

Leaving the glen, with a white horse on a low boat

The Vikings have lost their spirit of adventure:
become three sad faced men, holding
the reins of a white horse as it stands in a low boat,
leaving the glen.

After forgotten years in the barn,
they are silenced, unable to clamour
in full blooded colour. A stain has colonised
one corner of the print. Their berserker yells
have failed to shift the weight and gilt of the frame.

Once, the burn of their eyes made children hide;
fear the rough sweep of wolf pelt cloaks
across the bedroom floor. They plundered
dreams, held the night hostage.

They fade now between monochrome borders
on the slow return from a naming, a wedding, a wake.
Or perhaps they are taking the horse to plough,
to market, to the knacker's yard.

From this distance, anything is possible.

Shorelines

As children, they'd hauled the bloated form
to shore in a net of seaweed, the thing's skin
bruising their finger tips like a blunted knife.

They prised apart its belly to reveal eggs:
globes of hardening jelly nestled in rows;
a damp towel to take them home.

Tonight he staunches the unpeeled gape
of his guts with a towel, the unsealed mass
held gently as new laid eggs.

The handiwork of one small, legal knife.
He tightens fists, fights tears that coalesce
with blood, brackish as seaweed.