

Carousel

Matthew Ladd

The Pacific Ocean, to a child of three,
sounds like a push-broom in his mother's kitchen.
Life took us elsewhere: like other boys, I learned
to read, almost drowned in a neighbor's pool,
was bitten by insects, studied constellations.
Years later, in New York, I read Ibsen's *Ghosts*
and pictured myself as Oswald, rotting from syphilis,
my mother orbiting me like a hummingbird.

She came up to the city, once, and we visited
the terraced Guggenheim, the sober Frick,
and the Central Park carousel, with its unison
of open-mouthed horses. The unlucky ones
galloped stiffly along the edge. When it slowed,
we walked off holding hands like a married couple
but said little, because my brother had gotten sick.
She was so small. I could carry her, if I wanted.