

## The Gate At The Throat

Did Chinese ancients leave their villages  
At dawn in rowboats carrying wicker  
Baskets inside which was movement?  
Did yellow stalks of arms row the boats

Across water, water and stop,  
Where the oars were dropped and drawn  
Inside the boats to rest?  
Was a basket opened, a dark bird taken

Out and from a pocket a gold ring  
Slipped over the neck to slide  
Down the feathers and wait?  
Was a long bamboo string tied

To the gold ring and the bird released  
To sail over the water, no weight  
Of the ring, no tug  
Of the string on its breath?

Was a shadow seen swimming below,  
Itself with many others? Did the bird  
Waver, lunge, and emerge carrying  
In its beak a fish?

Then did the universe try to swallow  
And puzzle and puzzle until the string  
Tugged, the ring turned to steel,  
And the meaning rowed near.