

G E R R Y M C F A R L A N D

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## Gunner Thinks About Everything At Once

I toss the trash in a sealed plastic bag over the fantail to slowly sink,  
disintegrate in the salt, disburse the crumpled cargo scraps  
strewn across centuries with the bodies of sailors sunk with ships,  
or dropped into the sea in funeral sacks, litter at the bottom of the world

and 1000 tons of steel, aluminum, plastic, and glass goes on and on,  
gray and grim, turning and rolling in the wind, and the wind cuts  
white-capped scars on the face of the sea, and the bow rises and falls,  
slices water upward into a sheer arc that falls back into the great body

swirls into itself again, undiminished, unchanged. The USS *King*  
leaves no trace by the grace on the sea. A good day on the open sea,  
I look down or sideways to breathe, my work clothes stretch  
and flag against my body, and I lean into the wind,

one arm across my chest to keep my soul from blowing out of my body.  
We all know how the USS *King* can survive a bad day,  
how in a mood the heaving ocean rips the ladders from their welds  
like buttons on my dungarees, and we dog the hatches, hang on

to the white straps put there to be hung on to in ragged seas,  
to keep from being thrown to the tile floor green as the sea, our mouths  
move like swells, a tide, ignorant of the steel cable snapped from its bracket,  
unwound and shining over the side like a water snake in the Gulf.

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**GERRY MCFARLAND'S** poetry has appeared in: *Crab Creek Review*, *Crucible*, *Limestone*, *Meridian Anthology of Contemporary Poetry*, *Sanscrit*, *Zyzyva*, *Contemporary American Voices*, *Cider Press Review*, *Chautauqua*, *Salt Hill Press*, and, *forthcoming*, in *War, Literature, & the Arts*. His first full-length book of poems, *The Making*, will be released in 2018.