

An Imposition

Two spaniels leap and bound towards
an 18th century picnicking company.
19 of them, stooped by a turn in the river
one in deep blue, another in red –
though as the party lift and shoo
like men hunting a contact lens in snow,
midges evaporating at the drumming of thunder,
the dogs scattershot and mazy in their trajectory
red soil streaking their stomachs –
they are revealed to be mourners
scattering ashes onto the water;
no worry that their voices will travel to your ears,
this distant commotion is stirred
beside the high river after the recent thaw;
in their hands now lanterns, as they proceed
to contain the bounding animals, seek
a return to their attentive position
adjacent to the moving river's level surface
they stir and bat till a trace of leveret
takes the dogs off to the high thicket and the women
master composure, the gentlemen decorum
and they place their prayers on the water
like white folded boats, the paper repelling inundation
keeping it at a distance like white doilies
dimping the lain picnic blanket,
pads cushioning the spilling breast.

Matt Bryden