Alfier's most recent book, *The Shadow Field*, was published by Louisiana Literature Journal & Press (2020). Journal credits include *The Carolina Quarterly*, *Copper Nickel*, *Hotel Amerika*, *James Dickey Review*, *New York Quarterly*, *Penn Review*, *Southern Poetry Review* and *Vassar Review*. He is founder and co-editor of Blue Horse Press and *San Pedro River Review*.