Paddle

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Abstract
We three women walked to the cove. Silver, the long light, swans drifting, pied cormorants on guard
PADDLE

We three women walked to the cove.
    Silver, the long light, swans drifting, pied cormorants on guard
and three gulls, restless
    as we tipped over the yellow rowboat stranded on the sea grass
its gathered leaves and rain
    water spilling in thin air.
Shoes under one arm and trousers rolled
we made our way back
we three, planting each foot
    on clear dry sandstone studded with sharp winkles –
look, here's a starfish! – and a flowering
    here red, here gold
of lichen
here a fan, here a broad charcoal heap and fire blister of rock
    and here a crinkling of white comb
fine as an abalone mushroom
and sinking to our knees on to deep rocks
    the clearer for being immersed
in that pure density and weight
more like the lees of the afternoon
    light, grey and leaf yellow
and autumn cold, than
water. By then the hull was a lemon shell among shells on the edge of trees glassed in shadow, and still one or other of the gulls was lifting off in a hush of feathers and red feet, to settle back down, fold and flourish of wing spray close by another who lifting, swept past, and so on in slow sequences of approach and veer, those same three keeping the space of water and air between them constant.