CONVERSATIONS WITH A SHIPWRECK — DIGITAL EXHIBITION

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Adam Davies, Starboard, 2019

Adam Davies, Deck, 2019

Adam Davies, Drydock, 2018

Adam Davies, Lift, 2019
THE OWNER OF THE SKULL

I mean you. Not the museum
or the Swedish government, but you,
the man who lived in it, in whom it lived.
Whatever stories you had heard of shipwrecks
you didn’t hear this one. You knew
in the violent suck and torrent
that this was final. Maybe you thought of heaven,
Christ, whatever you’d been taught.
You never thought of a diver.

You never thought they’d build another man
using your scaffolding. They’ve given him
a face, and hair, some freckles, moles.
You wouldn’t know yourself. His name, they say,
is “Filip” – the quotes marking the place
where knowledge leaves off and fiction begins.
No one knows your name. More people see him
in a day than saw you in your lifetime.
He lives in your bones, lays claim to your possessions,
your clothes, your knife sheath, and your coins –
four of them. He’s taken everything you had.
He, they say, still had two milk teeth, hidden behind
permanent teeth in his lower jaw. Those tiny
pointed secrets that only your tongue knew
and never could have told because they
were so much a part of you that you
never knew you had them. *He had two milk teeth*,
the label says, meaning Filip, meaning you.

The book on my desk is open to the pictures
of your skull and Filip, the wrong blue eyes
staring from your sockets. Maybe being found, restored,
is just a different way of being lost. Come back,
I want to say, to my father and my mother.
Be who you were, and not who I try to make of you.