INSIDE PASSAGE, GLACIER BAY

The ship's orchestra finishes with a forte flourish
like the midnight buffet's overkill of king crab
and baked Alaska. Down below polished dance floors,
tightly closed couples and funereal scent of carnations,
the engine massages my soles, strums my belly,
a discordant guitar. The screw munches
loose ice, spitting pieces against the hull
like fragments of my life, a hollow random tattoo.

Old images line my crevices. Other guests are primed
with visions of calving glaciers and gourmet breakfast.
Now the first corridor is full of trailing sentences,
serial goodnights. I wait for the last door to close.
The empty elevator delivers me to the top deck,
the penultimate chill. The bay
is Irish whiskey smooth on the rocks. The air
cleans my lungs like silk pulled through a gun barrel.

Across the bowscape, the moon trails a ramp wide enough
to climb if I wanted to be higher. At land's end,
an old worn glacier kneels to lap up reflections.
The tall young one catches every dangling shine, volleys
the bright bias from peak to pylon to friezes of poems
in blue calligraphy. Ice-hoarded indigo scalded by silver
can no longer resist duress of trapped fire. The facade
crazes and falls. Sea geysers muffle the shock wave.
The glacier exposes a new face, new verses. The ship yaws,
moves on in afterquiet. No mattering difference
comes of it all.

Why am I out here? Is it because writers poke
into emotional viscera too much? Are we weak
or merely overloaded with sensitivity? The answer
would solve nothing. Crane and Woolf let water do it.
Deep, caressing water, progressively darker
till even inner sight is gone.
And how does it work? Your hollows fill with it and you die
for air. Tales that it's the easiest way can't be true--
you struggle, choke, cry with a misdirected milk swallow.

No, better to go right to the heart of the matter,
then let cold beautiful sea be the mortuary:
a new divisor, finality forever, the conclusion keeper,
all-time expert at secreting earthly baggage and bones.