

## CONCRETION

*Grown together, hardened  
a sphere of stuff that forms around a nucleus  
stars  
planets  
spheres and ovoids found in sediments  
gall and kidney stones*

When the ship was close enough to shore  
a sailor would row her in  
so she could walk the beach.  
Once she found an perfect ball of stone  
at the base of a sandstone cliff  
she brought it to her father,  
it slipped from his hands  
and fell, denting the cabin floor,  
cracked at the equator line,  
she lifted off the upper hemisphere  
and found at the core  
a crab the size of her hand, complete,  
burnished with a bronze patina.

“Ah,” her father said, “a gift from the sea in stone.”  
he launched a long monologue on geology  
from which she gleaned  
that fossil formation took  
a long, long time...  
percolation...  
lithification...  
“waves wore at the cliff until...”

“This rolled out,” she’d said,  
“I picked it up and you,  
you dropped it;  
what is it?”  
“Fortunate that I did,” he replied,  
“you would never have let me break it open.  
It is called,  
a concretion.”

The one thing she saved from the ship.

## **EU-**

*Eu-, a combining form, from Latin from the Greek "eus" meaning good, well, pleasant, beneficial,*

Her father's constant striving for eudemonia,  
good spirits, well-being, gotten, he professed,  
from "an active rational life." This  
despite his wife's death at his daughter's birth,  
his later battles with darker spirits.  
What others labeled 'fate' he scoffed off as 'chance'  
"Fate is a facade the weak-minded hide behind.  
We have free will and I choose to embrace it."

The sharp familiar scent of eucalyptus,  
with their 'well-covered' buds,  
when the ship entered San Francisco Bay,  
smelled again in their native home  
when they sailed to Australia.

The leaves of a winged-euonymus near her mother's grave  
that burned bright red each fall  
and always set him weeping  
when they went there  
on the anniversaries of her death.

The eurythmy of the open ocean swell,  
The deep euphony of fog horns,  
The sweeping beams and flashes of lighthouse lights  
on clearer nights,  
The euphoric calm she felt after storms at sea.

He took the salty waters  
as his eucharist,  
his eulogy, he had said, should be,  
"Good years,  
sad years,  
now gone."

## IRIDESCENCE

*Being, beginning to be a rainbow  
lustrous rainbowlike colors*

Nacre,  
mother of pearl,  
the inner shell of mussels, oysters,  
interior whorls of snails,  
a pearl,  
a rainbow wrasse turning  
in the filtered light above the reef,  
freezing fog moments before  
it lifts for the rising sun,  
a peacock's neck and breast and tail,  
the opal brooch  
"your father brought it from Australia  
as a betrothal gift for your mother"  
her aunt told her  
and passed to her  
the day she turned sixteen,  
"your mother wanted you to have it."  
Iridescent, how these things catch, bend,  
then hold the spectered light.

## KRAKEN

*A sea monster,  
from Norwegian of obscure origin*

She was fascinated with the creatures of the sea  
horseshoe crabs  
wolf fish  
moray eels  
a hammerhead shark  
a fish, though small in body, had a mouth  
that was a sabered cage of teeth.  
tiny krill  
the mythic Kraken,  
Lars, who had been with the captain for a good stretch of years,  
“pickled by brine and rum, crusted by wind and sun,  
can still outwork many a younger salt,” her father said,  
“and spin a yarn from the tiniest bits of thread,”  
Her father had a book with an engraving showing  
a monstrous octopus wrapping its legs  
around a three-masted schooner  
The captain, who had first gone to sea on a whaler,  
had seen the skin of sperm whales marked with what looked to him like sucker scars  
She’d seen an enormous half eaten, tentacled thing  
floating near the surface  
Then there was the giant squid that attacked  
Nemo’s Nautilus.

“The Kraken comes in a storm or on the darkest night,  
rises up and up from the deep  
‘cause the heat of hell woke it from its sleep  
glides near to ye  
opens its mighty maw...”  
Lars would pause, grab her arm in a bruising grip,  
“...and bites.”  
She would shriek, break free, and run for refuge  
at her father’s side.  
The captain never warned him off  
would only shake his head and say,  
“Who knows what monstrosities lie obscured  
in the dark depths of the seas,  
the minds of men?”

## ORT

*Archaic, from Dutch,  
scraps, what is left over, not eaten*

The food remaining on your plate  
"Finish that ort," her father would say,  
He was the only person she knew  
who ever used the word  
until she found it again  
in lower regions of crossword puzzles

add an o and you have the Oort Cloud  
that stuff, ice and dust and stones,  
beyond the final planets  
birthplace of comets left over from  
the formation of the solar system  
her father would have been fascinated by that  
having seen Haley's Comet twice like Clemens  
named for Jan Oort, Dutch astronomer,  
finder of dark matter,  
who used antennas left by the Nazis  
to listen to stars.

She had never met him,  
her husband, the astronomer,  
described him as tall and brilliant.  
"Was it possible," she wanted to ask Oort,  
"to hear all the way back to the Big Bang  
and the silence before that?"