

## Fortuity

you ran your cart into mine in Sear's

then on route 308  
it was rabbit  
soft, distinct, the bones felt under,  
almost a sound as soft  
my doing so clear  
did not choose  
I try not to brake  
suddenly

large enough, full grown,  
did it, it was done,  
just as and immediately as  
I felt then knew it  
decision to not swerve—  
that class for speeding points--  
but then the squirrel  
in rear view behind me  
went

under that car, must have  
held fast and saw itself,  
as they say, safe  
to the other side

was it necessary  
with all that luck  
a damn, not damned,  
squirrel, that other, now, side of the g.d. road  
as susceptible, but not as  
rabbit to me

shifting into fifth  
yards only later  
feel such a brief shiver  
of joy at squirrel, perhaps, too, at rabbit

why such a clear flicker of this?  
and small laughter, never mind my own  
rabbit, felt, a living form, done to, no,  
my car,  
more distance needed,

and feel a brief uplifting,  
questions for later  
if this remains --  
must take now the Taconic ramp south

for C. R. Darwin

we three, another tale

"only the one task, why/will you not repeat it?"  
--Louise Gluck

how much however can we bear to repeat  
of a history so well tucked  
under the rug or the overturned stacks  
of clay pots in Mr. McGregor's shed

to repeat, to bear to articulate each rung  
down and back is only safe on wet Sundays  
when not alone we bear details,  
the measure recollection carves

of the delicately cuffed wrist  
which held the stick above the child's arm  
the heavy wooden doors the light did  
come cracking under when the voices  
rasped steadily at each other

the inarticulate tunnels of briars  
body and spirit required  
before a clear yes/no to sex, politics and self  
needed no more blood

but Venetian blinds collapse  
music dies before the resonant chord  
of two sisters who tore through  
the same barbed silk nets  
swam their golden way  
one dancing, one singing a desperate  
whiskey tune

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two who sang the same first songs as I and swam  
around the summer island  
through the same unfurling wave

beyond history and horizon  
to a desert edge  
lay nibbling at its shore  
and no more echoes

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recollection does not cut through  
those rusty underwater wires  
wrecks tear at those young limbs  
stroking clockwise around the island  
never knowing the ocean is eastward  
that a continental connection  
can have many shapes  
and harbors which do not always  
drain to leave one gasping far from shore

from her Atlantic seashells' play -  
turn them as she will -  
chords and progressions of sisters  
bury the shells along the entire littoral  
from Horn to Hatteras to Winter Harbor, Maine  
she is out of water alone  
the storybook trio silent

can not keep the waves from washing  
the seashells high on the dunes  
where every step hints at a crunch  
she fears is seashell holding one sister  
or another, that she was in on their strewing

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echoes pound her thin margin  
of sand on the shore of the sea of the long ago island  
of memory and motion, motion of sisters, the dances  
of summers and city-held snows,

the deliberate pace of the schedule of childhood  
up to the day and the dusk the golden carp fled  
tore down the brown Atlantic, gnawed past the Horn,  
up and around to the dry California shore

where a harbor opened  
swallowed them into memory  
out of her history forevermore

## A Question of Parallax

Our two trains do go  
In one direction

Usually side by side  
With equal views of mountain, dog and pond

Yet there are crossroads  
A switch perhaps on the track

The curve for one train at a time  
A coin's toss in the air determines

Yet after the endless tunnel  
(through our momentary Alps)

ahead there is gentler ground  
sun tilting now for the Atlantic

a question of arrival, meeting place  
all steam foreclosed now to us

a fine be-gloved gentleman  
to hand us down the metal steeps

to platform, but don't our tickets  
need to agree way, way before us  
Bruges, Antwerp, or Rotterdam

Have we each paid enough  
To land quietly at Calais

Before trying hydrofoil and home

The Cassatt Misremembered as a Manet

climb over the canvas on the floor  
after the easel's failed vertical  
try astride the aluminum stretcher  
palette steady enough for the cobalt blue,  
black, and white cadmium of it all

the sail to belly out at last  
when I've all the tensions set  
– no, Manet is on my mind again –  
reef it discretely, handle  
the equally arsenic green of the gunnels,  
now clarified, a different eye to canvas

the man ever with back to us rows  
his beam black, the muscles of his pull and profile  
flat foreground for the curve of boat  
the secular pieta blues of mother and son  
steady in the stern, sail taut starboard side

all is passive in the pulling  
the anonymous receding shore  
the acquiescent brim of her hat  
beyond his cap and sturdy gaze  
this ferrying in a late September sun  
all lines, arcs, clear salt statement  
a comfort above channel and current

the first then last degree of light  
the firm stroke to get to our shore  
no one holds the disembarking  
in mind, in eye, in this ever mid-point of the bay  
with pull after pull water resisting  
as it must for the blade to dip and draw  
when small waves hold without rancor

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lulled by the slapping water the child  
under his straw hat tastes a patience  
soon dropped when boat levels to dock  
in the reach of the journey he will stare  
mid-air in those larger hands lofting  
him at all horizons before his bare foot  
finds the bleached boards and shore

what was left is far behind  
the grays and faint rose tell us so  
summoned weekly by something formal  
on this shore they come toward us  
capped and coated, the man our minion

and I, covered in finest cadmium white,  
squint at every minim of this middle passage  
Cassatt has given, and tacit in the spell  
relinquish the other view, my eye as full  
as any Édouard could require

## Reduction

I am reduced to this  
worrying about arranging red potatoes  
in the small drawer, moving them  
around to make better space -- because  
I bought a medium sized bag, my mistake,  
and therefore, the usual space is a bit  
of a problem. Worse, I quite like rearranging  
these potatoes, even if anxious as I do so  
about – making it all work out well –  
making them, for my great relief and therefore  
pleasure, fit.



