

Does No One at All Ever Feel This Way in the Least?

O ocean sea, for all your being vast,
Your separation of us from the Old
That should have made the New World newly great
Would only disappoint us at the last
If it should not do anything foretold
To make us different in a single trait.

This though we took the Indian name for maize
And changed it to the English name for wheat.
It seemed to comfort us to call it corn.
And so with homesickness in many ways
We sought however crudely to defeat
Our chance of being people newly born.

And now, O sea, you're lost by aeroplane.
Our sailors ride a bullet for a boat.
Our coverage of distance is so facile
It makes us to have had a sea in vain.
Our moat around us is no more a moat,
Our continent no more a moated castle.

Grind shells, O futile sea, grind empty shells
For all the use you are along the strand.
I cannot hold you innocent of fault.
Spring water in our mountain bosom swells
To pour fresh rivers on you from the land,
Till you have lost the savor of your salt.

I pick a dead shell up from where the kelp
Lies in a windrow, brittle-dry and black,
And holding it far forward for a symbol
I cry, "Do you work for women—all the help
I ask of you. Grind this I throw you back
Into a lady's finger ring or thimble."