Late on a winter day
we crossed the causeway
and, reaching the dunes,
turned to watch the tide
consume our shoeprints.

Where the slow sea
of dunes
breaks on the beach
a lifebelt
on its gallows
outlines a Celtic cross
against the sky.

The waves
that break
and flow
like hair
on the sand
and the black rocks
sing across this island.

The sea
that sings across
this island
is the sea that old men,
wrapped in Fair Isle blankets,
gaze on from their deck chairs:

The broken mirror of the world.
II.

A square sail
a dragon head
flickering
at the horizon
Cuthbert kneels
closes his eyes
prays

That his soul
might be made
transparent
so he may discern
the muscled parts
the well-made parts and
that which has atrophied.

A creaking, a heaving,
the reek of leather and
the ring of mail
into your hands o lord
before him a king
bearing in his ungloved hands
the mitre and the staff

And say he did call water from dry rock.
And say his body, eleven years in sand, was fresh and supple.
John Staveacre, Tom Morton, five heathen Danes, and some who from their dress and coin we took as Irish fishmen are buried here where they were found this day. In the lee of the dunes some bones, some hair and broadcloth erupt, receive the sun, and are buried.

On the path to the harbour if we walk softly, keep our distance we may see them, leaning together. Sometimes, on the still air of a summer night, we may hear their cracked voices calling across the flats.