

Whale · *Laura Jensen*

The oars are silenced.
The silenced oars silence the echoing
darkness and water, unscrew
the lightbulbs of the phosphorescence.

You have shut your eyes to the sureness
of that tactile evening, the whale
like an old thumb-print of presence,
the gray canvas damp at the surface,
dark and enormous with a small, small eye.
The digits at the shovel of the hand
always knew they could not quite place it.

Listen. Echo is twining on stone.
Marginal, intact, virtual, virtuous
coracle. Rainbow arcs into the ear
like old dry beans, like Mother's warning,
like Wrath of Uncle, "What have we here?"

The vine holds on to what comes next, what
happens: though the stone may crumble
in Hellenic ruin; or be parked by the
Empire mile, carved into, dumb, columbine-
fresheted; or stacked up, handled, managed
and bandied by the Old Man of the Wall;
or cobbled into overshoes and sunken
down, hauling bones by the tarsals,
hauling Zoot suit and cigar
and meeting silt exploding
where it must moan many years.

There the stone dreams of a center sun
that blushes on the east at the skyline
a branch that opens up a flower by blinking,
a flame that rushes to the stove without thinking,
without saying, "I don't know. . . ."

There it dreams that echo swims by now,
dreams echo says to the stone,
you will once again see daylight,
there, there. Believe me,
echo only need hear.