

Grevel Lindop

A FAREWELL

I walked in the long colonnade of dreams
and she swam up from a depth of blue-green water:
light mottling the pale skin of her arms
and hair like branching coral over her shoulder.
I waited on that pavement of white jasper
for what message she might have to deliver.
Our eyes met, and nothing could be clearer:
she had come to say that she had been my muse,
and now she was leaving. These words are my tears.

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SCRIMSHAW

I do this one thing that is not of use.
Some dark hours below deck are all I own,
congealed to lampblack and tobacco juice:
it is the Arctic night inscribes the bone.

By day the whales are hunted, chained and flayed.
My little ship, tight nest of clean-drawn lines,
sails on a different truth I also need
to where a mermaid on her rock reclines:

though scratched on whalebone, she can have no share
in flensing-knives, blood, blubber or baleen.
Her mirror shows no face. She combs her hair
and sings to someone I might once have been.

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THE WITCH BOTTLE

Glass flask, height 105mm, sealed with a cork and wax, on display in the Pitt Rivers Museum [...] collected in 1915 by Margaret Murray, Egyptologist and writer on paganism, from 'an old lady [...] near Hove', E. Sussex. Reputedly she told Murray, 'They do say there be a witch in it, and if you let un out there'll be a peck o' trouble'. – *British Archaeology*, 108 (September / October 2009), p. 11.

I was the valley's Goddess long before
the wooden Christ was hung with outstretched arms
over these plots carved from the stubborn moor,
his cross on parchment parcelling out the farms.
And girls still opened secrets at my spring,
the old ones' murmur settled by my stone:
unasked, they gave the Christ child for my nursing,
and my blue mantle lapped him for my own.
But blackrobed preachers killed their faith with fear.
Starved of belief, I dwindled to a wraith;
one falsely in God's name confined me here,
struggling inside blue glass, deprived of breath.
Man, lift the stone. Under your threshold, see –
my gentle heart still beats. Now: set me free.