

Poem

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Reconstruction

Life can only be understood backwards, but it must be lived forwards. — Kierkegaard

Gingerly, hands in oven-mitts, scholars handle molten artifacts tempered by time.

Lava flows into the sea's cool water
caught in shapes as it freeze
frames. Smoke exhaled, inhaled: entrails,
funerals, prisons, artisans, criminals and rites.
Buried, burnt
moans, shrieks,
charred seared bones reek.
Preserved scrape delve

Deep.

Worn, rounded pebbles — fragile fossils in river of time — clues captured in hot amber
yet eroded by wind, weather, water, sand, smoke.
Past trails, exposed, uncovered; time
lines, labelled, discovered.

Caldera's mouth emits faint stream of ancient sound.
Echoes. Recovers. Traces. Burial mounds.

Urgency to translate ashy screams sparks and haunts archeologists' dreams.

Lava retraces fiery path to its source.
Backwards course.

— E. Irving-Waddleton