

THE ARRIS

by

AZIZA LUCIA AKDENIZ

A THESIS

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~~Garrett Hongo~~, Chair of the Examining Committee

20 August 2010  
Date

Committee in Charge: Garrett Hongo, Chair

Accepted by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Dean of the Graduate School



CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Aziza Lucia Akdeniz

PLACE OF BIRTH: Istanbul, Turkey

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

University of Oregon

University of Colorado

New York University

DEGREES AWARDED:

Master of Fine Arts, Creative Writing, 2010, University of Oregon

Master of Arts, English Literature, June 2008, University of Colorado

Bachelor of Fine Arts, Film, June 1995, New York University

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

Poetry

English Literature and Film Studies

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Instructor, Graduate Teaching Fellow, University of Oregon, 2009-2010

Instructor, University of Colorado, 2004-2008

GRANTS, AWARDS AND HONORS:

Karen Ford Award in Poetry, University of Oregon, June 2010

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For my father who gave me my name, the Mediterranean,  
for my mother who showed me the place to moor,  
and for Jason who went with me.

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## THE ARRIS

Above the palazzo is a wheeling of pigeons;  
shadows from their wings fall on gelato vendors and tourists  
(southern natives so like the Turks, so unlike.)  
Imagining I am back over my father's shoulders  
his mustache against my cheek, when gelato was nothing more  
and my father himself the hum and drone of the palazzo.  
Undulating with the wind, the birds are loudest, their language wildly thrown  
as we return to our flat overlooking the palazzo.  
The concierge greets me birdlike, an echo of his chickens running in the courtyard:  
*Bella Donna, Bella Donna.*



All these phantoms I have salvaged  
to practice against the art of forgetting.  
I sit under the arris of an ancient dome,  
watch the rain streak the colonnades  
as uninvited guests build again from reflections thrown to the ground,  
returning me to that lovely error of grieving and remembering,  
  
as I imagine myself back; imbroglios seeping  
through the walls, covering the mosaic floors of an apartment  
overlooking a palazzo  
that is nothing more than words.

*Oh, Bella Donna.*

It was my mother he was sweet on.

*Your mother is so lovely dear,*

said the clucking concierge.

And so I realize now why errors make rich  
the destitution of experience;

how a child tumbled from monumental shoulders  
and vanished into the fountain when birds sang wildly,  
their throats weaving a maze of this memory  
word by word--Babel's fallen tower.

I understood nothing of that tragedy. Following the tunes that coo the rise  
and fall of empires, over my father's shoulders,  
now a dust of words like *imbroglio*, *gelato*—  
that is past, nothing more.

The pigeons fly overhead  
having come from round the ruins of a tower,  
their feathers in patterns arranged, I gather,  
as directions of a guidebook laid open in my lap.

## THE AVIARY

Rather a shot fired in his study one night  
than what took him, dulled without rage in mourning.

In the empty house, gentle

silence anchored in a vase  
on his desk. The birds of paradise,  
quiet for weeks thereafter,

but finally torn to shrill pieces  
whistling through every room, every hallway,  
calling past the vineyard toward what flew beyond the fences.

Although, when they came with the first echo,  
the arriving birds in the empty house,  
emptiness grew sharper.

Birds arrived in threes and fours  
as we stood naked: we had nothing to wear,

so what came from their wings  
touched every part of our bodies, hair to toes.

Each part mattered, each part tried.  
But we grew thin; there was food  
but not what we wanted to eat.

And what did we want? Salt and cream with caviar?  
Chandeliers, antique furniture, my mother's  
wedding ring with diamonds bearing  
down, suitcases from around the world, emptied?

In the aviary we coveted  
the birds until the wind came twice

and the wind came fierce  
raging through the study, wild  
caged around them, shaking chandeliers;

yet the doors off hinges and curtains freed  
from the windows reflected our bodies  
bent awry of all that had been.

