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Independent Pursuit

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PURSUIT

Stacked and locked and braced
snug along the deck, freight boxes

improvise upon their linkages
and stress points, inside their sun-

ovened atmospheres—staccato
cadenzas, flourishes of groaning as

the ship climbs and surfs indifferent
swells. Manifest of time-- beaten,

beating out into the vast Atlantic
sky. This is what we've been

lugging, then, a thousand miles out
into eternity—*time*—loud, erratic,

yet almost musical *tempo*-- time,
manifest in the noise matter makes

on its way somewhere, out here
across eternity. Three flights up

on the gleaming bridge, time's
a measure of space and position.

Back in Carolina, where monstrous
cranes so deftly swung all these

containers into place, back ashore
there, time is someone's money, units

of expectation and responsibility.
Back there even the sea is working,

laving quays, collecting rank larders,
compiling and excavating shores.

Out here the sea is only up to itself.
No mere figure, but incomparable

presence no language can use
without revealing its poverty.

Originating, extravagant,
a reckless beyond beyond

handling, wherein the tonnage
this keel heaves ahead is abstracted,

and memory's cargo dwindles
further into dream. Seven decks

aloft in the white stern-castle,
the passenger savors the sway

and rise beneath him, the vast
swath of northern stars, and off

southeast: wild, silent lightning
behind ranges of black cloud!

In the sheer spaciousness his
whole body knows at last, soles

to thrilled nape, out here who
knows where, he's as close

to longed-for self-forgetfulness
as he will ever be-- awareness

incarnate. Oh stop, then, he tells
himself, stop making sentences of it.