

A Painting Conor Kelly

Caspar David Friedrich never painted
“The Bench of Desolation”. If he did
would I appear before the surging tide,
waves splashing past the low retaining wall
and sweeping up the concrete esplanade
to where my patent leather shoes, a daub
of brown with heels a smudge of black,
are seen below black trousers and a wooden bench,
a darker shade of weather-beaten brown,
and all beneath the horizontal line.

A horizontal canvas takes on paint.
The figure on the bench is one third up.
The rest is landscape, a panoramic view
of sea, of rocks, of clouds, of distant hills
and all obscured by early morning fog,
a scumbling of light blues and lighter greys.
A palette of dark blues depicts the sea
and in the upper clouds a hint of pink.
Although original, it’s painted like
“The Wanderer above the Sea of Fog.”

The tragedy of landscape dissipates
and I am sitting on a bench, alone,
facing the sea, the sky, the looming fog.
A rückenfigur (your view is my back)
I’m facing what I face without a face.

A few light brushstrokes show my thinning hair.

A dark green smudge, bisected by the bench,
depicts the heavy morning coat I wear
while you and I are staring far beyond
the pleasant limits of the picturesque.

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