

THE FIRST AND ONLY SAILING

Your shores diminish.

 You learn
 the doom of sailors drifting
 south on ice islands.

What echoes shall you code
to float the sea?

 When Manolete
 got it from Islero in Linares,
 he rose again as four
 stone matadors in Córdoba.

Likewise Philippe-Auguste,
 who paid his bodyguards with whores
 to keep them loyal.

 This side
 of memory, you fight the killing
 tides to death for etchings
 on a rock, for life.

 As for
The Happy Isles?

 Let dreamers
dock there.

 Believe in such,
 and you'll believe that Essex,
 More, and Mary of Scotland
 kidded the chopper on their climb
 to God.

Settle for the whirlpool
and the cliff.

Mermaidens, naked
at the nipples and below, still
mate with sailors in their sleep.

And who escapes from sleep?

Waken, and you wage one ship
against the aces of the sea.

Weaken, and the bait of Faust's bad
wager waits you.

Worsen,
and the winds of old indulgence
overtake you.

You face them
as you'd face, years afterward,
a girl you'd kissed and fondled
in a park but never married.

Becalmed, you make your peace
with dreams.

Expect nothing,
and anything seems everything.

Expect everything and anything
seems nothing...

To live
you leave your yesterselves
to drown without a funeral.

You chart a trek where no
one's sailed before.

You rig.

You anchor up.

You sail.