We had been heavy with hunger,  
for shadows on the walls and floors,  
for the bones and feathers of the flying birds,  
for the evening songs of flowers anchored in a vase--

In the aviary our father disappears with no sound  
and the smoke of his last Cuban rages to ashes  
all the continents we have known.

And when we wake, the startling mute sounds:

birds fleeing the smoke of dawn,  
night folding like wilted vines,  
and shadows emptying beyond.

## AFTER THE BLUE MOSQUE

Consider the place no longer there.

Consider we need not reach that end.

So let the Blue Mosque fade.

Let the funeral call fade, its wails like the birds of Jove.

You must remember still, not far was an old hotel

and we sat in the lobby, sisters.

I played Cassandra, reading your fortune in the bottom of a cup.

It was grand, I revealed, you will travel far, find

the inviolable answers between dusk and dawn

on widening streets of an empire worn and crumbling.

You should not have believed everything I said:

that there was a purpose to our being there,

that our father had found a cure for his madness.

There was none. An impossibility of returning

to an origin betrayed--for it made him feel ashamed.  
There was no atonement but to accept the spite  
and all the weight of that city forsaken. He was led  
eventually to a tomb at the heart of a maze of cobblestones.

Time has passed since he began to fade  
among the blue and copper lights of devotion's palace there,  
a place we have only dreamed of returning. And why,  
I want to ask, have we been marked by these hollow chambers  
holding in the promises of the dead, to whom we are merely past?

There was a tomb at the bottom of the Bosphorus  
that we named the Blue Mosque.  
You have tried to reach it in the night,  
traveling far lighter than you ever could awake.  
You have soared above the evening city



to watch the sun shake copper from its hair,  
to wait again for the blue lights of night signaling  
the final dirge, which will echo rites for all the living.

But no rite will teach us how to thrive,  
or chart the route of our future ascension  
from this passage embalmed in our memories,  
a reversion, a less than inviolate devotion.  
Easy to have loved the blue that neither speaks nor breathes;  
it was splendid as light covering the starts of shadows.

The Blue Mosque is not the last memory lapsing among memories.  
So if you must, remember.  
Pause for a moment by those walls. They are only a bouquet of flowers,  
fading. See here, up close, they are pitted with time. The words carved in them  
can scarcely be discerned.

## FOR BEAUTY

reveals never more than this,  
that the living soul desires

the bare bones clothed--for beauty is  
the law of the ever thickening skin

*(see the gravely wounded hand  
with its scars reaching*

*see the birds perched on the lawn  
composing evening songs*

*their voices lift sufficiently  
to graze against the gloaming sky*

*is it then the process of composition?  
is it then the process of cartography?*

*maps that better knowledge, inch by inch  
measure by measure to consciousness, knowing*

*as hard as bone, brutal as blood  
and higher than they raise their songs, these birds*

*of feather and of flesh,  
for the commencement of flight*

*to the tips of the tallest pines  
with the map that is their bodies*

*like bones and throats tracing  
the tendril pathways of their hearts*

*mimicking the patterns of the pines  
from needles to laden branches);*

here, then, is the cartography of wounds--  
cartography of the soul's making song

hear, then, the sounds of affliction, the innocence  
of waking to the mark of song-making--

scars on toughened skin, lovely as sky,  
everlasting as a damaged map of flight.

## ERRANCY

*For Simon,  
and for my father.*

Wading past the silver fog settling on Lake Van,  
a child watches mullet, pearl-colored from spring  
until the end of summer. They drift past the goats and horses,  
cranes and doves,  
wooden, stone and glass,  
the manifest of Noah's Ark—  
its grave lies on a nearby mountain.

He sees them float and bob,  
having abandoned his toys for something larger  
that will surely come from watching

these tiny things give in to gravity,  
their refusal to swim upstream.

