

The Other Side of a Medieval Tapestry

In middle distance, agony
is undistinguished
clear:

a cornered buck
his hurtling hoofs
against an anguish of pariah pack,
his concave eyes, amazed, concede
his entrails under bloodied feet.

Back figures shape
more ways of pain:
a peasant sagged against the earth,
a soldier wrenched around the blade
now frozen in his groin,
and here a carp breaks
coiled around a hook
his silver to the painful air,
while in the pond two goldfish swim
untroubled in their crystalline—
the flowers spaced among the green,
each petal, leaf, articulate
embroidered in metallic thread.

And high front
on a hooded horse
a lord in profile
gazes past
the torment of that pantomime
stares flatly
into mirror screams
that reenact the woven scene
in openings of history.
But hard against the unseen sweep
the weaver saw and labored at,
where he left hanging ends of warp
after the weft had patterned it—
beneath that lordly eye serene,
beneath the wide untender stare
there
grieved against the chafing wall,
that other, unsewn eye
must weep.

Jean Hollander