

Working the Shelf Break for Pacific Cod

I string gear along the break, fishing the edge
of the continental shelf where currents dredge
what cannot be measured in tides.
Anchovy livers reek down current, slow plumes
woven with herring oils. My offerings flume
where water masses shift and slide.
Bucket faces come snuffing upstream. They kedge
their heads through ebb-water, nosing the stinks bloomed
from my cod pots, hunger their guide.

What cannot be measured in tides moves the dark.
Buoylines climb to the surface, slow-humming arcs
tugged by shadow in migration.
Spawners follow the rhythms of salt and moon
pulsed along fathoms, their bathymetry tuned
to roe swelling in hydration.
Driven through murk, migrants cast across unmarked
ground, tacking through black tonnages, gametes strewn
among uncharted striations.

Tugged by shadow in migration, I launch pots
through striations of flow that I will not plot.
I string my gear along that break
between the contours recorded on my chart
and those contours engraved where salt slides athwart
eddies entrained in the opaque.
To reach my ground, I join buoyline in three shots,
ninety-nine black fathoms metered like a heart,
measuring a tide that leaves no wake.

