

**The Scream**

Supposing he inhabits a kind of hell, the figure freezes  
at the canvas margin, on a high bridge  
traversing some northern scene. It is the turn of the season —

things suggest this, the light, invidious and thin,  
dazing, desolate slope of ridge  
and bald hills and the aspect of chapel

with its scattered houses. The figure itself is pale or, better, un-  
faced and drained by a wind we might suppose  
comes from our direction, a place of estranged viewers, living

in a future that sends winter and a sheer  
arctic darkness. It is history, brewing madness along the seaboard  
to screech and warn in the rigging

of a minute ship bound — where? Nothing provides  
an answer. Outward, one imagines, from the narrowing fjord  
into open water, though it seems detained

by a vague inertia, caught up in invisible tides  
and stalled in the frame where walkers, unsolicitous, pass  
and the figure like an afterthought or image retained

on the retina, presses to its ears  
hard questions: and screams  
headlong into wind so we cannot hear.

*Steve Heighton*