

## Listening

And from that village, steaming with mist, riddled with rain,  
from the fishermen in the bay hauling up nets of silver flecks;  
from the droning of the Buddhist priest in the morning,

incense thickening his voice, a bit other-wordly, almost sickly;  
from the oysters ripped from the sea bottom by half-naked women,  
their skin darker than the bark in the woods, their lungs

as endless as some cave where a demon dwells  
(soon their harvest will be split open by a blade, moist  
meaty flesh, drenched in the smell of sea bracken, the tidal  
winds);

from the *torrii* halfway up the mountain  
and the steps to the temple where the gong shimmers  
with echoes of bright metallic sound;

from the waterfall streaming, hovering in the eye, and in illusion,  
rising; from the cedars that have nothing to do with time;  
from the small mud-cramped streets of rice shops and fish-  
mongers;

from the pebbles on the riverbed, the aquamarine stream  
floating pine-trunks, felled upstream  
by men with *hamachi* tied round their foreheads

and grunts of *o-sha* I remember from my father in childhood;  
from this mythical land of the empty sign and a thousand-  
thousand manners,  
on the tip of this peninsula, far from Kyoto, the Shogun's palace,

in a house of *shoji* and clean cut pine, crawling onto a straw futon,

one of my ancestors laid his head as I do now on a woman's belly  
and felt an imperceptible bump like the bow of a boat hitting a swell

and wondered how anything so tiny could cause such rocking  
unbroken joy.