

Through the Looking-Glass

*Echoes live in memory yet
Though envious years would say forget.
—Lewis Carroll. Prologue, 1871*

Draped in aqua blue, all imagination
and touch, Pierre-Auguste Renoir's
Young Woman Arranging Her Earring
is uninterested in what a mirror might
tell her –there is none in the painting,
maybe none in the room. She is either
putting the earring on, her eyes closed
as if anticipating a kiss, or aligning
it with a pink rose tucked behind her ear.

My eyes open, I avoid mirrors, don't
want to know how I look but can't stop
myself when passing sun-blackened
windows. Ignoring my reflection is
like burying wreckage of a rowboat
in sand in order to imagine life
it must have led, the fish it held while
seaworthy. Memory like water
forever tries to get back to where it was;
the Mississippi River was straightened
to make room for houses but it still floods
them. Renoir's woman sure of her beauty,
youth, didn't think about them, didn't try
to reach into the past hoping its glory will
emerge before surrendering to darkness.