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## A Dream of a Distant Land

Henry Taylor

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HENRY TAYLOR

*A DREAM OF A DISTANT LAND*

Deep in a darkness many weeks old  
I stand alone at the rail of my ship  
Listening to the sounds to which  
I have not yet become accustomed:  
The pump of engines nudging the boat  
Through the clear, cold, endless night;  
The crack of icebergs that surround,  
But do not bind me; and forever  
The crash of water on a coast  
Where seals on the rocks move slowly.  
On the deck, now, I am alone,  
Only thinking of you, waiting  
Where thoughts of ice and whales  
Are rarely more than amusements,  
But I know that below me men watch  
The hands of curious instruments tremble,  
Hunting for the best course south  
To the Arctic Circle, the open sea,  
Back home to the Temperate Zones,  
Where I played as a boy in the first  
Cold winds of autumn among shocks  
Of corn covered with frost, and walked  
In the fields where my father's cattle  
Lived. Through the open window  
At night I could hear horses  
Cantering across a field of stubble,  
Steering around the shocks of corn  
Like polar bears cruising among  
The icebergs as they swim beside  
My ship in the clothing of life  
Itself: claws, eyes, teeth and hair,  
Salt water running in their veins  
As it runs in yours and mine.

I think of you waiting for me  
In this land where summer is short  
Enough to let you remember winter.  
Through the veins of the bear,  
In your brain and in mine,  
The blood that knows will blunder  
Its way from season into season,  
As it sends the fish beneath me  
Through the dark like horses  
Dodging frozen white shocks of corn  
On a stubble sea, their senses  
Of direction trembling like the hands  
On the dials of careful instruments below  
That guide me to you from breaking waves  
Where seals on the rocks move slowly.

ROBERT HOLLANDER

TO JEAN

for Maginel

And so you've turned my book into a reliquary  
For a spray of pink asterisks on green wire,  
Footnote in the heart of *Don Quixote*  
To fields full of punctuation,  
Wild strawberries in flower like small-voiced  
Exclamations around the single fruit.

You make me think of careful gestures  
My grandmother would have understood  
By her warm-smelling upstairs bookshelves  
Of how in a moment off the world's way  
Something is that wants to be remembered.  
Pressing flowers in a book.