

JETTY

Places like this are rare,  
weathered spits of boulders dropped  
past goosenecked pilings, past sandbars  
where ring-bills skim trapped schools of silversides  
past bridges, barnacled marinas and into the Sound  
a great, roiling plain of breaking water - the continental shelf  
drops suddenly away into the abyss of Hudson's Canyon -  
haunted by columns of darkness, shadows of tuna boats and  
driftnets.

The drop is only half a mile from where I stand,  
at the end of the jetty, the last rock covered with *ulva*  
and sea squirts and hunched fishermen hiding  
their crowsfoot faces in the warmth of their jackets.  
There is no wind anywhere  
like the wind at the end  
that churns the dark water into white fury  
that drives needles of brine into the skin that  
pushes corridors of mist around far green beacons  
and opens the throats of foghorns.

Schools of snapper feed in the estuary  
created by the jetty's curled finger, holding away  
the Atlantic. Engineers say it saves the beach from erosion;  
the snapper will tell you different.  
A great blue has taken my bait today  
and runs and runs my reel spinning like a hot drill  
pole bent double against the strain.  
Blues are just old snapper, past the point of mere snap -  
into the realm of *bite*. Great strong fish they are,  
blue-eyed and big like the sharkmen from Montauk Point.

I let him run.

He follows the stream of the tide, screaming now  
so that the clammer's mooring lines groan against the pull.

I imagine him, alone now, broken from the school to rid his  
mouth of the hook, running out over the edge.

He stares into the darkness with unblinking eyes  
down into seven thousand feet of yawning  
down into skeletons of unrecovered rumrunners  
and their hollow-eyed crews.

And I wait for him to rest so I can begin the long pull  
back, back to the shallows, back through schools  
skirted by hammerhead and leaping mako  
back across weaving meadows of thelassea grass  
over rippled plains of open sand where only target rays skate.  
I will bring him from darkness into  
haloed light, until he is beneath my shadow on the water  
the nexus of all sunlight.

But for now he is still running, powerful caudal pumping  
out over the edge, away from the stone finger reaching for  
the hole in the ocean. When his fight ends mine begins.  
I wait, crowsfooted and salted as Lot's wife,  
tethered to him, forced by the wind of some other void  
to look down into the measureless darkness and run.