



LAWRENCE RAAB

SUNRISE WITH SEA MONSTERS

after J.M.W. Turner

There they are, surprisingly pink,
although the rising sun may contribute
to that effect. We who live here
still guess at their actual colors,
their size, even their shape. We've seen them
only as you see them now, lifting
their backs above the ocean, then the edge
of what must be a tail, and their eyes,
unusually large and round and expressionless.
Are they playing? Is it time for them to mate?
We just have to wonder, calling them monsters
because no one's given them a better name.
And because they frighten us, as monsters should.
But you saw them quite clearly, didn't you?
Later, back home, maybe you'll decide
it was a trick of the light, and you'll say
I was the one who persuaded you
they were real. But why would I do that?
I just bring people out here to the cliffs
where they see what they see, and later believe
whatever fits the stories they want to tell.
There they are, farther off. A few more minutes

and the ocean will return to its usual self,
with only a dolphin or two for excitement.
Some say we should kill them,
while others would build them a shrine.
What I know is—they appear, let us look,
and are gone. Or else it's all
just the light, the rising sun like an eye
—the eye of God, I once heard a man say—
staring right through us, burning away
everything we thought we knew.

TESTAMENT

In my youth I wondered often about the past—
how it would change, and where it would end.
Now I can tell you many strange things
will never be revealed, and you
should be glad to understand this.
When I vowed to discover the truth
I tried not to care about being believed.
I walked alone under the wild moon,
listened to the rain unfolding
its many propositions. Those were the days
of certainty and surmise. Thank you
for reading this far. I won't ask
for much more. Perhaps you've found
these pages by chance, and you're hoping
for the wisdom that endings
so often promise. Let me say: assume
nothing about this world, neither
its rules, nor any of its daily habits.
Nor how easily a man can forget
why he threw his life away. Or if,
in fact, I did. I won't excuse myself,
not now. The light that keeps the sky
in place is fading, but it's always fading.
Forget the past if you can. It's never over.
And then it is.