GRAVE GOODS
Tankeringen
Sandane, Norway

In the square in Sandane
I raise my camera to frame the Tankeringen.
Was it chance find or theft or gift
that brought this birchwood enigma
to your mountainside,
that dark beached hull above the fjord?
It lay here, folded to your breast
for thirteen hundred years,
the end of a journey, and the beginning.

In the space between planting and harvest
a thread was woven through mountains to the sea.
South along coasts ships dreamed their way -
strakes flexed and trembled as they surged
through daylight and darkness,
the Volga, the Caspian Sea.
At the edge of the fjord I raise my camera.
Certainly there were journeys.

What could you see, what changed as you stared
through the ring of thoughts?
Framed in its carved, calculated form
your home and children, women at the loom
or hives, livestock in the fields, men at their nets
or honing blades, boats tilted on the shore.

Perhaps as you slid its angles,
narrowing and widening its aperture,
you saw other skies, rocks and water
framed by the form of tree or ragged fleece
Uzbek ram horns, fish or spears,
a Turkmen gul that bloomed like a flower or sun
from tapestried rugs and tents and saddlebags
slung on the backs of horses as they surged
mile after mile across the arid plains.

Yvonne Gray

Note: In the square in Sandane, Norway, stands a sculpture, an enlarged version of a mysterious wooden object found in the grave of a local chieftain, the Eidehovding, dating from 475-500 AD. Measuring about 20 cm in length, it is cut from a single piece of wood and can be changed into a variety of geometric shapes. Only two other objects like this have been found, one in Iran and one in Afghanistan.

'Grave goods'. Yvonne Gray.
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Necklace

Dark blue pearls –

your eyes as they gazed
some days on the green lake
that spreads like silk cloth
round Vora's shoulder.

Dark blue pearls –

the winter sky
that glitters at night
above the ice cap.

Dark blue pearls –

cool and smooth in your palm
as they spilled from his oar-roughened hand

Dark blue pearls –

the dark blue lustre
of nights at sea; his eyes; his thoughts;
the impenetrable strangeness
of those places you will never see.

Silver and gold-foiled beads –

the glimmer of fish in the green lake;
ice on the pitcher at dawn.
ale in a horn in the evening;
the moon and sun above the mountains.
Strange coins, silver and gold,
transactions in the places you will never see.

Two amethysts –

the sky in the summer twilight;
violets and gentians, devils bit and cranesbill.
Tears with a hundred faces
like ice that falls from the mountain.
Eyes, eyes that have looked on places you will never see.

Yvonne Gray