

*Distances at Sea*

*for S.T.*

I let my eyelids hover unshut like things adrift  
in case a ship should pass at such distance I'd see it;  
mine was a small boat.

My gunwales welcomed a wash  
of the smaller fish casting themselves  
sideways, flattening, clearing the sides

like high-jumpers in order  
to take bites from my legs.  
In that vastness they smelled my weakness.

How close the ships looked though  
I couldn't make out a single person on board at that  
—what *was* distance now

anyway?—only the dark  
shape rising from the surface.  
I thought they should see me.

In my body I felt just as big.  
I saw many ships, many days, and then the one  
that, as I waved my handkerchief

faster, turned—  
it grew larger.  
The one who spotted me might

for a moment have looked up and then  
beckoning his mate that a man in a flat boat  
was—*over there*

*look*—readjusted his eye  
to the scope. And he would go on  
looking awhile

for a man among white caps riffing  
like handkerchiefs until he was convinced  
that he had made me up.