On the Journey

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On the Journey

... three trees on the low horizon
T.S. Eliot

This sheep-bladder,
in my goatskin satchel,
smells of wine and leather.
Dry. Empty.
I do not know the way.
My provisions are low, patience
at an ebb, but
there is something
about these three trees
low on the horizon —
these gnarled and bending sisters —
makes me feel a triad
guardian’s presence.
Their crooked branches beckon
with dry fingers,
suggesting the way.
Point out for me, sisters,
the reason —
why is it I on this road?
Am I not too old,
too cracked, as they say,
new wine in old skins?
I am well-journeyed
and jaded.
the lines on my face
sharp from wincing and weariness ...
my heels are stubborn,
the pads of my soles
no longer soft.
Why, when I spy you three,
do my eyes moisten?

I squint in the dazzling sun,
smell the ancient vintages
seeped into sinew,
sense the crush of grapes,
swallow hard.
I feel warmth slide down my throat
as though a goblet of blood
has been tipped just for me.

Kate Marshall Flaherty