

From a Dune above Herring Cove Beach

It's my turn to flatten the spartina grass.
Like others before me, I contemplate the sea,
the rafts of black eiders, and today, a lowering sky,
ash-colored swells from a composition by Whistler.

I want to follow a wave all the way in
but I keep getting lost in the troughs,
in the churning gravity set in action
somewhere off the Atlantic shelf.

And such dizzying permutations:
each form similar, not two identical,
like snowflakes, sand grains,
our whorled thumbs.

Out in the watery cleats,
one bristling scroll at last unwinds,
gathers momentum. It's a mighty specimen.
With a storm behind it, this one

could pull from the bottom a half-ton hull,
dump it on the beach like a bottle.
Faithful as Penelope, I mean to stay
with my wave to shore, but when I blink

at a passing gull's shadow, it's lost
to any of many spumy crashes, disappears
into evanescent froth. Beneath the sand,
there are not recirculating pumps.

Come September, no salted wave
will pool around an inland garden's asters.
From this height, it seems appropriate then
to say a few words about my roller,

how it spawned so many wavelets,
how this stretch of coastline
wouldn't be the same without it.
And consider the journey:

how it summered in Fiji,
survived the Cape of Good Hope in foul weather,
surfing the Gulf Stream, stirring
whatever it touched.

How, at the final moments,
it tried to take everything with it
in that raking hiss, that *yes, yes*
of shells, stones sucked from their sockets.