

I've seen how the water
climbs up to work at the keel, how it
eases the boat off its landing. I've seen the boat
tilting unattended on the lake, oars
in the oarlocks, the whole thing
tipping this way and that
against log, stone, and breakwater.
How the wind holds it in place
while the lake kneads it and rocks it
stem to stern against shore plucking
small bits from the bow. I'm afraid
someday I'll be out there rowing
across the black gloss at dusk, listening
to the loons, content, thinking
this is all I need, when I'll hear
some other kind of sound: water
between the gunnels, my blue boat swinging open
like a door.

NOTES FROM THE NEW WORLD

We went on talking into the dark.
We were saying the same words
over and over. Like children trying to speak
underwater, I thought if only I enunciated,
if only I shouted that word
a little bit better, you would lift
into the air yelling, "I got it!
I got it!" We were talking into the dark
as if there were a phrase
we hadn't come to yet, one last word
to make us understand. Yesterday, I watched a horse
gallop up to a fence, halt, buck,
and wheel back the other way again
and again, as if finally, the intention refined,
the fence would fall. Granted, in 1492 the sailors

sailed up to the edge of the earth and discovered
the earth had no edge after all. I imagine them
clinging to the rails, shutting
their eyes and laughing
when they found themselves floating
instead of falling.
They went on sailing.
We went on talking. "A little farther,"
you said, and I went on.
We ran our hands along the seam.
You stared at me thinking if only you looked
hard enough, it would all come clear.
I walked out.
I came back.
You said, "Let's talk about it."
We went on talking.
It was as if we thought we lived
in some other world, a world where
when lungs fail, the people learn
some other way to breathe.
Imagine, in need of air, your hands opening up
to do the work your lungs have ceased to do.
I would hold my new hands
up into the light. I would place them
against my ears and listen
to the air lacing in and out of the web
between my fingers. Imagine how careful I'd be
carrying those new hands
wherever I went.

BAY MARE IN A SECOND FLOOR BEDROOM

In my dream of the last day, a large bay horse
followed me into my house and up the stairs.
The horse stood quietly behind me as I gathered
my possessions: ice-cream bars, cigarettes,