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# VARNISHED

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There are motley barnacles on my past,  
jagged-edged,  
impossible to remove without a knife.

Every once in a while  
I think maybe they're gone, peeled  
away by salt water, diffused, diluted,  
but then I cut myself on them.

With time, and the sun, some have  
softened,  
their shapes more fluid, familiar,  
bearing the scent of rue rather than columbine.

I look to them for reminders  
of my own defects,  
as they were seen and as I saw,  
though which today I scarcely greet.

And despite repeated oaths  
my hand upraised against time,  
the unsettled shells  
cling to weathered thoughts.

If you then look away  
to finer lives and clearer minds, naught but  
to sun-bright memories,  
feel no shame.  
I am myself so  
varnished I sink  
with gravity.