

## TEACHING

SAM SALERNO JR.

They shuffle in each morning,  
these children of the forest,  
with books, laptops, binders (the  
heavy oars of their labors)  
the sunlight of daybreak  
cresting over their faces.

When their eyes meet mine  
they smile and lower their glances  
as if I have caught them,  
immodestly hunched upon a thought  
a bit profane, perhaps,  
a bit too wild for the aging man in front of them.

They sit for the day's work:  
parts of speech, parts of a paragraph,  
pieces of the hearts I try to pick up  
scattered on the floor.  
We're going places, I tell them.  
There's an ocean bigger than the one down the street.

Kind grins, rolling eyes—a distrust of the figurative.  
I tell them a story of youthful sailors who couldn't hear  
the enticing songs that the helmsman tied to a mast would.  
They want lines, compasses, lands in sight;  
The world should make perfect sense.  
How can I tell them there are no maps for this sea?

## THE FISHERMAN

SAM SALERNO JR.

When the line taps lightly on the surface  
sending the rings  
pulsating outward  
the fisherman has a prize in mind.

He reels it in with the most  
beautifully tragic hands  
thick and brown,  
streaks of white scars  
to mark his moments on the ocean.

The gulls there are vigilant  
waiting for the battered, bleeding  
contents of the day's catch.  
Scales cross his hands and cross his mind.  
He's heard the feeling before;  
This darkness has a face.

The silver acrobat below  
knows no such music;  
it can only feel  
the weight of the line on its  
astonished mouth  
pulling it earthward  
toward a grave of sky and human expanse.

## THE MAN WITH THE METAL DETECTOR

JOHN LAUE

A curious phenomenon,  
this man in stifling clothes  
holding a metal detector low,  
sweeping it back and forth  
like a top-heavy wand.  
Notice how his eyes  
avoid the bathers  
as he weaves among them  
focusing on pockmarked sand.  
He might, perhaps,  
be the saddest man  
on the beach right now  
if it weren't for beeps  
from his bulky earphones.  
Oblivious to the sky,  
the crashing of the waves,  
the ocean's flashing lights  
he wanders up and down  
like a lost soul  
searching for a resting place.  
But there's no rest for him:  
even the bodies in lewd poses,  
gleaming with oil,  
bare as the law will allow  
don't alter his pace.  
He's a man possessed,  
drawn here irresistibly and kept  
by the magnetic force of metal.  
Don't moralize or chide him  
if you want to know his name;  
speak to him on carelessness,  
of lost and precious gold!

## AFTER THE STORM

PETER NEIL CARROLL

The ocean's done its heavy lifting,  
brought in the lumber and bottles,  
a ripped sailboat rudder,  
bottom of a bikini, the pink torso  
of a doll. Now come the detectives,  
picking driftwood, seashells, pebbles, kelp.  
This labor I know because two sturdy-backed glaziers  
puttied weatherproof panes in a diner near Half Moon Bay,  
revealing multitudinous coastal Californians  
at work: gray-coated, the gulls trawl for lunch,  
a hundred wheeler humpback hauls cargo  
down the old Pacific highway, no stopping at lights;  
white capped scrubbers beat against sand,  
pound the rhythm of a tectonic tune. Not an eye  
muscle relaxes. Work, work, I watch all day.