Fish glide with round eyes never closing,  
like the tiger, most ferocious, the boy's favorite,  
with an eye as luminous as a haloed moon,  
supernatural green, jade orb plucked  
from a lonely earring and fastened to the tiger  
with glue

come loose in the water, suddenly  
pelted by streams of late summer rain, torrential.  
A tiny maelstrom is born, hollowed and spiraled  
like a nautilus shell of chambers  
where the Ark suffers the push and pull of crossing currents,  
the fall and rise of air and water, a knifelike hissing wind.  
The amorphous pulled glowing into shape like molten glass,  
a solid and useless thing  
in the form of a greater Ark or a whale's belly.

His error: thinking Noah and Jonah the same,  
wooden Ark and a stomach flesh and tender.  
Wondering, who is punished, who is blessed  
when the two are conjoined?  
From what grace, afloat for forty days and forty nights?  
For what reprisal, emerging unscathed, from darkness  
into light, granted a second chance at significance?

The child tries to rescue animals from the water;  
two horses, a dove, a goat,  
and a pair of whales,  
all moving toward the middle of the lake  
as the sun trails behind the clouds  
like mounds of soiled linens  
or gauze pressed to open wounds in the sky.

The rain thins.

Mount Ararat reaches across the horizon from Turkey to Armenia

and majestic echo-horns throw gun sounds

of soldiers at their drills.

Yet none startles the boy--

it is the bark of the dog, sharp and then unceasing,

vexing him to lift a glass German Shepherd

to the stony surface of Lake Van.

The dog disappears inside a shaft of light

that has pierced through heaps

of clouds washed clean, passing clarity,

which is truth, which is beauty.

Now he lays the salvaged pieces in the grass,

the big and the small, menagerie of inconsonance,



wooden, stone and glass, rabbits dwarfing  
the tiger, the tiger eye to eye with a rat.  
He knows it is enough that he has sacrificed nearly all  
the passengers of the Ark. These are his least favorite pieces;  
those and the fierce cat, set out to dry on the bank, almost as passive  
as the blue pinned over the firmament--

and held in its hollow is the sun that blinds the child  
to all the Ark's children left drowning in Lake Van.

## MEDITATION FROM A GLASS HOUSE

These pale swallowtails, wings embossed  
with bordered veins of cream and burgundy  
enter from the morning to evening--  
in twilight they are captured and released,  
fleeing from my hands when the doors  
of the greenhouse close.

Tonight, only four have escaped;  
all others on the ground expired,  
bodies perfect, felt and paper--

and should I say I wondered then  
how the wind remained unaware,  
turning these fragile creatures,  
the beauty of the evening unchanged  
while indifferent crickets chorused?

And that I was moved  
to a quiet kind of grief  
touching their wings, open as if  
in flight, eleven beautiful bodies  
I regarded in sorrow and in wonder?

I will confess. There is relief in knowing  
I am the one each morning who opens  
the door of the glass and wooden box  
that holds in wild color, palettes of greens,  
peas in their casings, hanging loose,  
no guilt, but the bordeaux and gold  
of wings and rounds of tomatoes—  
a pharaoh's tomb: beds made rich by a life  
that commands and accumulates. I am thinking  
of that which I demand from this soil,  
remembering all that remains to be asked  
and how, roots planted, I grow human from asking.

## THE NAUTILUS

There are acres of echoes outside, peacocks and wild pheasants,  
too many to distinguish, cries overlapping in continuous measure  
from one end of this land, bounded by a river, to the other,  
bordering a highway that runs where my name denotes, eastward.

Inside my small house and its narrow hallways, I hold a nautilus to my ear.  
Only the waters retreating and retreating to the source of their first echo,  
my mind moving with them to other rooms that coil inward, lit by artificial fires.  
Soft, I grow small in the shell's powdery glow, hear only a glass lamp's crackling  
in flats drawn steadily closer and darker than any of my London sublets,  
or those other places unwelcoming to easeful contemplation.

After years of exploring, there are rooms yet undiscovered. Their replicate I often build of paper  
and of light, and all their dreams' work startles,  
their double a lodge in this forest of thirty acres, blue-green with a crack at intervals  
where the sky falls through, bearing along the wind's salty vestige.

