

# JAN MORDENSKI

## MATTERS OF THE SEA

Yesterday, like a sightless Chinaman working his abacus by touch,  
you sat rummaging in your bent green tackle box, describing  
the curious disgustingness of the lamprey,  
those long fat snakes with wide funneled mouths  
that latch on to other fish in order to suck their blood,  
grab on to rocks, even, feeding off Lake Huron's shore.  
These things, you tell me, really exist, cruise  
our own state like sea monsters too ordinary to believe.  
I understand the function of fathers, now.  
I know how a mother can interpret the world,  
weaving a soft strong wrap of answers, of explanation,  
the motley threads making a loose warm garment  
of her life and your life and all the lives  
that touch me underneath my clothing,  
and how that can shield and shelter, yet bind  
until the wearer can't be told from the weave,  
can't know the lining from the right side.  
But fathers are for something else.  
I listen to your tales and they are of freighters,  
cracked in half like kindling, left by lunatic waves  
to rust on the rusty shores of Louth,  
of Coho big as small women, crashing into boats,  
breaking lines as though they were embroidery threads.  
You would claim you only tell the truth. Mostly,  
you tell of things too strange to be true, yet are,  
or could be, or once, at least, were--, matters mostly  
of the sea, eloquent enough to live without interpretation.