IV

Memo: To the Assembled Company

Up and down the river, in weather foul or fair,
in a keelboat, in canoes, westward to the ocean—
Did I mention we’ll be rowing there?

Rowing, pushing, hauling from the shore,
in brush and biting flies, like plodding oxen,
up and down the river, in weather foul or fair?

Did I say that we’ll be famous, we’ll get a share
of land, of women, a book deal, a movie option?
Did I mention we’ll be rowing there

a quarter ton of lead and rifle powder,
flags, whiskey, a pair of mounted cannon
up and down the river, in weather foul or fair?

And for the locals, Dr. Rush’s questionnaire:
*When do you dine? What about baths? Depression?*
*Your oracles—Did they mention we’d be rowing here?*

Do we seem to bristle? Excuse us—for we’re
a blessed, bristling nation. Please excuse the renovation
up and down the river, in weather foul or fair.
—Did I mention we’d be rowing there?