

# The New Criterion

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## The Marlborough Sounds

by Devin Johnston

Aboard the Interislander  
as if inside a bronze bell  
a low drone vibrates the hull,  
hold full of parked cars,  
twenty thousand tons afloat.  
*What old weight of feeling  
has settled in your bones?*

A hammer clangs somewhere  
beneath the waterline,  
a prolonged reverberation  
rich in overtones,  
pulling a deep draft  
through sea-drowned valleys.

Up top, cold wind whips  
your camera strap against the rail,  
a foil's flick, hankering to find  
a cap to roll along the deck,  
weightless and uncontainable,  
with joy a flame to flutter.

A mollymawk sits on a swell  
before the bow and glances back  
from beneath a black brow  
in time to take off—  
blades of wings stiffly extended,  
feet patting the tops of waves  
as if a shallow puddle.

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**Devin Johnston**'s most recent book is *Mosses and Lichens* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux).

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