

Open Letter to the Anchor

by Maya Dombroskie

not the spinelessness of the open ocean but from the stability of the docks at shore
is where i write to you now. the water laps beneath me, demanding my feet stay firmly planted
yet my mind is elsewhere, across the murky waters, my view is drawn back to the shore only by nausea–i
can't stomach losing more of our history, knowing little besides why the ship was boarded: instability.
was America the Great everything you thought it to be? this is an open letter to you:
to Poland, to the grandparents I never got to hold close, and to their son. can i unearth our culture again?
Rewind the clock, pull up the anchor.

differences in the waves are studied by a woman in black, she slumps down as the wood on the dock tears
at her back, few belongings piled nearby, the cross at her neck sways slightly as she leans forward to
squint at the deep water gaping just too far out of reach, taunting. he will be here, he will come
she chants, and imagines his body gliding through the water, sung home by desperate calls.
and she touches the drops of water on the deck and prays, the cross at her neck swings to the salty spray
and her hand glides along a swollen stomach, the anchor baby waits for continents to collide.
Rewind the clock, pull up the anchor.

smothered by an unclear future, father and mother speak in hushed tones: leaving would be hard, but
beginning again? so much harder. it's said they're absurd, traitorous, guilty of hope.
ignoring the whispers, father and mother steal away into the night, wrapped in an old knitted blanket, but
there was only space for one. the journey is not for them, it's for the son: so the mother steps aboard. this
goodbye is final, yet as the anchor rises, she sings a lilting tune. her son will know it by heart, forever
having an affinity for salt-covered rocks, with the journey on the Atlantic will calling him home. Fast-
forward the clock, set the anchor.

it's pierogies and babka and our name being mispronounced and the longing for that missing piece:
i see it in you, dad, as you carry the memory of a family and a nation you never knew,
a part of you lives across the ocean, with the home you left behind. you carry Poland itself, i see it in you.
one day, we went to the sea. I watched you climb towards the water, you sat on the lowest rocks as if to
search the water. you don't remember much, but when you sat me down by the water and sang me a
polka, i knew you'd lead me back home, that you sang the same song. dad, you're the anchor. *Pożyjemy,
zobaczymy*