

Island Quietude

Kökar, Åland Islands, Finland

Birds lap the horizon, swirl out
to sea and vanish;

I watch them go —
beyond the cliffs, open water —

no markers, no islands, no boats.

In far-off cities words pass each other
like high-speed trains;

here silence walks the sea road
in her nightgown of snow —

her tilted crown a laurel wreath.

I'm learning to keep words safe,
zipped up in winter's worn change purse;

I dig out a few for stamps, or black bread,
when a nod won't do.

Here, there are no trains, no buses, hardly any cars;

only a ferry,
heavy as a groan,

if you want to, or must,
cross the open sea.