



Harmonic Choral Speaking : Open

Secondary 5 to 7 : Boys and/or Girls

**The Second Voyage**

Odysseus rested on his oar and saw  
The ruffled foreheads of the waves  
Crocodiling and mincing past: he rammed  
The oar between their jaws and looked down  
In the simmering sea where scribbles of weed defined  
Uncertain depth, and the slim fishes progressed  
In fatal formation, and thought

If there was a single  
Streak of decency in these waves now, they'd be ridged  
Pocked and dented with the battering they've had,  
And we could name them as Adam named the beasts,  
Saluting a new one with dismay, or a notorious one  
With admiration; they'd notice us passing  
And rejoice at our shipwreck, but these  
Have less character than sheep and need more patience.

I know what I'll do he said;  
I'll park my ship in the crook of a long pier,  
(And I'll take you with me he said to the oar)  
I'll face the rising ground and walk away  
From tidal waters, up riverbeds  
Where herons parcel out the miles of stream,  
Over gaps in the hills, through warm  
Silent valleys, and when I meet a farmer  
Bold enough to look me in the eye  
With 'where are you off to with that long  
Winnowing fan over your shoulder?'  
There I will stand still  
And I'll plant you for a gatepost or a hitching-post  
And leave you as a tidemark. I can go back  
And organise my house then.

But the profound  
Unfenced valleys of the ocean still held him;  
He had only the oar to make them keep their distance;  
The sea was still frying under the ship's side.  
He considered the water-lilies, and thought about fountains  
Spraying as wide as willows in empty squares,  
The sugarstick of water clattering into the kettle,  
The flat lakes bisecting the rushes. He remembered spiders and frogs  
Housekeeping at the roadside in brown trickles floored with mud,  
Horsetroughs, the black canal, pale swans at dark:  
His face grew damp with tears that tasted  
Like his own sweat or the insults of the sea.