

## Divers

Joanna Newsom

A diver is my love  
(and I am his, if I am not deceived),  
who takes one breath above, for every hour below the sea;  
who gave to me a jewel  
worth twice this woman's life (but would cost her less  
than laying at low tide,  
to see her true love phosphoresce).

And in an infinite regress:  
Tell me, why is the pain of birth  
lighter borne than the pain of death?  
I ain't saying that I loved you first,  
but I loved you best.

I know we must abide  
each by the rules that bind us here:  
the divers, and the sailors, and the women on the pier.  
But how do you choose your form?  
How do you choose your name? How do you choose your life?  
How do you choose the time you must exhale,  
and kick, and rise?

And in an infinite capsizes:  
Like a bull tearing down the coast,  
double hulls bearing double masts-  
I don't know if you loved me most, but you loved me last.

Recall the word you gave:  
to count your way across the depths of this arid world,  
where you would yoke the waves,  
and lay a bed of shining pearls!  
I dream it every night:  
the ringing of the pail,  
the motes of sand dislodged,  
the shucking, quick and bright;  
the twinned and cast-off shell reveal a single heart of white.

And in an infinite backslide:  
Ancient border, sink past the West,  
like a sword at the bearer's fall.  
I can't claim that I knew you best,  
but did you know me at all?

A woman is alive!  
A woman is alive;  
you do not take her for a sign in nacre on a stone,  
alone, unfaceted and fine.  
And never will I wed.  
I'll hunt the pearl of death to the bottom of my life,  
and ever hold my breath,  
till I may be the diver's wife.

See how the infinite divides:  
and the divers are not to blame  
for the rift, spanning distant shores.  
You don't know my name,  
but I know yours.