

The Feeding

The shoreline is not the shape it once was.
A century of salt has buckled the pier,
that skinny wrist tied with a bangle of boats.
The villagers say it's only right the water
brings change, time itself needs fed. Anyway,
it doesn't seem long since the *Ella Brewster* floundered,
going down by the bow, the mussels pouring.
What's a hundred years to a beach?

When the famous storm was on,
the one in the red frame above the fire
that shot water eighty feet above the harbour
as if it was nothing, and jettisoned its weeds
and rock, they watched
as wind feasted on the land, forever altering
the way the universe was proclaimed there;
the sermon of the dunes rubbed down to refrains.

Each wave reared up with its own story,
crashing upon dark sands
with the weight of Gods you may not observe
but in the soul of a place. Walls went extinct,
fields were now what the sea required of them
and it was the old lady on the hillside
with her toes in a new landscape,
it was the dead beast brought ashore

in a tangle of rope pale as old veins.
That was long ago. Everything in exchange.
The blue ache of the sea is tomorrow's harvest
massing itself in unfathomable ratios,
each model of existence
balanced—gulls shivering over rock pools,
dolphins gutting wave-folds,
whelks vacuumed into the big sadness of it all.

Somewhere between two storms we fuse,
caught in the moment before the water cracks.
That being the inspiration for life, the lust for it.
Waves will never not throw themselves high,
grey water heaping its sins
as the ancients rise in these most gorgeous, rolling bulks
and the unchanging permanence of the sea
passes a hundred years in one tide.