

## RUO LI

*California Autumn, 2009*  
oil on canvas, 33 x 22 in



courtesy: the artist

## ALAN FELDMAN

### The Light

I'm dealing with a chain of probabilities  
only, coasting across the bay at night  
under the swaying stars. I check the compass  
regularly, but there's no way to know  
if I can beat the current rounding the point.  
I'll have to let the boat tell me  
when I get there, and trust to experience  
or luck. It's exciting, but also relaxing  
not to know. I'm practicing trust  
in myself and my Bermuda sloop,  
especially since I can't know anyway  
if the cloud that begins to blot the stars  
might be fog, or a storm, or else  
just a bit of haziness. Not all voyages  
need the stars for navigation,  
but I'm practicing trust in the heavens, too,  
or at least a neutral attitude  
about disaster, assuming the stars  
favor me just as often as they don't,  
assuming the buoy guarding the reef  
should be two points to starboard ...  
and yes!—I can see the light flashing  
one second out of every four, as the chart  
predicts, though I'm still amazed  
to see it waiting out there for me  
in such thick darkness, just to the lee  
of the island where decades ago pure  
chance led me to make my home.

**Alan Feldman** is the author of two prize-winning collections: *The Happy Genius* (SUN, 1978) which won the Elliston Book Award for the year's best book of poems published by a small, independent press in the United States; and *A Sail to Great Island* (University of Wisconsin, 2004) which won the Pollak Prize for poetry. He has new poems forthcoming in *Arroyo*, *Ploughshares*, *Southern Review*, and *Yale Review*. Throughout the summer he sails a double-keeled Westerly on Cape Cod and Buzzards Bay.