# The Littoral and the Imaginary Carol Ciavonne



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Neo-Mimeo Editions:2025

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The Littoral and the Imaginary

What's a rock in water an uncovered ledge where we crawl out and disappear into the wake the planet leaves in the wake not footsteps here in the littoral of space looking out for light years the beach is not a beach littered with shatter, mass upheaval and pebbled aftermath.

I'm alone like the earth in photos.

To know what happens under rocks, where the starfish cling to their kingdom

to know that cunning world, anemones pink and green the hermit crabs in stolen shells, small volcanoes in the sand.

A man sits on a bench in the aquarium every Tuesday. He goes early and he's alone. Behind him, in front of him swim smooth-skinned fish, large enough to ride on. I picture him with trident.

I will be sporting an early 20th century blue gray gown with tidal lace

a necklace of corallina gracilis and a roaring heart.

without the others we can be ourselves

If it's dangerous to walk down the steps to the sea, if it's dangerous to climb up the cliff, if the tide washes you off the rocks, the little crabs still scuttle. In the deep are marvels seahorses like fronds waving but here only the starfish are in our charts. What we must imagine for our sanity: the edge of things where all creatures breathe and swim.

A knob of kelp and a seal's wet head, a piece of wood bobbing. The moment after the spray. I never see a whale. I consider them imaginary.

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Littoral 1
Artefacts of
sound
the moving
languages,
Latin
nearly meaningless now,
except in deep
and Greek only
near, nearby,
nearly, a bridge; a raft of boats.
just to keep afloat like the tide
passerine
came to me in a dream
```

the birds stop singing

the birds are singing

or

stop

#### Littoral 2

and feathers
even feathers
which have no origin here

but drifting down

must be considered
part of the province

I only know about love and how it gathers flotsam onto a misfit island.

#### Transubstantiation

I will eat you fishes. I will eat you crabs.

Kelp I will eat you.
Mussels I will eat you.
Gods I will eat you.

Believe what you want to believe

It's either the ocean or the refrigerator

It's either the ocean or the traffic on the highway

It's either the wind or the ocean

#### Littoral 3

Taming the heart urchin stroking the murderous red spines

put it in your chest cavity
its own circulatory system
they can't touch it.

### Out of her body

"the animal constructs
membranous bags"
in which the offspring are enclosed
tied off by the animal with
"a short cord"
the animal constructs.

the pearly children in their gauzy bags by which the short cord, tied, is "attached to the surface" to which the mother is attached.

swaying in the current the young of the animal "are protected until they hatch".

#### Vellela lata

"sailed for several days through incalculable numbers of purple, sailed 'floats'"

I descended in their midst; they offered me everything. I took their gifts, they explained them to me.

"so thickly distributed that there was, by extremely rough estimate one to every square foot of the surface of the sea as far as the eye could reach."

"A very light breeze will keep the animal (really a colony of specialized animals)"
(I myself am made in that mode the little alien mitochondria around which I grew) "moving through the water."

The wind opens them, they extend-"drifts of the little blue siphonophore
Vellela lata
strand upon the beaches" in parabolas
parable sans lesson

"The animal with its diagonal sail like a piece of cellophane drifts" in elegant movement "to the left of the wind"

"storms drive tremendous numbers of the creatures ashore"
They must know of that country, arrival.

#### Clam Shell

The clam shell I drew

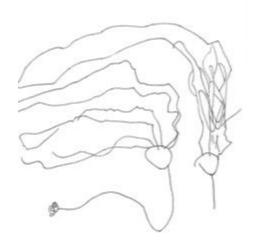
in order to sing

the ridges on the shell in all minute variation

in order to hear it in me.

The attention is not always appropriate

but when destiny shines oh bright day.



Carol Ciavonne's poems have appeared in Denver Quarterly, Boston Review, Colorado Review, Interim, New American Writing, and Tupelo Quarterly, among other journals. Essays and reviews can be found in Interim, Colorado Review, Rain Taxi, Entropy, Parole and Pleiades. She is the author of Birdhouse Dialogues (LaFi 2013) (with artist Susana Amundaraín) and a collection, Azimuth (Jaded Ibis Press 2014). Ciavonne is an editor of the online journal Posit.