

# Long Paddock

**JONATHAN LEONARD**

*Trip to the ocean (formation of the erotic)*

In the four o'clock darkness we packed the house onto the train to the river; our mattresses, still warm from sleep, sit in bundles in the luggage carriage. Now we journey towards the coast.

For months I have anticipated a meeting with the ocean, imagined the nuance of its moods. The whispered calm. The swollen smack of fury. My father attempts description but his words are as blunt and unfaltering as railroad sleepers. Weak from a lack of sleep, I stave off nausea by considering whether the stars gaze upon the ocean with the same expression with which they consider my house.

When the train halts we load our possessions onto the boat that will take us down the river to the ocean. I am absorbed in the contour of land, water and sky. Through the hills virgin forests guarded us like stolid Araucanian warriors, now the river carries us towards our destination. I feel myself an estuary, stir of salt and current within.

How like the breasts of Dona Trinidad Candia Marverde the mountains are; the white sand of the riverbanks the supple thighs of my mother's American starlets. And my father's dark eyes, wide like a tide of lust searching for relief in an expanse as old as dawn that knows pain, that smooths away the footsteps of advance and demise without deference, gently ebb into the colour of night.

At last we reach the ocean. Never has the horizon been so distant; above it stars reach out to obscured depths of the universe.