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Nantasket Beach

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Pulse

I listen through these fingertips at my wrist.
"Art thou there, truepenny?"
One . . . two . . . three . . . the moveless marching.
Not only Hamlet's father's ghost
But the ghosts of all our fathers
Stir in the audible dark.
The centuries crowd our veins;
Not with intent, we are cast as culmination.
Listen: the step of one who was valiant in battle;
The step of him who crept to weep in the forest.
Hostage still to the unstilled host,
I join them through these fingertips at my wrist.

—*Roland English Hartley*

Thalassa!

In passion I bent to the march, treading, treading,
Comrade to all and most to obedient women,
But hung on their last resistance, so degrading
A treadmill, hung on the speck of the superhuman
In passion's depths, denying my urgent reading
As if it were an impenetrable omen
In the bowels of love, or as if I were parading
Falsely among them, the pimpest catechumen,

Until my sickness came and I lay still,
Fallen alone in that country for a long, long time.
One day I heard in my head like a drowsy bell
The sound: "Thalassa!" And as the hawk will climb
In an empty sky, look down, and plunge at will,
I saw to their naked hearts, the foul, the sublime.

—*Hayden Carruth*

Nantasket Beach

The horizon has flat edges
that rise toward the center
and yet hold at overflow
rhythmic, seasick waves.
Boats, like wobbly toys,
move along the line
and drop and sink below
shot in this arcade
where the wind whistles
through its gums and large
sea birds patrol the shore.
Above, the sky is grey,
powdery, about to mourn
if Nature ever could.
But not the waves chop
such logic down and show
where the dark water sheen
ends in a curve of foam.

—*John J. Gill*