

## *Grunt*

*'Well...tell you what. Curley's like a lot of little guys. He hates big guys. He's all the time picking scraps with big guys. Kind of like he's mad at 'em because he ain't a big guy. You seen little guys like that, ain't you? Always scrappy?'*

John Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men*

Your foot shy of the rowing machine's baggy loop left by Babe Ruth;  
his feet twice the length, three times the width,  
that big toe, the left one, an embarrassment.  
He was Six-two, weighed two hundred and fifteen pounds;  
his length of arms have reached around you twice.  
What he had in body, though, you make up for in subtlety,  
in charisma, in wit and in charm, you think,  
even though a hundred pounds lighter, even though five-eight;  
when you row you grunt, as if to inhabit one bigger,  
as if the bigger grunt might propel you like a sail.

It goes on, the war between big and littler men.  
*Okay*, you say. The ghost goes through its work-out.  
For its every long pull on the oar – from shin-bone to waist –  
you have to pull five or more to keep up with the pace.