Claudia K. Grinnell

From Now On

For Richard

It will all be true: the birth
of the compass: imagine:
China, 2000 years ago.

A sailor watches as men
throw an iron rock on the floor.
Without fail

it points toward a certain star,
a certain north. Soon all ships
of the Chinese fleet possess this magic

rock: if you look long and hard
enough, you will notice
that there are no miracles

on which faith is predicated,
you will notice
that the world cradles in its stone

another stone that no one has
yet unearthed.

Stabat Mater

At the cross her vigil keeping,
stood the mournful mother weeping... 

Her tears, his blood: a monk
in his cell celebrating
his solitary struggle—nails
in his flesh, her lips searching
for his. He is thin,
even his heartbeat is visible
under the arched ribcage.
Her hands find no resistance.
The head so deeply bowed,  
yet too far for her  
kiss: she kisses him  
where his feet  
have turned crimson.  
Yet his skin, his skin  
remembers, answers in notes,  
extracts from love  
an echo.