

COLOURSTRUCK

*After "The Fighting Temeraire" by J M W Turner*

*Gareth Alun Roberts*

A smudge of pastel curves the eye,

we see a sunset swaddle the fighting-ship  
and make it fitting for our breath, not gasped  
but leaked, drawn out:  
a long-winded exhalation.  
Exhortation.

We can sing with this;  
sing patriotic tunes  
in a minor key.

She is passing:

queen of the waves of brine and brawn.  
Her beauty flamed in mast-head pennants  
and the bloom of sail-cloth on horizons  
that dipped far below our own.

She was the sun. Our sun; our blaze; our glory.  
We traced her wake through the several seas.

She sets now.  
The sun blows her home.

She is ghost and spirit: immortal become ephemeral.  
Sails all furled, her colours struck in the cloaking pastel  
that curves the eye upon itself, and we

are substance. We are lighter stuff:  
flesh and spirit;  
wind and sea;

tug-boats.

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