

After the Tsunami by EJ Shu

Not for us the leviathans, biofouled vessels
entering and departing ports and harbours in hours or days—
we take our trip on the slow boats: skiffs and buoys, carboys
and a whole fishing dock that arrives one day without sound
and like a massive skirted table on the surprised Oregon coast.
Clumped in strong spring pulses and on downswelling winds,
we drift ashore after years of Pacific days and looping, easy
currents that sustained our adhesion and our need
for languid self-recruitment in the massive debris field.
All taxa were detected. You could plot the richness—
moss animals on the upturned hull, a barred knifejaw
in the stern well, shipworms deep in the beam.
Oh, what a ride we had on this twentieth-century stuff!
On the rafts you built for us with forms and foul extrusions
and by laying up the chopped strand mat. Such a rich flotilla!
Our traumatic dispersal sustained by the long half-life.

Poet's Note: This poem uses fragments of this scientific article: [Carlton, J.T., Chapman, J.W., Geller, J.B., Miller, J.A., Carlton, D.A., McCuller, M.I., Treneman, N.C., Steves, B.P. & Ruiz, G.M. 2017. Tsunami-driven rafting: Transoceanic species dispersal and implications for marine biogeography. Science, 357, pp. 1402-1406; doi: 10.1126/science.aao1498](#)

Editor's note: After the Tsunami references the [unprecedented dispersal of hundreds of species and entire ecological communities across the Pacific Ocean on debris from the 2011 Japanese tsunami](#). It is reprinted in MEAM courtesy of author [EJ Shu](#) and [Poets Reading the News](#). EJ Shu is an Australian-Canadian poet and writer living in Tasmania. Poets Reading the News is a digital platform that publishes original poetry about current events, including [science news](#).

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