

# Nina Budabin McQuown

## The Creaky Ship

We being the Cruise Ship, eat and eat  
of crusted cod and eggs in hollandaise,  
and pack the steerage to its iron walls  
with bloody beef filets.

We come to lunch uneasy on our feet,  
the grey sea and the sun's eye fixed  
on our hundred ton marl, as if deliciously,  
the sun that's wanting to express by this  
plank off the broken world, her blighted loveliness.  
Where hair-backed fathers and their jeweled boys  
hide in cabins while the day retreats,  
and then we breast through one reflective cup  
of darkness, as if already in the drink—  
except a certain off-key tinkling as a  
violinist on his stage pauses to scarce  
applause and loudly turns her page.

A tray of chocolate truffles fixed  
to the carpet on the mid-port deck  
is unattended, so attracts certain free-thinkers  
who fold their napkins and relay  
free sweets to angst-hewn bellies which  
deny them anchorage — we only ship to sin;

so knows our pilot, a blue-faced angel at the aft  
whose job it is to blow men up on the  
sandy shores of mercy, and blow well,  
not down the bendy pipe to hell – why should  
he with a god who'll yet say yes  
to him whose shirt is sodden with  
his up-chucked loveliness.

Here's some wild hoard that's beating  
in his pitted abdomen, where fifty swimless  
fishes float in parts: his interesting and  
melancholic hearts. How like a worm  
he is, alive! Though all his pieces take  
opposing sides. One leads an orchestra  
of one, one moons after the grave,  
defeated-seeming sun. One inculcates  
a steward with aesthetic bliss. He ballets  
across the forward in a fit of loveliness.  
There in the deep and swimmy drink  
where lunged-fish arc and spout,  
there lives a blue faced pilot who can  
bear the steward out. As for us, we're sailing  
to the peak of mount limbo, to offer up our sockets  
where the lights of heaven go.  
And as for us we're sailing to the purgatory hills  
to power heaven's foot lights on  
the lord's trillion tread mills.