

## *No Mermaid Could Ever Sing*

1.

Around me colour wells up  
like the wind. Rich, thick,  
careless brushstrokes  
that are fish, float into the blank  
space of my sight. The whirlpool  
gathers me to its heart, and makes me dance  
where no creature can live: this is  
how I am born everyday, but not  
how I came to be:

I rolled down in an egg-crust  
a melting glacier had kept and got  
tired of keeping, so it left me  
to rest in a giant cave  
hanging above the sea-bed.  
*A dream hatched me: I dreamt  
I was a fish  
and so moved like one –*  
Wetness filled my shell's  
dark air as my fin broke free

and I melted into a world  
I never made, warm and exhausted  
from lives lived.

I learned to breathe water.  
My voice vanished into little bubbles  
and currents around the dark  
pink coral that shudders  
like a breathing jewel in the light.

This is what happened  
to every woman who grew a fin.  
So believe me, no mermaid could ever sing.

2.

No mermaid ever lured a sailor  
to his doom with her song:  
*no mermaid could ever sing.*  
The sea's mystery lives in my silence.  
Orphaned by the earth and air,  
if I were to break the bond  
that sustains me, where  
would I be?

*No mermaid could ever sing.*  
No mermaid sold to a witch  
the voice she never had  
for a pair of legs to walk the earth  
in search of some man or sailor prince.

*No mermaid could ever sing.*  
Ocean currents and the moon's pull  
and the anger of floods I could  
loosen from me and the earth  
would be sea, but not the voice  
I never had: I was woman once  
but now I am half-woman, half-fish.  
*No mermaid could ever sing.*  
The sea's mystery lives in my silence,  
in my cutting cold fin.  
My voice is a memory  
lost in the water, the wind.

*Archana Sahni*