

REFLECTING ON THE LIGHT

The Outer Barks adorn these Eastern shores:
A beaten golden necklace hangs beneath
Old Carolina lace on green moire,
Cape Hatteras the sculpted amulet.

It's here the nation's tallest lighthouse studs
The pendant— dulling jewel, creeping cracks
And crumbled mounting-- some say much too flawed
To polish back to brightness. Relocation
Risks are high the lofty stone would topple,

Dash its facets past repair, a waste.
Divided, preservationists debate:
Some advocate new jetties to protect
This antique gem from endless sea's attrition.

No expert I, just one whose family owes
Its life to that old pharos. We were lost
In Pamlico, rain picketing our boat;
The Sound was loud, its waves in argument,
My father's efforts worth no more than foam.

Then sightlessness was stabbed with sudden hope,
A brilliant shaft, a reaming of gray-white,
An eerie finger pointing us to port.
Each time it disappeared, eternity
Set in, but light returned, and so did we.

This landmark, literal and personal,
Like all its kind in lordly obsolescence,
May one day lose the fight while heritage
And history are weighed against the tide.

The price of sentiment is deemed too tall
By many. Automated tower lights
With radios are cheap. Loran, radar,
Satnav move sailors farther from their homes.

Reluctantly I leave this native heirloom,
Casting stares astern as I depart,
My wishes wrapped in opalescent mist.
Behind my wake that intermittent probe

Will mark my course through every troubled dream.