

Late Breaking News

We're in Wally's Renault, driving
south in Provence, the car radio
harvesting disaster, swaths of it,

and the fields bloody with tulips,
a brash statement stretching
to the low hills of the Luberon.

Later, in the hilltop fortress
with its catapult and trebuchet,
I ask my friend what happened

to monks, to sanctuary, places
where little pain sears the weary
breastbone, where envy's rare

as gourmet meals, where even
the spirited horse, grown
accustomed to lassitude, nudges

the pitchfork's worn handle until
hay falls like manna from the loft,
and where prayers are crafted

in lieu of weapons. Eternity
is long, Pascal has written, so
faith is worth the gamble.

The soul sets sail for a distant
port. Tears mark its departure,
but what marks its arrival?

Planks resound with footsteps,
deep water parts to accommodate
the insistent keel. Wally, amused,

dismisses these speculations,
insists there's romance
in neither monastery nor rose.

Solace, perhaps, though skimpy,
and only in what the moving pen
inscribes or the stiff horse-hairs

of the brush render permanent
and lovely, those moments, all
too brief, when the anchor holds

and the sea blooms resplendent
with all manner of kelp and with the
scrubbed tulip faces of the dead.

GARY GEDDES