

MARK SVENVOLD  
FIRST PLACE

**Immigration Algorithm (Application Form D (3) b (1) a)**

It's time for the orienting lecture on regret—  
Emotion (so goes the talk) is like a futile ocean,  
like a seascape—gray rollers and frozen rain,  
for instance. The lecturer continues to separate  
the listeners from their longings, like sunlight  
drowned on the horizon by a darkened metaphor.

"So you're a doused wick, excuse the metaphor,"  
says the lecturer. "So there's nothing but regret.  
Deal with it." The crowd, silent but for sunlight  
ablaze through squalls above a clobbered ocean,  
sniffles, shuffles its feet. Someone, (separate  
from the rest), inquires about the sudden rain.

"Oh, that," shouts the guide in sleeting rain.  
"You'll find a way to deal with that in metaphor."  
The crowd dissolves along a path that separates  
"Then" from "Now," "New Hope" from "Damp Regret"—  
each like a place name above a somber ocean—  
each a town in a patch of tragic sunlight

with its own doomed calendar of civic sunlight:  
'Happiness Reinforcement Days,' 'Festivals of Rain,'  
and 'I'm OK w/Hades' signs along the ocean.  
Communities have banned the use of metaphor.  
On alternating Tuesdays we burn regret.  
Then, guys in hazmat suits collect & separate

the unburned stuff at a treatment plant kept separate  
from the population: there, would-be sunlight  
gets mixed with unburnt ashen pigments of regret.

We paint the sky with it. This insures the rain  
will always fall without the need for metaphor  
(and an unemployment rate at zero by the ocean).

Hell is not a place but a method: boil the ocean,  
it says. Let this application sift and separate  
tenor from vehicle, the trailer hitch of metaphor  
from how (and who) it moved in glinting sunlight.  
Please make an argument in praise of rain,  
it says. In the space below, explain regret.

Include support materials: sunlit ocean,  
rain qua rain, your five-year plan for metaphor,  
and, on a separate sheet, your first inkling of regret.