Poems

Abstract
HERMAN MELVILLE JUMPS SHIP, FINDING THE RIGHT BLUE FOR THE WATERFALL, THE STOWAWAYS, ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON DREAMS OF ORKNEY IN SAMOA
They say that blue
slows the passage of time –
so what was
the blue reflex
when I jumped ship
at the Marquesas?

How was it I could read
by the blue light
from the *noctilucae*
but not look up at the vanishing ship
or the natives running like grass
before the wind?

**FINDING THE RIGHT BLUE FOR THE WATERFALL**

Hiroshige knew –

so solid a blue
the Victorian tight-rope walker
could have walked across
in the declining sun
without her white pole gleaming.

It’s a metaphysical act,
intensifying the blue –
swallows in slow-motion,
stars perched on the overfall
without trepidation

as when Orpheus played.
THE STOWAWAYS

They stayed on the ship for years, never giving an identity, thriving on a sense of displacement

for what was time when they went for months without seeing land or darkness

swinging in their bleached hammocks between counterweights of sun and moon?

But in dream seal-women gave them molluscs as they disembarked

and when they woke the luminescence persisted on their hands and mouths.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON
DREAMS OF ORKNEY IN SAMOA

Last night a wind came over the sea, keen as a swan's bone, particular with the dead.

I saw my father and grandfather, inspecting the major lighthouses as the skerries smoked by.

Here, azure orchids burn, kingfishers refract the great white light - but for a moment

I weigh the examined life, the necessary exile, against the way light behaves between islands.