

## DES PETERSEN

## HOUSES

The photographs upon the walls  
of this empty, once scrubbed house  
stare back at me without a story  
except, simply, we who were here before  
no longer wake to hear the ocean pass.

I wish they were here with me,  
apart from memories whose solitude  
tumbles with these hills toward the reefs,  
but a request to an empty house offers  
nil. No, I would not have them here,  
for people gone to other houses become  
themselves more by changing,  
and I must myself set out like the sun  
along my road across those great gulfs  
towards your house, before the ocean turns.

## EXPLORERS

Was there ever a noble sailor  
who from the top of the mast  
could thankfully anticipate failure,  
economic loss and waste  
by glancing away from that isle  
in distant haze, and call below  
that all was well, not a bird in sight,  
this island from his eyes let go?

I've often thought of explorers up there  
atop their world, all the tower  
they need for wealth or discovery,  
whether one would in a shower  
of visions have watched ahead  
not for islands full of treasure  
nor for the glory on his head,  
but for some fellow being who at leisure  
could be at least himself, saved  
from the threads explorers cut.  
Yet what in heart to heart we have  
far outweighs conquest's clutch,  
that grips explorers worse than guilt,  
though fated to follow paths  
on which some explorer, man of vision,  
cut you from your past, plighting us.

## HILLS

These low hills hold to the earth,  
 draw solitude about them like hermits gleaning,  
 the gold grass under; grey above.  
 I watch their pause awhile,  
 how they honour their bows so piously  
 yet so crestfallen and poor.  
 It is this that draws me here:  
 that thoughtful poise, refractory,  
 humble after the harvest of so much life:  
 as if in search of prayer, awaiting the change of heart.

## WORDS

Many languages I hear spoken  
 I cannot understand.  
 Many thoughts my ears confuse  
 as if by sleight of hand

the syllables are tidied away  
 somewhere inside of me  
 before they strike the note  
 that opens my eyes to see -

until I heard the people  
 taking to the boats, and you,  
 leaving homelands forever.  
 Half in their dark I see

the sky tear itself from earth.  
 They chant a mysterious tune  
 and I search their voices  
 for the words I need to find you.