**Pacific Ship Crossing**

Lorrie Ness

Unnerving blue —

the color of meridians laid against the sea.

Some lines are drawn,

but only in another man’s mind.

Crossing the 164th,

as if the water could be sectioned

like this orange, its wedges rocking on a rail.

Metal creaks and heaves.

On paper, it’s fluid density,

gravity, the force of water against the hull —

a simple equation

that separates buoyancy from the crushing sea.

I cannot see the horizon

from the bow. Its calculation changes with height.

It’s the plane of a celestial sphere intersected

by a perpendicular line.

There is no variable *S*

for the swells lifting it toward the sky as we trough.

Our searchlight burns

the shadow of gulls against climbing water.

The map says we are flat,

even as meridians bend around the ship.

The map says we are watercolor blue.

Not Prussian. Not midnight. Not dusky bruise.