

Mary Rose

Gareth Alun Roberts

Lady of the noisy waters,
you have kept your sovereign's blade
as if it were still iron enough
to augment clumsy wars.
All those battles that did not come
have jumbled themselves up at your bed,
their rude interrogations now muted
as swans and the small sails flying over.

So high were you in fresh winds
that your sky-lights blazed
and the crowded bones in your bosom
lost themselves, momentarily, in brief rites
of wine and roses. You opened your arms
to the sea, and the sea's for you -
a fitting match, an embrace to last
while history receded.

Ariadne of the cold shores,
threading the maze of centuries
from one end: the sot - to the other
in the grip of bull-headed Theseus.
But it was you reeled in
through weed and green water,
through moons rising on neap and spring;
the crazed tides; and the slow rip.

You are strung up in dismal lights;
your still-breathing timbers inspiring
the wet, dead currents that embalm you.
Grim Solent: that kept your dulled vision so long
from the white edge, the green smudge
the black mud, has undone you at last.
And for all the weathers debating this belligerent isle,
there is no sound weather left for you.

Lady, it were better the candle that lights you was snuffed.

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