

## Rusty Shovels

If you knew that it was wrong  
To shovel the sea off the beach,  
If you knew that the water  
Would always move back around your legs  
And you knew that the moon  
Would always push and pull,  
Then how hard would you shovel?

Worn handles and fingers broken,  
Blisters leaking and now scabbed.  
The shovel rusty from the salt,  
Sunburned neck, and calloused hands  
All because the shovel can still shovel,  
While the sea will still see the shifting  
Tides four times in our days.

See how your feet turn smooth,  
Polished by the waves and the current,  
Legs like dock piers pushed down into the sand.  
A crab nestles between the toes,  
And digs in between the tendons,  
Eyes looking up to the shovel and the water,  
Waiting to be cast out to find another shell.

Time slows with the shoveling,  
The sea and the shovel continue in futility,  
In foamy cuts, casting up blue and green  
Shards of our souls, one drop at a time, splayed out  
across the water. The sea and the beach exchange,  
Giving and taking without giving care or mind,  
To the shovel or the vast exertion.

When a shovel breaks, it marks a point, a new moment,  
And grade after grade, the reason, the purpose of the work  
Has become murky and muddy where nothing is clear,  
Where eels slither among the weeds, propagating  
the same disappointment, working to work.  
You have to keep the shovel moving through the water.  
Just work and keep working, you will see.

From between the dunes, to ease your burden,  
Someone comes, after years and years,  
*You have been shoving the sea, and it has gone  
Nowhere. Why do you shovel still?* Looking back over

Your shoulder you see the beach is littered with hundreds of  
Rusty, broken shovels. *What else can I do when the earth and the sea,*  
*Refuse me anything new, but to keep them apart.*