I drown in its nearness, the South Atlantic and the North Pacific, soaked one within the other.  
Promiscuous meetings against the thick of dark air and moonlight: the oceans are inseparable.

...and once I stood upon Bird Island's castle, shivering, such splendor,  
the Aegean undivided from my name!

The ocean's radiance is that from which I have become estranged; its mark of intoxicating sting.  
My return still a dream of careless remembrance, bereft as any travelogue,  
notes of Berlin and Seoul to Tel-Aviv or Antalya by way of the White Sea where I was born.  
This catalogue as names on paper maps bleeding into a river; a name river  
that must surely drown in the place where it meets its Pacific.

Brilliant sounds have beckoned me all winter: to a place that is elsewhere,  
always a trace here, but out of reach, what it means and from whence it comes--  
and leaves a score upon this land: full music of the echoes marking like an hour hand,  
like the point of any needle that is also a magnet--

Instinct is shaped like the nautilus shell, the echoes of continents  
and watersheds are held in its hollow, delirious life washing the length  
of its segmented corridors. Follow the ash trail that leads to a fire kept warm  
in every room for my return, the embers familiar as a token  
or a secret upon my person, leaving quiet notes and small scars of soot  
that shadow dreams in other rooms of other places, the never-were regions  
in nowhere nations not to be found on my broken globe,  
cosmopolitan wonder that would pivot to the place  
I began, into the tides of the oceans  
trapped within the endless spirals  
of a chambered  
and nested  
body.

## AND I TASTED AND I SAW

*(after Denise Levertov)*

Despite the rain striking  
dusty windows,  
I saw  
thirteen wild turkeys gathered  
in a circle  
against the fence which overlooks  
the wider pasture.

And I tasted  
words gathered with  
no skilled hands:  
*chewed*  
and my *world* into

that which may pass for

or prove

my *life*.

They sank deep into my guts, toward

the *tongue* of my *imagination*, hungry

to swallow both long and short syllables,

bitter still and green.

Each one reverberated a cold promise to

compress the distance between the wild

birds and me

who wanted to stretch *feathers*,

*beaks* and

*barnyard*

into a net wide enough to cast around

and catch

*grief, joy* as tangible

as fruit, even my *name*.



The kernels that lie scattered in the barnyard  
the birds plucked with their beaks,  
until one, perhaps the most impatient, shook  
her feathers and flew over the fence  
to the wider field beyond.  
The others followed, singly  
and in twos.

But the last, perhaps the most needed one  
remains still in my field of vision  
with her feathers unshaken:  
*hungry*, still pecking  
my *name*.

A THOUGHT ON SOLITUDE

An empty hour spent in the field

of Angel-wings and Ash

will surely be enough to be--

as I watch the guided summer wind

arrested between swaying tips of tassels,

the quiet undulation of dancers

who know to sway that way forever,

forever being an empty hour

filling with this emptying field.

As the field vacates to solitude  
between the rustling of the silence  
and the trembling of the summer will  
that'll have its way with anyone  
with heart to know an hour's answer;  
I become this hour's summer lives:  
  
now the Brown and Spider Violin,  
the sleeping dogs and the hiding fox,  
the rustling Wings and silver Ash

the wind, and the grass over broken rocks;

finding I have always been this hour in the hungry

stop between the silence and the solitude.

*for G.H*

## ARRIVAL

My mother and I are in an all-night vigil,  
suspended above the alter and hanging  
by voices that will not lead us down, without falling--  
nor lend us wings to a gentle landing

as snow beyond the atmosphere of the cold night choir,  
as we follow the strain of the siren carrying my sister,  
will stay suspended only in the hour of my making:

over the road before us the color of frost,  
opaque as a thought, which will never find its mark,  
although the road marked with the spinning red  
of sirens call us to follow, a funeral song  
brushing against the window of our car, quietly--  
It can only be a night this beautiful in remembrance.

