

Poetry Porch: Poetry

Sea Rise in the City

By William Doeski

When I return to redbrick Boston
after dawdling for years in the 'burbs,
the Charles basin has broadened
and the Back Bay streets brim over.
Snug in Wellies, I trek up Beacon
to high ground near the state house.
The gilded dome looks old and cheap.
The male delegates' trousers bag
and sag and the women clench
themselves in dull and unchic wool.

Law can't halt the advancing sea.
Soon the slop will deepen
and no one will be wading to work.
Small boats will suffice for a while,
but storms will crash through windows
and render even the skyscrapers
crude and obsolete as Stonehenge.
Why have I returned to the scene
of my favorite unsolved crimes?

The top floor windows where
my marriage choked itself to death
still wink with afternoon sun.
The basement flat where someone
unbuttoned herself to crush me
has drowned in illimitable salt.
The corner where I speared a thug
with an umbrella still grieves,
although the storefronts are blank.

But from the height where Shaw's
gray bas-relief still functions,
Boston looks almost sane enough
to revive me from the stupor
of forty years. The drowned trees

of the Public Garden still stand,
but the ghost I dread most swims
dolphin-style in the shallows,
as if no grave heartbreak looms.