

HOMESICK DITTY

Welded to the hot South by duty, looking
 old among cheap chinoiserie,
Left with a gaudy sun and the smell of cooking,
 when will I see
 steep streets leaning to the sea,
white town stepping down to quay, to dark
 harbor water, verdigris
 where brushed by art
of Northern light, pale, pellucid, cool and tart?

The sign of the fish long bartered for a low rapport
 with poisoners, my hoard of prix
pointless as life sinks on a lifeless shore,
 when may I leave
 this still, tideless inland sea
that lifts its dirty mirror to a ravaged
 sky, these deadly tenebrae,
 when read the message,
find the strait way home and take the wished-for passage?

On the rim where eskers of the West give out
 to drumlins marching to the sea,
tried by fire, by ice tempered, now
 true North is East.
 The sea speeds the subarctic toward me;
swell skips past, flinging flowers, casts
 showers of foamy roses; see
 how the whales dance,
the seals laugh, the birds shout, my soul cheers before the mast.