

This Craft

SAMPLER

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*Some photographers will exclaim, 'Oh! it was just like that.'  
True, but it was just some other way as well.*

PH Emerson, photographer (1856–1936)

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**The eye does not see as sharply as the photographic lens,  
for the eye has faults**

Because he is angry and his century is dying  
he has come to these difficult waters  
with his wildfowling guns and his brass-bound camera  
fitted with two spirit levels  
and Dallmeyer's long-focus lens.

For a year he lives on a boat that once carried cargoes of ice.  
The tortoise stove in his cabin spits with rage  
its red mouth a two-inch gape.

One day he sails fifteen miles tacking against northeast wind.  
For hours afterwards he wonders  
is this how birds see the world  
this slippage?

He photographs reeds etched onto a frozen fen  
trees floating on mist.

He searches for shadows and reflections  
expanses of missing  
what's unremembered.

In bright sun he shades the camera lens with his hat.

**Logbook: imperfect symmetrical curvature  
in most human eyes**

Impurities floating about  
mingled decision and indecision

The eye hunched in its dark workshop  
what to make of a switching wind

a lost driftway  
a hare caught in a looking glass

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## The difficulty with clouds

is their drifts and elisions.  
They slide out of the lens in the moment you begin to see  
how complications of stratus and cumulus  
fold shadow and shine through a river  
and the man and woman who stood on a bridge  
leaning their elbows on the parapet  
that summer afternoon.

The seeing takes too long.  
The picture had already changed shape.

He considers it surely then *an admissible dodge*  
to finick with damp tissue paper  
in the fabrication of clouds. A craft  
that will *with marvellous accuracy*  
*give a truer impression of the scene –*

in this case a woman who stands at an open gate  
under a sky compounded of blacklead and glue  
and bad weather coming on.

Of this you may be certain.

**Logbook: all week white light**

A bird's silent curve  
into the eye  
a speck in a field of sameness

The fishing town  
flashes high above the tide  
whirls around and around

Very strange

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