

## 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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