

Elantxobe

1. Poco a poco!

a woman mutters on the path above,
waving a fistful of plucked herbs,
reproving my rush up from the harbour.

Unkind wife, daring me to chase you,
fit to burst, up break-neck crumbling hills
below landslide netting, to scramble
the last gasping flight to our square
where the grandmothers perch at dusk
like birds on their village bench till late
and shout in their aprons like they have time
to burn, like something new happened today,
just now, and must be told and retold,
gathering vehemence with each recount,
as though the tide is not about to turn.

2. One oar

Flung on the deck, worn grey from churning green water
blue as the Virgin's mantle till salt tore the pigment from you,

you are cracked and destitute and twine rebinds you
but your double lies off in a boat shed.

A lifetime working a quiet harbour and this is what becomes of you –
salt-flayed and failing, but somewhere an unsullied self abides.

3. A problem with water

'Green' will not serve for this misted harbour
when the tide is in and the water billows

like a flung sheet falling to a bed
like dark glass dimpled as it cools.

Someone hammered pewter over magma;
or it's the hue of cloud-saddened conifers.

The harbour glowers deeper than polished stone,
a chunk of liquid emerald, big as a football field.

4. A battered red-decked dinghy

Behind by the sea wall she hovers on glass darkness.
Braided coils of light loop the navy-green around her.

Salt spray, sun and gales, the fret of mooring lines,
have scoured her deck to a mottle of dulled rose.

She stirs, she skates on living water. Swerves
her battered bow towards the entrance.

She'll skip port on the turning of the tide
and then come the big blows.

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