

I SOUTHWESTER

Beachcombing south under a seamless shroud,  
On the right grassy dunes, blue-grey sea  
on the left, I saw racing toward me--  
black against white sky--a red-eyed rain cloud.  
Shoes swamped already, ancient clothes no good  
wet or dry, I resumed scouting the shore:  
scallop shells, ghostcrab holes, fish lures. More  
apt for a sign, though, would be the right wood.  
So engaged, there was a sudden sprinkle  
lasting no time at all. I looked straight up.  
Overhead, white only, no black. The sea  
had drawn the darkness to it. There was ample  
water there, I joked. No storm in a teacup,  
even, I added, no menaces for me.

II NORTHEASTER

Thinking like metal, sand streamed toward me.  
Why did I only barely feel the sting?  
A coating on my glasses was the only thing.  
I stashed them in my backpack and could see.  
Residue on TV screens, monitors.  
Portuguese sandblasters on Notre Dame.  
Why Portuguese only, and why the same  
for Italians in France, mainly cobblers?  
Through the gritty haze, answer to my quest:  
a 4 X 4, promising. It could be  
just the post I needed, the right measure.  
Kneeling was like surprising a hornet's nest:  
The sand blew low, ate every part of me!  
I rose quickly, grabbing first the treasure.

III PERFECT CIRCLES IN THE SAND

No wind. Sea frothless, breakerless. Some heat.  
Had clouds contained it? Had the sky been clear?  
Water, scudding here and there, there and here,  
exposed my darkest secrets to the bear.  
Shells from the bottom, tree-roots from some land,  
Glass floats from Japan, Styrofoam from boats,  
cross for a death beyond the dunes. Sea oats  
mystery: perfect circles in the sand.  
Crop-circle hoax? I photoed all the same.  
Who did it? How? This was no accident.  
Any ring's circumference was greater when  
so was the stalk it circumscribed. It came:  
Before any wind degree, a stalk bent  
to the sand--compass, reed of La Fontaine.

IV THE BEACH, AFTERWARD

It's said unheard falling trees are soundless  
and something must be named to be. Humanless:  
grey clouds can't threaten and are colorless;  
circles are zeroes; ghost crabs are lifeless.  
Minds may try to peer from Space. What there is  
is just nature's lotusam. Jetsam's no more--  
no humans. Washed in from the ocean floor:  
seaweed, vacated shells, fish carcasses.  
Human barriers gone or crumbled, the beach  
will flush to the island's other side. Free,  
coastal islands drift to their continents.  
Far offshore, new sandbars begin to reach  
island-size. From Space, what can humans see?  
Though nothing exists without residents.

THE DOE AND THE TURTLE

After The Late Show, I read until I was dull.  
I turned off the overhead and stood up. Bound for  
upstairs, I happened to look out and saw the doe.  
Vaguely, she wandered up the lane, nosing the ground,  
moving from side to side, testing the shoulder grass.  
This was her hour. I hadn't seen a deer so close  
for years. Darkly, I eased toward the best window.  
What did I do? Right away, she flashed out of sight.

Early, its carapace bedewed, the land turtle  
was eating melon when earth tremors scurried it  
into the thorns, where it closed itself up, safe now  
from haters and lovers of ties, wigs, and beards,  
from mockers of reclusive or friendly turtles,  
from doubters of it, sponging themselves with its ills.



by  
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