REAL

for Olof Lagercrantz

Seamounts

just below the surface,

they seem to be. One night

you were swimming with strong strokes

and they cut you,

the salt stung but you kept on,

not wanting to show you were afraid

of what's under

water.

Asking

quietly around,

you find their presence

doubted. No one else has seen them,

they say, it's just a deep sea,

no angelfish or coral,

so deep.

You return

in the early morning hours

when you can't sleep, you're alone

and you swim around, try to define them

without touching.

You remember

how they cut; you think

you know where they are.

You come back

again, carrying sacks

of words (which is all you have),

build cofferdams and caissons, encapsulating

what's down there; it will

be revealed.

Words tumble into place,

pleasuring others. Here they build

a papier-mâché mold, there, the construction

is airy-strong and supple

like a spider's framework silk.

Words craft textures

round the shapes

underneath:

you hear

their sense

in the worlds

in your mind.

One day

it is time

the others see.

So you bring them by, tell them

of the wine-dark sea and what cuts

underneath — you show them the sluices, the storm

you've diverted

into a glass

box.

It's a success,

a good party. One

likes the sheen of the silk curtain,

another admires the caisson airlock

and wants to license it. Someone remembers

how he also was afraid

of swimming in the dark,

how he once brushed

against

an eel.

They laugh

and cry. Some

even stay to see you

break the gates, strip the curtains,

open all the structures to see

nothing there — the sea

as it was

as it will be - the sea

and around you the words rise, only words,

entwined, composing

a trellis on an ark,

gulls diving for jellyfish.