December 1993

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Recommended Citation
Colby Quarterly, Volume 29, no.4, December 1993, p.326

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Night Sailing

Most twilights, the wind dies.
But through some nights, it keeps
pouring and I’ve felt it
carry my wife and me in our sloop,
like seeds on a leaf. Perhaps tonight.
I call friends, who hesitate.
“Sailing? At night?”

Yesterday, in downtown rain, we saw his face,
pallid, not for the first time, her eyes,
iodine. We suspected; that’s why
the call. I can imagine her fingers
twisting in the spiral cord before
the choke-hold of dailiness relents
and she says, “Why not?” and he says, “Let’s go.”

Before moon-up, we rig sails,
then weave upwind easily
past glowing beads in cottage windows,
past rock-wharved islands, heading
where lakeshore withdraws into obsidian
evergreens, lightened only by revenant birch
until the moon gains buoyancy, greatens, land-bloodeed at first
then clarifying as it rises to chaperone us
almost to Quaker Point, where a single cloud
gives the sign to turn home.

Ashore,
in the meadow of made hay, we’re
radiated by a moon grown strong enough
to cast us on the ground. We linger
at the shore, afraid. He’s the first
to slowly back away and climb
toward the moon above the hill.
We follow urgently until, again, we move
all four abreast. Turning once to fathom
where we’ve been, we see our shadows
stretched downhill, strafed with stubble,
almost blending with the green.

PETER HARRIS