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Ballade of an Artificial Satellite

"Thence they sailed far to the southward along the land, and came to a ness; the land lay upon the right; there were long and sandy strands. They rowed to land, and found there upon the ness the keel of a ship, and called the place Keelness, and the strands they called Wonderstrands for it took long to sail by them."

—*Thorfinn Karlsefni's voyage to Vinland*

One inland summer I walked through rye,
a wind at my heels that smelled of rain
and harried white clouds through a whistling sky
where the great sun stalked and shook his mane
and roared so brightly across the grain
it burned and shimmered like alien sands.—
Ten years old, I saw down a lane
the thunderous light on Wonderstrands.

In ages before the world ran dry,
what might the mapless not contain?
Atlantis gleamed like a dream to die,
Avalon lay under faerie reign,
Cibola guarded a golden plain,
Tir-nan-Og was fair-locked Fand's
sober men saw from a gull's-road wain
the thunderous light on Wonderstrands.

Such changing countries in cloudland lie;
but men grew weary and they grew sane
and they grew grown—and so did I—
and knew Tartessus was only Spain.
No galleons call at Taprobane
(Ceylon, with English); no queenly hands
wear gold from Punt; nor sees the Dane
the thunderous light on Wonderstrands.

Ahoy, Prince Andros Horizon's-bane!
They always wait, the elven lands.
An evening planet gives again
the thunderous light on Wonderstrands.

POUL ANDERSON