Verity Laughton

Cape Hart

Or maybe you will come out to Cape Hart
where the cliff drops to a blowhole in the rock
and the heavy ocean floods and then retreats
before the next inrush makes the round complete.
Here the sea eagles lean along the wind
morning and late afternoon like white spears on
the gusty shafts of air, cool assassins
checking the dance below for sudden sustenance.
Your heart thuds, your breath comes quick, and you
dismiss as incidental whatever
suffering is involved because it's essential,
you say, that the lovely heights be served
by such smooth and lonely grace for more
than this one rapidly darkening year. There's
just the two of them, the pair, though once we
saw two grey fledglings swoop and loop as
adolescents do, all clumsy bravado.

If you look through them, through the patterning
in the sky, through the fleet, strong bodies,
through the curve and cut of head and beak,
and the spread triangles of those lavish,
guiding wings, look through them to the isness
in the light and wind that holds them here
scudding the vast fantastic, it cups you too
in its unmanifest holy palm, pinioned halfway
between the roaming eye and the dance.

Note: This poem is 'in conversation' with Seamus Heaney's 'Postscript' which first appeared (in the *Irish Times*) in 1992 (10 Oct.) and was republished in *The Spirit Level* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996). Both poems bear witness, not in a political sense, but to being in this difficult, and occasionally transcendent world.