

EINSTEIN SAILING; A PHOTOGRAPH

Einstein loved to sail in skiffs
but couldn't swim; imagine
tending to him in Zurich's lakes.
You'd stand on the shore
in this picture, dated 1931
and watch his mighty brain gybe
the boom inadvertently across
his chest and forehead.
Who's to blame if
he's knocked into the water?
Are you a spy for Heisenberg
or an ally of Niels Bohr?
Do you jump in to pull his bow
around or let nature take control?
That would be *his* way,
why he thought wind and sail
a perfect type of physics,
blind to arithmetic.
But you're too practical for him,
your socks match and you can swim,
so you jump from the dock
hoping to save a century's worth
of infatuation and hit your head
on a stone disguised as a turtle.
It smarts, the pain
and your throbbing ego says "enough,
I'll let him drown and be proud
I tried". But the dark skies open,
the wind dies and Einstein returns
to the dock, jauntily turning his tiller,
his brown fedora cocked on his head.
"I so enjoyed the scare", he says,
dripping on your shoes, not knowing,
the real fear arrives next year.

—Michael Salcman
music by Lorraine Whittlesey