

An important failure

For Auden, behind cut-glass claret
at the top table,
the Old Masters knew about suffering,
its human placement.

Dogs and horse exist, poor in world,
lacking a gaze from behind their eyes.

A ploughman works his field
under a sky melting wax and wings.

An expensive, delicate ship sails
in neglectful seas out of the frame.

In other narratives there's no turning away:
animals witness the boy disappearing,
sense death under bloody fingernails,
forecast ice fracturing on the edges
of small woods and great forests.

About suffering they are never wrong.

Wendy Woodward