

Sails Catch the Wind

after the Vŭng Tâu, shipwrecked in Vietnamese waters, 1690

along the ridge men leave early
they gather clay 高岭土
 white like jade

far below
Jingdezhan lies in shadow

the artist takes a bamboo brush chooses blue
paints flowing vines lotus flowers
a small bird with wings outstretched

the Vŭng Tâu has a hull of camphor wood
sails that catch the wind it outpaces
pirate ships
holds tightly the vines flowers
small birds wrapped in straw

in coastal waters a fisherman
casts his net for red snapper
brings in blue and white porcelain.

I hold a bowl
where gazelles run beneath the rim

roughness
 of sand smoothness
 of seaweed.