

No Paradise Here

In the refuse pile behind the taverna, a snake appears
from beneath a flattened cardboard box. No paradise here,
where tomatoes rot, geraniums spring from rusted olive oil tins.
The snake had green eyes like yours, I tell my mother later.

*I dream of fire and a horned devil;
snakes around my feet of stone.*

In Herakleion, cats under the small blue chair and at my feet,
I sit at a table eating calamari and squash blossoms,
surrounded by women. We call ourselves Minoan priestesses,
cats on our heads, snakes spiralling skyward in each of our hands.

*I dream of bulrushes in water,
priestesses wearing long skirts, snake-entwined.*

I cannot describe the shedding of my conventions,
what is underneath,
what is revealed in the alchemical transformation.
What clings ferociously to my naked skin.

I dream a skin casing hanging from a tree.

Making Room

Open to the irritation,
grit forms a pearl
it's been said.
Fish for mermaids, dive for pearls
the end is the beginning–

down at the bottom
a mouldy-smelling trunk
black and white photographs
with lipstick smears,
a wedding gown,
a Bible with passages marked.

Place them on the sunlit sill
until the memories infuse the trees.
Those elders with their waving arms
know what to keep,
what to surrender to the wind.

You stand mesmerized
by dust particles
in a river of light.