

NORTHERN FULMAR
(*Fulmarus glacialis*)

In the wind the fulmars come and go,
heeling where the northerly blows down sharp.
The fulmars hurtle crosswind,
to and fro by hundreds
until the woven heavens
have been warped
close to this planet, nimbus gathered low, pursed
heavy in that seine
which the birds have knotted swift,
mesh sewn on mesh, each flight a twine
threaded through bar and row,
seized into gores
where the fulmars feather deft.

In the wind the fulmars never slow.
They crisscross waves,
skimming low in the trough, close
to the face of each sea. The blows struck by gusts
loft wings over rollers driven rough
and the fulmars cast across grounds
trodden by seal and crab,
seined by flounder and whale.

stanza break

In the wind the fulmars wheel to blood
unpacked like skeins of roe.

Flurries of snow filter light falling dusky
as fulmars flurry and reel on the breeze,
a cloud alive of hooked beak, stiff wing,
and woe to the dying
afloat aloud
on the loud sea
then tumbled under all that flows.