

Mary B. Moore

*Abundance*

For John

The light differs here, half wild and whiter  
than the tamer light that gilds the inland

cities gold. It ricochets  
off silicates—mica flakes, sand grains,

quartz bits. Stasis can't stay.  
Even southward off Highway One

where flower herders grow mum,  
larkspur, zinnia all the way

to the cliff-edge, the rocks  
beyond shimmer, jut and glint;

the chicken-wire fences catch fire,  
banter, undulate, wink. Nothing

holds still. Even your hair flies every  
which way in the photo, the dazzle etched

against the sea. And you poise  
in your winged stance, head thrown back,

arms wide, a festival receiving  
of what can't be caught.

To catch it, the Cliff House boasts a camera  
obscura that shows the shore

through a pinhole. It rotates  
first to Sanctuary Rock, lighthouseless,

then to the sea whose blues vary  
by depth, meet and marry

like yin-yang's mutually  
fitting curves.

On Sanctuary Rock, the pelicans,  
ladle-beaked, rubicund, fly and return.

The seals sun on. Cormorants preen. Everyone  
does bird-call Kyrie eleisons,

the cacophony preying and mating  
make. The pelicans in bands seem to dream

and lumber even in flight.  
They look sideways at the seawall

with one tear-sodden, salt-reddened eye.  
Then one dives. He seems to catch a fish glint,

an eye-spark, in this place that mints  
new light each minute, its gift, the unstinting.

David St. John

*Little Sur*

As in the beginning the early tide at last collapses  
& recedes as porous knuckles of rock

Shoulder their way above the foam where cormorants  
drift & settle & as the day begins inhaling

These last wisps of morning fog & rags of sunlight  
lift into the redwoods rising up along

The canyon walls & in the inlet below us elephant seals  
announce their daily dawn arguments

With those lessons of pre-history & your hair floats across  
the bed as easily as strands of the ruby kelp

That just yesterday rose silently beside the kayak as you  
carved a singular quiet along the waking bay

Jennifer K. Sweeney

*White October*

Big Sur

You cannot let go the ember,  
cinnamon and rust,  
everything husked and shaking

paper skins, the hay-sweet  
evening, auburn and cold  
rooted from a seasonal childhood.

You search it in the October skyline  
but the day is only white  
over skirted mountains.

You could lose yourself  
crawling the car around coast cliffs  
and all the ways you've wished

for disappearance  
lower down in veils,  
take a fragment of memory or

desire back into the perpetual  
dusk of ocean,  
wrinkling and unwrinkling

its surf and glide.  
You're searching for a little  
fire, anything aglow

on the mauve-brown bluffs,  
but that's not the point  
this blurred world is making,

white October with its white pumpkins  
and pearly pampas grass.  
Thin as a plume

it's something about surrender,  
how your need is a shade less  
in this fieldrush of cloud.

The person you love is beside you  
and the rest of your life is a big question—  
it's something about the cornsilk

of one two three hawks  
swooping low  
into the numinous.

Catharine Lucas

*After New Rain*

On the slope, last summer's dead—uncut fennel,  
dry thistles, ghosts of rye grass—a silver scrim  
like tattered fog subdues the boisterous green  
called forth by new rain. Our tardy wet season has begun:  
dirt paths soften that last week wore like iron under  
the feet. The earth is not yet muck, so the going  
is easy if you stay out of the gullies.

*Look*, I tell you, meaning the feathered gray combed  
over the green crown of the hill,

*Like old men's hair—*

Or maybe not

*What was I calling it, just now? Tattered fog?*

I seem to be revising. For you. Who are here  
but not here.

I remember once, on the coast road out of Big Sur,  
you turned from the sea to the sweep of brackened  
hills. Nestled into crevasses, lifted on the crests:  
furled wands of pampas, purple as newborns—

“Give me some of your pretty words,”

you said. (I had thought that, like most, you minded  
my constant commentary). Nice to be invited,  
though it silenced me awhile—a babbling child  
surprised by someone listening.

I never recovered innocence.

Often since you left, I catch myself practicing—  
as if you'll come back. We'll be driving along the

coast, and you'll suddenly point, far out, to where  
sea meets sky.

"Give me some of your pretty words," you'll say.

I must be ready to describe  
infinity.

Emily Grosholz

*The Gold Earrings*

I thought that I would meet you here.  
You stood on the pavilion beside Nepenthe  
Where the view is still the same.  
Nepenthe, you told me, means forgetfulness.  
You reminded me to notice the body of earth  
So often that our exchange  
Melts back into a hundred other occasions.  
Surely we admired the cliffs together  
Descending and descending to the horizon  
South of San Luis Obispo; singular pines;  
The blue Pacific arrested in a motion  
So vast and tranquil it resembles staying.  
Forgetfulness pours through the enormous veins  
That bind and furrow the world,  
The ancient rivers of Acheron and Lethe.  
Mother, souls who must begin again  
Drink at those deep channels; so I began  
Long ago the process of forgetting.  
Not that memory grows less intense,  
But the period of recollection lengthens.

I thought that I would meet you near  
The lion-color mountains,  
Twisted cypresses weathered to silver  
Unchanged by twenty years, the cyclic ocean  
Enchanting and shaming thought into reflection.  
Time came round full circle like the horizon  
And placed us at the center  
Talking together, drunk with the blue of distance,  
Your voice clear as ever: pay attention

To the lovely body of earth. Nothing endures  
In the end but the colored bones,  
The mantling blood of ocean flowing down,  
Forgetfulness. No less intense, I swear,  
Just more infrequent as the years go by.  
How body wears the mind in recollecting.  
Tears blinded me at the door of *Souvenirs*,  
Where we chose a pair of long gold earrings  
I loved and lost. The last I ever wore;  
For later on, my taste in ornament changed,  
And they were peerless, after their own kind.