

command my flailing hands to seize
and make fast the head that flips away
with car-yard bunting in the breeze.

JENNIFER WOODHOUSE

MELTÉMI

Day gleams dull and still,
an aquarelle of the Aegean;
the coasts of Anatolia
are lilac shadows merely;
the spectre of an argosy
steers for an ancient Koan harbour,
crewed by a company of silences.

Last night the *meltémi*
gave tongue to nightmare,
eddying with ghastly cries
of drowning men;
taunting the watch with questions
of the mermaid, silver-sinister,
until one said he saw her face
and flung himself to join her,
leaving his friend bedevilled,
inarticulate . . .

Glimpsing at noon the drypoint
certainty of port and pier, the sailors
will not recognise their wives.

The *meltémi* is a seasonal summer wind in the Mediterranean.