The Rumour of Myth

(Thetis on Achilles, the son)

Starts in estuary
whelm and whirl of rock-skin,
sea-swell, the hove called salt.
I loved
the hero-to-be,
his life first arrowed unto me,
scudding, spared, still
unconscious.

No
he and she to wash
away yet, my
inhale planked to his ex—.
Plus our everywhere wet
trough
in the tidal
waves repeating
over and over.

Given, milky teats, realm of belly,
given, his body my body by faith.

Which to keep him I’d
cozen, always,
guarding every waterway I owned.

See hand, heart, heel where I dipped him, to save.

See the would-be bargain, back ridge of epic,

hovering in half-truths as if I really could unwick what was to come.

In the end when they took him the spell of the world sang

name, rank, date

of birth, your mother’s maiden, your father’s post.

Still, I said no hands out the window, boy,

I said no swimming at the water’s edge.

Sand’s oozy blank’s where they’ve got oblivion, boy,

so listen you get back here right now.

Nothing worked. He wanted all the wrong toys, tanker’s prow, the true-edged sword, a golden set of spears.

And when it came to the armor, god-hammered, bronze through the beam, well, I never begged. Another exoskeleton, extra skull. Though I’d made him perfect, zodiac’d to last.
Meanwhile, time being,
on that outline-horizon,
you could see empire
serrated at the edges: junk boats,
great ships,
the soldiers waving, even the geese
defined in V’s.

Soon each new sight needled.
And Fame, that bitch, stuck
like a splinter inside him,
cutting the flesh
in whispers, rumoring,

*you can win, you can win.*

Wood hewn like a beast at the door.