

The Tenders

How like an all-pervading pain it is
how flu-like in its source-less issue
how like skin-prickling weakness, nausea
drip and clog, orogeny of tissues

in the bedside can
the knowledge that we'll change again.
How like an all-pervading pain it is.

We are the tenders, we attend
the taxi ride from ship to port,
the souls still physical who bend
and hobble to the confine of our boat

which plays lightly on negative space
the mirror which once held god's face.
We are the tenders, we attend.

We wonder if the water could reprise
his features, form a mirror mirror
coalesce that highest of all Is
and if that beauty-shock's enough to tear our

faculties to smithereens
we wait upon the opaque green
and wonder if the water will reprise.

We back and forth against the isle of Whales
like a lousy lover
who with his unimaginative weight fails
to help his other grip and alter

the harbor seethes with non-response
we navigate indifferent rocks
back and forth against the isle of Whales.

But every trip is hideously new
the passengers, time, the weather, harbor sounds,
the muscular fatigue of our fair crew
the number of trips til we touch ground,

and each of us was something else in life,
a lawyer, lama, soldier, wife
so every trip is hideously new.

We go to limbo on the concept
that after penance, peeling and purgation
we jettison the fundamental precept
of eternal alteration.

Like a burn that's touched with ice
it will feel necessary and nice
for nothing to change in Paradise
we form God's uniform content.

On the Death of Frankie Bottomless

Who knew the lambs and the gentle ewes
in boxes on the land do piss and shit
as they chew their food that godliness
may not touch them. So, Frankie thinks,
do the passengers who ride the silver sea
to the edge of things all cover up their rays
with spanglely bits and ignorance
and sugar-free lemon glaze.

But Frankie's not what others are:
hat crisp, head oiled, and feet scrubbed white
in the shining bathroom stalls beneath
the safety tubs where the wind catches
and rails at the rails in the swift-past night.
In a room with a bed and a pile of towels,
a window on the dicing wet,
a foot of rug to walk around
a mirror and a closet where

Frankie hangs five bright colored shirts
and fondles the telephone
with no one left expecting him
at home.

The Creaky Ship

We being the Cruise Ship, eat and eat
of crusted cod and eggs in hollandaise,
and pack the steerage to its iron walls
with bloody beef filets.

We come to lunch uneasy on our feet,
the grey sea and the sun's eye fixed
on our hundred ton marl, as if deliciously,
the sun that's wanting to express by this
plank off the broken world, her blighted loveliness.
Where hair-backed fathers and their jeweled boys
hide in cabins while the day retreats,
and then we breast through one reflective cup
of darkness, as if already in the drink—
except a certain off-key tinkling as a
violinist on his stage pauses to scarce
applause and loudly turns her page.

A tray of chocolate truffles fixed
to the carpet on the mid-port deck
is unattended, so attracts certain free-thinkers
who fold their napkins and relay
free sweets to angst-hewn bellies which
deny them anchorage – we only ship to sin;
so knows our pilot, a blue-faced angel at the aft
whose job it is to blow men up on the
sandy shores of mercy, and blow well,
not down the bendy pipe to hell – why should
he with a god who'll yet say yes
to him whose shirt is sodden with
his up-chucked loveliness.

Here's some wild hoard that's beating
in his pitted abdomen, where fifty swimless
fishes float in parts: his interesting and
melancholic hearts. How like a worm
he is, alive! Though all his pieces take
opposing sides. One leads an orchestra
of one, one moons after the grave,
defeated-seeming sun. One inculcates
a steward with aesthetic bliss. He ballets
across the forward in a fit of loveliness.
There in the deep and swimmy drink
where lunged-fish arc and spout,
there lives a blue faced pilot who can
bear the steward out. As for us, we're sailing
to the peak of mount limbo, to offer up our sockets
where the lights of heaven go.
And as for us we're sailing to the purgatory hills
to power heaven's foot lights on
the lord's trillion tread mills.