

## The Waters Within

Belinda Recio

Belinda Recio, M.A., has authored and edited books on subjects ranging from dream symbolism and sacred arts to nature writing. She is currently working toward her doctorate in Environmental Studies. Her scholarship focuses on the function of cultural and imaginal representations of nature in the conservation ethic.

*You never enjoy the world aright till the Sea itself floweth in your veins, till you are clothed with the heavens and crowned with the stars.*

—Traherne, *Centuries of Meditations*

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There, at the threshold of the sea, you are surrounded by  
Whelks, cowries, limpets, and wentletraps,  
Scavenger crabs, lost feathers, strands of seaweed,  
Smooth stones that tuck themselves into your hand, wrapping your fingers around them,  
Strewn starfish with missing arms, dreaming of their phantom limbs,  
And the hollow bones of birds, wind whistling through their chambers,  
Leaving euphonious echoes of feathers and flight  
Hanging in the air to evaporate like jellyfish on the sand.

Here, you find an empty nautilus long abandoned by the argonaut  
Its opalescent whorl and spiral a labyrinth of sound and space.  
You lift it to your ear and there is the sea's salty breath,  
And the ghostly song of a soft cephalopod heartbeat.  
The sound calls you to return to the primeval water, to feel the lunar pull.  
You enter the nautilus with your eyes wide open, feeling the saline sting.  
It is dark and cold and your tongue burns from the brackish taste.  
You are alone in this spatial cipher from the sea.

Now, as you make your way along the cool, lacquered corridors,  
You feel yourself breathing easier and realize that you are submerged.  
The ocean is passing through your parted lips, flooding you like an estuary,  
Flowing over the filaments of your newly formed gills.  
At last, you are an alchemist, a sea creature, a breather of water,  
Filtering oxygen atoms from hydrogen, conjuring breath from the abyss.  
The sea's your mistress, your soul, your rising tide—  
Let her hold you steady as stars explode and cells divide.

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