

Ship-building

by [Diane G. Scholl](#) in the [October 14, 2015](#) issue

The feel of awl and augur in his hardened hands,
the rough hull rimed with salt, a whittled plug
he made himself, so tight he set his teeth!
His handiwork behind him, Norway a miniature
carved in the distance, he watched the gray Atlantic
like a ravenous whale devour everything between.

The story ends, and yet begins again. Here
in a foreign port, his touch begins to read
each sign, the curves and swellings, splintered
keel and patchwork. How his heart quickens
when he finds his father's fishing boat, familiar
as his name, the family build, their house
nailed fast above the rocky harbor.

And yet begins again. How the found word both
fits and startles, an oracle recovered just in time,
just when it's needed, just before faith slips
away like my great-grandfather's wedding coat,
ruined in a flooded basement with old books
and portraits, speckled sepia like a gull's egg,
water-marked and too far gone to keep.