

M. F. Hershman

THE GULLS

the waves are not romance
rocking you rocking
the ship is only huge
metal-clad and knocking as
people sleep below

"good morning mr soloman" you say
an old man nods back
sick at his stomach
with sea salt smells

he scholar of God
closed doors no land
forced to stand in this air
of an ocean shifting about

"terrible terrible"

scarves and gulls flapping wings
over a dampened deck
an old man lurching
his body of twigs between rails

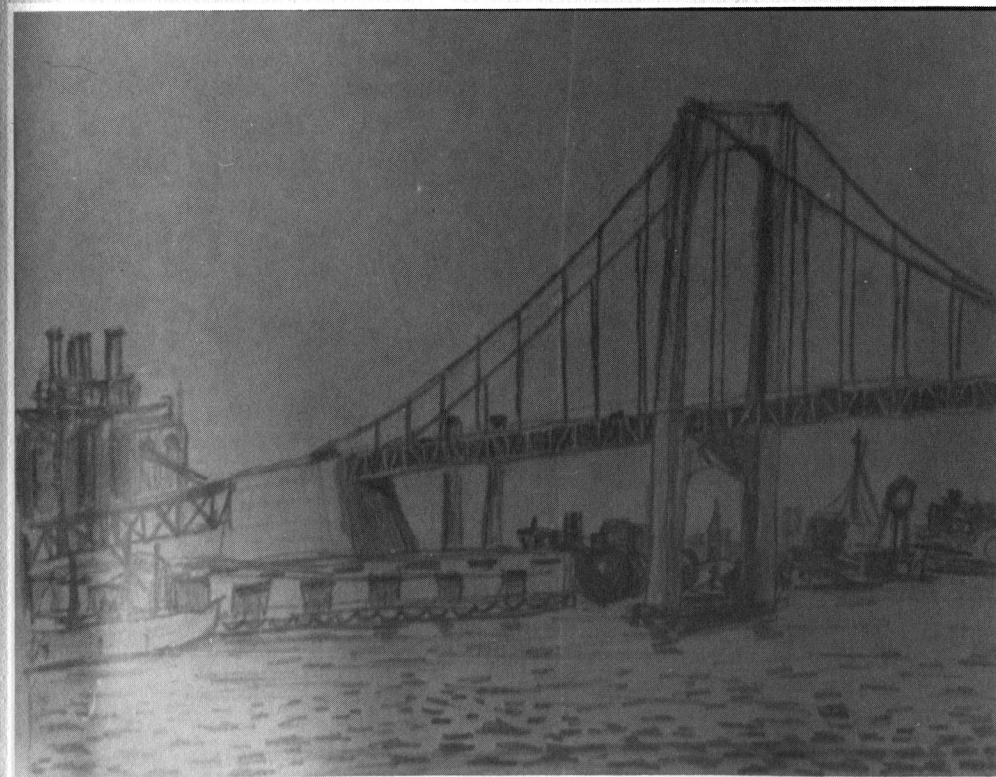
this is not what you imagined
unsteady movement toward land

dreams were things that
bled to make the dawn
a swollen ship now bobs
to the horizon

and you with your two twenty year legs
your one year button shoes
your own voice singing

hinta pollinta
keipcritze are
ei paprika

you the beauty without lice
(though sailors shaved everyone's head)
sing into air so salty
so sharply bright
one soaring feathered shape above
swerves shipward and soloman sees
the black unhuman eyes



John Farrell