

Gooseneck Grazing
by Keltie Craig

The spray of the waves climbs up the rocks in slow motion.
A steady gathering of momentum,
the bulk of water building as it moves forward,
creeping up the rocks until it finally BREAKS,
crashing in a foamy spray.
Then, just as steadily, the motion is reversed,
retreating and relaxing back into the folds of the deep.

Throughout this constant cycle of approach and retreat,
a lone figure is steadily scanning, looking for treasures that are:

The size of a thumb (not too tall and not too short),
and
Black (not white, not grey).

Attached to the jungled matrix of California mussels and barnacles,
the necessary substrate to the harvesters' diamonds.

The metal tool responds to the figure's movement,
springing off a handful of perfect specimens.
The waves come,
the waves go.
The man continues the harvest.

Does he know his role in this system?
The line that connects the \$10/lb. raw jewels to a \$60 dinner plate
half a world away?
The complexities of satisfying government demands and his peoples' needs
in a place where the divide between biological theoreticals
and the experiential practicalities of the layman can be as far apart
as Tofino and Madrid?

The waves crash.
The man scans.
Computer keys type away, processing data:
Biomass, distribution, stock assessments.

A woman eats *percebes* in Barcelona.
And the barnacles stretch out their goosenecks to the foamy spray of the Pacific.