

MAUREEN HYNES

ARS POETICA, FILM NOIR VERSION

You book yourself into the Terminus Hotel,
three days' journey by ship and rail.

You borrow Magdalena's satin dressing gown,
she offers a gardenia which you wear

on your wrist like a fragrant watch.

You stand at the ship's railing while bystanders,
the buildings, the shoreline disappear.

A bearded young man behind you

is singing a ballad in Esperanto—
beautiful, almost intelligible.

You have packed letters and poems and
the book about lesser known women artists,

a single feather and the eucalyptus pod twisted from its branch.

Before your destination, all must be incinerated
in the ship's furnace: the words, the song,
the gardenia, even the gown—fuel to carry you forward.