

## The Abalone Shell

No chambered nautilus, this; rough algal beard  
on bark of an inverted bowl outside;  
unpretentious, simple, plain, with tiered  
holes joining its life with sea and tide.

They pried it loose from its foundational rock  
and tore the living from the shell it grew,  
consumed its flesh with light convivial talk  
as all of us who know not what we do.

Now resurrected on a mantelpiece,  
the shell lies open in a single whorl  
bearing its holes of living without cease  
above the iridescent mother-of-pearl.

—A. Sherman Christensen