

ALISON CROGGAN

THE VIKING

We stopped mouths, smashed eyes, widowed women, sowed orphans,
stole

light and gold from tender lips and gentle valleys;
rose from the seatides catching a tilled land
in the heads of our axes, we
were gods from the winter morning in the
trembling blue laughter of hungry metal,
gathering black as storms on the threshing water.

Some like me strayed to the valleys
and learned to grow the green, hedge cattle,
cull corn; learned to love
the slow pace of the seasons, taking
dark haired women for wives. Only sometimes
the wind stirring grass stems
whips the cry of the seabird and the spray
landward. Then the heart leaps
to dragonships and wild men
and the deceptive freedom of a grey sea
and we touch our children unseeing for the
sky roaring behind the hills like
the blood in our ears.

But I could never go back to that
singing celebration of death. My
gods have changed. Tame as a plough
I tend the growing, and the seabirds
wheel away desolate to hunt
and fight and fly and be alive.