

A Letter to Spalding

I think we may have seen the same things
sliding up against the sides of the boat:
the whip of the air rising,
cracking against our faces,
shocking breath out,
our bodies
wrapped by the current of old lovers around us.

The monster weighed you down
the way the ocean presses me against the railings
so I see in the channel:

You are there
with the sphinctered, sucking geoducks,
your mouth stretched in opening,
pulsing against the water's pressure
in a thick and fluid monologue of salt.

...I've stayed against the railing—
careful of you—
heavy, curling yourself against me,
letting the spray of evening
stretch your fingers against my ankle,
riding the ferry
in the pitching comfort of a light sleep.

Iowa 1

All the Midwestern saints converge on the town of Anita.

They bring dishes for a potluck and light barbeques in the park next to the library.

Anita won the All Saints Lottery:

the deacon dances smartly on a picnic table with his wife

holding an icon of Gabriel above his head.

They will all be blessed with German potato salad, pineapple ambrosia, and pork ribs.

Iowa 2

St. Peter and St. John meet for German food off Highway 80.
They've scrubbed blood from the asphalt,
scraped drying hides from under the wheels of semis.
Wrapped in grass capes, they order schnitzel and beer from the menu.
Windmills above them carom silently into an oncoming storm
and their bodies smell like sweet hay and rain.

Waiting for News

*...I lived in sweet surroundings for the brain.
I thought it needed blue skies, white breasts, green trees,
to excite and absorb it...*
--Gerald Stern

I am thinking about Stern when I should be working--
of his lust for this city,
his penchant for lying in the grass
doing nothing.
That is what poets do--
they lust and do nothing and then they write about it.

I am thinking about doing nothing when I should be doing something--
counting quarters,
answering a phone somewhere.
I do my nothings in secret,
my penchant for the mossy, buggy countryside dampened to silence in small nods of
concession.
The lines back up, then atrophy,
my nothings turned to nothing,
all my lusts in the grass
biting my skin
while I wait for news from an old Jew.

The Road to Damascus

*Finally, just another prince
dead in the dust...*

--"The Buddha on the Road", Norman Dubie

Of course I saw it coming...
but I thought it would be quartz –
faceted, silk, violet – *pretty*.
Instead, imbedded in the dense weight of my chest,
it is milky, tough, marble, leather.

I am back in the thick summer of the east
on an island with water on three sides.
The wind from the Hudson flattens me
cools me
slingshots rain into my brow.

I am happy here because the road to Damascus is right outside
and the procession of thieves moves aside for me
despite the decline of my full glory.
I am happy with the high stench of garbage and piss,
happy under shimmering green rainclouds,
happy to lie down in the dust if I have to.

I saw it coming and I thought
Of course.
I, too, am just another prince.