## "The Y"

Unlike St. Peter who sank when he looked down, this guy's bend, pumping like mad, intent on keeping speed over the shifting ameobic shapes he probably can't see. He's probably not even thinking that besides the exercise bike, the hard floor, there's another reality pool water swirls on the plate glass.

But the gray-haired woman chuckling beside me sees it-how he pedals yet gets no closer to these eleven year olds lined up on the pool's edge, their gently emerging torsos and thighs. The guard eyes her collection of bags, and I'm trying to imagine myself ten years from now wandering in here Teusday before Thanksgiving watching children I have no connection to.

Why would a woman do this? Why would she get on a bus, let the road flatten everything behind her, then step off somewhere in Maine, one of those flat-roofed cinder block stations, enter a coffee shop and ask for the Y?

My mother used to ask why I collected such people. Why I had to think so much, couldn't stick to my job, why I had to ride my bike down to the piers to watch the water hypnotizing itself. She'd imagine my indigent, or married to a used car dealer who tampers with the mileage.

But maybe you can't roll back anything, you can't undo what was done to you and shouldn't even try. Maybe its all recycled pool water, past and future at the same time, and now is a shimmering lesson some kids find hard to trust, while others grow fluent as eels, expecting the waterto love them. Maybe we got worked up, Mother, over the wrong stuff.

Is it so unreasonable to want to sit in this steamy balcony watching the miraculous children hesitate and lunge? I want to ask what's in her bags-objects distilled from a dream it is urgen to keep wherever she goes?

Etiquette tells me, be quiet.
But she's kind enough to shake her head and
make the joke with me, how the man pedals nowhere so fast,
while we lean on the bleachers' stiff resilience,
among the echoes of children immersed in their schooling,
little parables of survival.