Her face was white and her hair was black,  
and I think, at fourteen, her head was  
nearly shaved, what was left dyed white,  
downey as feathers of baby birds,  
blue rings around her faded eyes. I see  
she could have passed for nearly dead.

So, too, my father with eyes a faded blue  
who caught her smoking heroin and listening  
to the music of skinheads, my father who struck her  
for the first and last time, my father who wanted to burn  
her clothes and shoes and books in a bonfire.

I recall the open fields of our four acres, Long Island.  
Although it seems a fire could not have raged long  
through that evening's blizzard--  
the ashes of half-burned objects  
mere reminders for my mother now

who then had packed together what remained,  
took us to Seoul, my sister's nose forced to heal  
in another continent. An early winter that year,  
and we were never together in a room again,  
until he was dead in a casket bound for the Aegean, ashes  
to be scattered over the lemon groves of his motherland.

So it is a winter scape I place us in, burning  
before in the glow of midnight, before the choir fades,  
when snow is suspended still in the air, small birds  
treading and weaving through and through,  
never resting on either land or crest.

Yet this evening I touch the arrival of what was marked.

Snow. The weight of it against me now--like feathers, like breath.

YET WE MUST STILL BREATHE

*See the old man walking from the distance*

*towards her, the child walking her dog*

*up a hill, frozen*

into this moment tightening like a ball

in my hand that will not open

to expansion

will not inhale these oxygens

of tiny lives

stretched into a life

worth marking



*she runs through the fall air to see him,*

*the dog moves in unison--*

*breathless--a fall*

to exhale--it will not expand--

inhale the oxygen

already blown in--

I have only imagined

that excitement, that life--yet it happened:

*the hills bright with no coaxing the fall*

*air like the perpetual longing*

*for the in-between--*

neither life nor death, where he and I still exist,

I, that girl (was it really me?); He and his winter,

perpetually staved, summer an internal threat,

immaterial, seesawing between the girl and me

but could it be, those imagined lives are made significant, thus only

this poetry made into that paradise of fall, of never winter, never summer;

the fall like a spring towards words of such internal significance:

*she runs towards the old man growing older with each*

*failure to expand this syntax to its exterior climax--*

to its rising up like a hot air balloon in the air, which they watch, expanding into  
my world and into yours--contracting

their breathing, all the more labored,

a crisis of this scene refusing to rise

refusing to lift--

Yet can we not imagine,

he took her to school, held her hand growing larger in his hand, growing older,

and that now her thin thin legs runs round where he stood rooted, still,

with the dog cannot run with the girl who tries to make this moment significant,

now beyond the past flowing

like the air flowing,

flowing out of their tiny lives

as the breathing ends like this:

a failure to expand the moment into a way of life understood.

## ALAHA

*And how should I console myself? Maimonides: Moshe ben Maimon*

The taste of salt that is thirst. Do not visualize,  
 this to which I submit, for I must crave the taste,  
 what is left on on my tongue, all that I can't see,  
 the other of thick and sweet. Can we not call this divinity?  
 A womb of salt: remember who told me, the mal lak, the angelos, how we all  
 crawled from its liquid sphere, an incomplete world: Oh angels, remember the taste  
 of blood on my lips and the absence of tears, although I cried

when baptized in nests of lace, three faiths battling  
 for the first taste of the first hour, of my flesh.  
 Now, I sprinkle faith on my food, five times each day, keep trinity  
 preserved on my person: my face and heart, and both shoulders shuddering--  
 Now the hunger scratching my throat. I have never cried, not for loss  
 but for absence, a craving sharp and constant.

In expectation we taste perfection, what is  
beyond us, never in the spaces marking hours of sleep, untroubled,  
neither in anger nor in love, what is within us,  
never when gliding among continents or oceans, in pilgrimages  
unceasing through nations, to be nearer a pillar of salt that can't remain  
in the same place for long; and it is that pillar we are  
all looking for to cure our lives,  
to preserve the seasons of our thoughts  
that beautify those signs, which prove our flanks and joints  
exist, as we insist on an abundant force to save us  
from disastrous seasons, the lean seasons, the famines and the floods  
that would stink our flesh.

