

P O E T R Y W A L E S

Turn of the Tide

(i.m. Michael O'Neill)

After Beowulf

I'm gathering driftwords
on the shore of this story,
washed in and out in the wake
of the kings-and-men
whose ships crunch beach-grit,
arrow-keen to eager and away
on their next sword-venture...

afterwards, *afterwyrð*, cast-off
cargo bobs and swirls in the shallows

edhwyrft
all whorls
and eddies
a turnabout
as quick as a fish

tidfara / time-farer / tide-traveller
from who-knows-where, now here

brimwylf : sea-wolf, she-wolf, on the sea-shore

these were not my words
to begin with
but I handpicked them up and out
and basketed them here

some sea-glass-smooth *scop*
some salt-barnacled *aglæca*
some ship-spine-bare *ferðloca*

I hold in my hand your *lastword*
(pathword)
but it's not my mapword,
so I lob it back— take *hwæt!*

(Can you hear the ripples writing back?)

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Select glossary: *wyrd* (fate), *scop* (poet), *aglæca* (monster or combatant), *ferðloca* (life-enclosure), *lastword* (reputation; literally, track-word); *hwæt* (an exclamation).