The Unstrung Bow

Driving north beside inland waters
a third coast lake stretching the horizon
I think of Walcott’s Caribbean schooner
and Odysseus’ one-master
sailing for home
harps of canvas plucked by Aeolian winds
scent of landfall urging them on.

The singular eye that overlooked my youth
blind now with age, memory gone with sight
names me nobody,
errant daughter, easy to forget
the face that’s turned away. I was
her arrow set to conquer worlds;
she now, the unstrung bow
that never will direct my flight again.

Scylla’s arms, Charybdis’ churning waters
were vanquished long ago; yet the siren’s song
falls again on my unstopped ears.
Memories gather, heart thrums
like the sound of Odysseus’ sails
beating toward Ithaca, searching out a tune
that time and place and circumstance have altered.

No sailor I, no island here, no intoxicating trace
of grapes or sea or salt air;
Michigan’s loam-sweet smell
signals no safe harbor.
As I cross the line between away
and this remembered home
the pine-sharp air leaves a sour taste instead
reminds me I am a stranger in this familiar land
unstrung myself by all my years of wandering.