A Bible of Crumbling Ammonites

(for Amelia Earhart)

We go among the tidepools in the rocks,
down where the masts of wrecks scar the breakers.

Fragments of footprints show in the water-tossed kelp,
memenitos of the people at the edge of the world,
that siren shore
    where shadow and consciousness slur and flow,
    where sanddollar corpses clack morning bells against the ebb-tide stones,
    tiny epiphanies sudden as St. Elmo’s fire,
    holy and cold as the ocean.

A flicker
that dies at awakening.

And we come wanting to follow after, into that light,
    plunging through the darkest deep
    to find the mysteries it veils from the fragile globe,
wanting new myths for a world that keeps rebirthing itself,
to bring back that fire holy and cold.

So we come seeking skulls among the broken shells
    to tell us in a homily of human teeth
    what became of our pioneers,
    what will become of us.

But all we find is calcium coiled into golden means,
    ancestors of something else, that never crawled out of the water
    to walk in the sun:
          the bones of nacreous angels
                who don’t share revelations
                with the ones who want to grow gills
                and swim forever.

And all we find in the husks is a promise of:
    always,
    but never enough.

So we remain
    pearl divers,
    breathing only air,
    lost in benthic blue.

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