



Nancy G. Hickman

WHAT YOU MIGHT REMEMBER

You'd forgotten, until you brought the car
to a stop along the ditch bank, needing to
stretch your legs after a long ride,
to stand up and settle your mind,
how October could surprise.

You'd forgotten that in this month, when soybean fields,
common here as disappointment, are transformed
to a dazzle like brass polished by church ladies,
their gleam leads the eye across the distance,
into each dip, over each rise,
and makes this flat land seem to undulate.

All the way across you stare, your eyes
in love with the crop that looks,
now that a cloud has shifted, more like
a covey of monks, saffron robes swaying.
Where the beans end, a single stand of trees
holds on to the last russet leaves,
and beyond, you are surprised to see, is the water.
How had you forgotten, as many times as you
used to drive this road, in a pick-up loaded low
with bags of seed, in a car headed home after church,
that here on the curve near Foster's Farm
you could glimpse the bay, far-off silver and sheen
like a length of silk pulled taut.

Back when this was still a land of last resort,
folks built their houses back-to the bay,
did not bother to clear away the brush at water's edge
to tempt themselves with views they had no time to savor.

You consider this, this moment when the beans are gold;
tomorrow or the next, the combine will take them.
You ease the car back onto the blacktop,
lower the windows to let in breeze, bird sound.
You're going to the next farm, and who knows what else
you might remember, besides the narrow path
you always think of, the path your feet wore
 through the tangle
of bittersweet and bayberry behind the handmade house,
to a sandy cove where no one went but you,
and where a boat could rest, if you'd had one,
and might be rowed away.