

Daniel Slosberg

Santa Monica Pier

Down the concrete ramp, past
the singer who's buddy

shouts "gimme' a quarter so my
boyfriend'll shut up." Down

onto dank, oil-dense planks,
past the carousel, where frozen

horses forever follow the
mad music. Men entangled

in tuxedos and women wrapped
in mink gulp sauteed mushrooms

while a man outside plucks
crusts from a yellow garbage

can. Farther down, past
oysters on ice, corn dogs

and cotton candy, past
celebrity card-board cutouts,

catapult a rubber toad onto
a mechanical lily-pad and win

a stuffed frog prince. Down
past clouds of hot cinnamon,

an incendiary crowd, alcohol
on its breath, past Madame

Cecelia, spiritual consultant.
A jellyfish drifts by. A gull

harangues the mob. Farther down,
the pier widens into a phalanx of fishermen. A knife

slices a white croaker's skin and snaps its neck.
Cinnabar entrails smoulder, covered by flies with

lead eyes. Barbed hooks tear blindly at the air.
The pier a toppled skyscraper extending over

the continent's edge, penetrating and provoking
the sea; a plumb line into chaos, born

of smoke-belching pile-drivers, bulldozers,
and cement; its feet bound by the sea, her

white claws climbing upward through the night-
shrouded pilings to avenge the violation.