

## Two Poems · Robert Hahn

### DESPERADO

*We should not imagine that the world  
presents us with a legible face to decipher.  
—Michel Foucault*

Don't try to pretend you know anything  
out here in the dark where the dunes slump away  
illegibly from the black Atlantic,

where the path twists back on itself  
like a breathless outlaw covering his tracks.  
The landmarks all start to look the same,

the crouched, battered pines, the grey brush  
screwed down into the sand. As Hemingway said,  
anyone can be hard-boiled in the daylight —

it's a different story out at land's end  
where the humpbacked whales brood in the dark  
all night long without a thought in their heads.

Black gusts pour in over Race Point, and drift  
inland, over the scoured, flattened hills,  
down in the arroyos, the blind defiles . . .

Darkness falls like a hammer on the badlands.  
Back in our room, a clean-cut lamplight glints  
on the bottle of Graves in its silvered bucket.

Our motel, at the marsh edge, is dreamily called  
The Moors. The Late Show is *The Petrified Forest*  
by Robert Sherwood, after whom I like to think

I was named, with Leslie Howard playing a poet  
sick of language. He wishes he could die.  
Bogart is a killer who can't understand him.

He keeps saying, *I wouldn't know, pal*,  
over and over, sounding minimal, savvy,  
a genuine tough guy. He means what he says.

## THE INTERIOR AT PETWORTH

*Turner*

After the mind is emptied  
and the empty shell is glowing with light  
paper-thin and translucent

after Goethe's theory of color  
coffee and brandy  
and conversation turned like crystal

after Claude's soft country  
and the high plunging sterns  
of the Dutch ships

after the mind  
knows as fact that those  
who have bowed from the drawingroom

will never be back,  
when shapeless, dulled shades  
drift in the hollow space: