Pipefish and Bird

Like snakes of the sea,
pipefish ghost currents
in various hues;
bright-speckled birds
flame the forest
with radiant noise-
palpable life
to drape the worn world,
skirting ears,
slurrying sand,
sifting soft currents,
beaking and nosing.
We make a fire,
follow the moon
that’s large as a god.
It has hung like a stone
since this headland was here,
since pipefish and bird
crested the reef
and worried the shore.

You finger the white
of a bird’s skeleton,
cradle the delicate
bones of a fish-
gathered remains
of seasons your father
stood in this house
and sketched what he knew;
when a boy and girl
swam and were drowned.
Still pipefish and bird
hold in the air,
carouse in the sea,
searching water,
venting their young,
eaten and eating—
a kind of keeping
bony persistence.