But it is not perfection we want,  
for is there not something better made when we are inconsolable,  
when we begin to putrefy?  
Is it not desire for what we do not know we desire?  
A tomb of salt, frozen though it seems with its billowing waves  
still to be moving through time, we cannot catch, is not.

I salt all my tender losses, gladly, pain  
intensified then, relish that slip carried

along the motionless tide as coming, in perpetualis, in sprays of quartz;  
but it is the black taste of existence, I crave,  
transparent rocks turned opaque with wear. Throw rubble upon that same  
corroding mass to call it "Devil," not "God," and gash open  
one another's cheeks, wounds deepening  
from worship, and from worship  
of what we cannot name, releasing a drive to erode  
our lives, for this:  
our flesh laid open against collars of salt,  
what provokes to wake, and wake us with a hunger and thirst,  
which comes to break that hunger.  
In our stomach something like  
guilt for succumbing to what we do not know, what  
we cannot name.

Only the thirst inside the sea

riding us toward fresh water, to mountains of springs, hastening all our diasporas.

It may move us, scatter us like grains of sand, but may also trade in

salt for decay, divinity wet with mold, and refuse

to spare us from the symptoms of raw disaster,

leave lesions on the soil of our private and chosen fields, nations

upon which we will have observed solemnly all the promises

we made both in violence and in tranquility to search for the open tomb

to preserve, as if our own bodies, solid and perfect, that taste trembling

on our tongues to the last hour:

and will we marvel then, when we begin to decay, as we will,

how the God of salt could have failed; and how then,

how then will we console ourselves?



THERE IS A TEMPLE

crumbling from neglect,

filling with narcotic echos of prayers long misunderstood,

a place overlooking the Aegean,

soothe our minds with small things, within,

filo dough stretched thin on wooden blocks scarred

by copper utensils, annointed with labor, these things

making such labor worthwhile: scratches on tables,

signs of the day and the night; the rhythms I take

from the people of this world,

the whole of the Aegean turned to air;

a kitchen crumbled into the landscape, scars thickening with mirage--

Which comes again and again, when

watching the water, these reflections,

large, unbroken, and immediate,

the Aegean, lush and foolish,

the waves of her like halo,

like wings of salt whipping and splitting my skin.

She wills I taste all this,

beyond those ouzo and raki waves,

and I am indebted to her hands, stretching my skin to remembrance

so I taste again those moments of water

and flour, salt and hand, turn to Diana's artificial satellite,

airy and transcendent, filo dough made in a kitchen,

while windows reflect the simmering of the Aegean,

as people of this world had taught me, to hear the rhythm of the hunt,

hooves of the stags beating on the flat roof above the kitchen

windows wide enough to see the death and rose scented August air--

And yet I still doubt it happened at all, that hunt or any other.

I am surely drunk.

Air has no texture, no nerve, no being,

no will to turn water and flour to matter, my mirage

to body and skin moving toward waves of nerve after nerve.

But they *are* watching the fireflies lighting archways of the open windows,  
my father and his mother and all those I taste on my tongue,  
watching me pull their matter to airy lightness, translucent and useless,  
unable to cover anything with gravity, but urging us  
still to pull them thinner and thinner, to turn matter  
into essence, while my grandmother pours into my ears her ouzo.  
I hear the language of water, see what they see, responsible  
for the corpses washed ashore: oily patches of what once lived  
speaking matters of blood and bones and heart and bile;

of lives dismembered to echoes of prayers. She makes prey of us all

telling us no longer to pray, even as she leads

us to places cold with neglect, death interrupted by our living,

our wandering far from here, disintegrating our memory to rose scented salt--

water evaporated from waves of her halo

leaving grains I hold now in my hand, as their pricks

interrupt scars from thickening over wounds,

punctures deep enough to trace healing

and warm the blood from congealing.

## CARTOGRAPHY

Europe,

    Asia,

etched in the belly of the fish,  
antique map of beasts and gods on all  
four corners of its flesh. I traced,  
but loved more the depth  
of its ineffable world, infallible  
the internal logic of its external goal:  
to grasp the total universe of hours  
and minutes clinging on grids like nets sewn  
large, cast wide,  
by people  
    erased from this map,  
where Poseidon ruled.

He marked my days,

Poseidon riding a monster, carved on the handle

of an antique knife with precision, mathematic equal  
to the god I see in the belly of this fish,

the one I had watched  
scraped to the bone, skin that clung like wet lace  
to flesh.

Ancient god on flesh and wound, the rank of iron  
from tissues, fragile,

how soon forgotten, had it not bled so much, revealed  
how much it held beneath, past its skin and bones.

From the ocean the men had returned home,  
hauling fish, newly netted, movement  
struggling against the sunlight that hit their scales

to break. Pieces like glass pierced my eyes,  
then fell forward to touch my feet, bare open  
wide to cut.



The men had no words of comfort; still I waded  
among my uncles returned home after having labored in the deep,  
where I had watched them cast fish net webs over the expanse,

nets that one man from our village  
had always weaved with a fish bone carved with an eye  
hook in the middle,  
weaving and catching each strand of cord to loop  
and to tighten,

loop and tighten, the rhythmic hold and release  
of the weaver's breaths  
matched by the undulation of his fingers,  
slender and brown,

bound to catch the eternal movement of his net,  
moving wider into the sea,

under the still dark wave of dawn, as cold  
as it could ever be, there, with the planets

disappearing with the night, the black silver of the water  
thin as ether, and as permanent  
as gauze floating  
under the waves,  
toward the Atlantic, monstrous,  
endless.

Journeying past Poseidon, fallen--  
sunk deep past the monster floating--, is yet  
  
another fish, which the sea god tries to rein,  
although his net is old and tender, needled silver.

The fish swims past that ancient god, closer  
toward the fixed star in the sky, veiled by light,  
now gauzy with early morning breaking.

Fixed star I had charted with Uncle Vadim  
years before with the eye  
of my telescope. And now

I chart these waters with the needle  
of a compass pointing west,

where fish and monsters swim beyond myths  
and journey to the abyss beyond  
the limits of sun or moon or stars,  
an underwater desert in the canyon  
beyond my Aegean,  
toward my Pacific, beneath  
the coral bracing rock and cliffs, on sides  
of the abyss

crystalline,  
clear patterns charted on its walls  
long before it was ever seen  
by anyone. This is a place where time moves

toward oblivion, beyond the grasp  
of perception, like blood or instinct.

Great monster  
sees back  
to clear waters, where she was born,  
to spawn  
offspring who, too, will chart their way to the sea,  
then back home to where they were born,  
the way etched deep beyond gills, fins, bone,  
minds, and are as real as the scent of blood.

She moves  
through the water freezing,  
though not yet frozen,  
as sunlight rips the weave and stitch of frost,  
gauze broken  
by the will of movement,  
the fish moving through ice, skin distended  
and expanding with life. When ripped open,  
blood will flow free, cold smell of iron,  
a map of time,

unstitched from the raw of her flesh.  
Her young will travel the unbearable distance  
through waterways, across the sea, down streams  
lakes, waterfalls, and back  
to sea: their goal;  
and mine to end, there,

like the one once caught in our unravelling net,  
fish bruised and battered, still alive and dying,  
I touched with my hands, smell as salty as sea,  
as cold;  
fish eyes an abyss, ancient as our lifeline; its guts  
a chamber of crystals, mess of maps aging--

traced backward, from the the Atlantic  
to Pacific;  
from Asia Minor  
to the Major;

from a room where I was born, to rooms  
where I now live, distance and time unveiled  
by remembrance as tenuous  
as any human stitch.