

## TRACES

To see the first signs of the time: the seed-chap;  
The way water travels beyond the reach of rivers and man.  
Beginning with a thing converted: an equal mind in the face  
of blind contingency.  
Beginning with the recognition of fact as a start for music.  
Beginning with the eye and a sea-space.

*Silver cars and copper – prows of silver and steel  
Clap foam-flecks, heave bramble by stump.*

*Currents of scrub, great furrows of ebbing tide  
Swivel to east, to pillars of woodland,*

*Jut of the pier-spiling rutted by spindrifts of light.*

Nothing is inveterate: the direst habit of wind or  
circumstance wears new.  
Even mockery or violent revenge – ‘That Roman in the Wall –  
The stink of him – stewing from bracken, pile after pile.’  
Beginning with bigotry and a degraded church;  
A bone injured and decaying in the arm.  
Beginning with gas, primordial, incandescent.  
With a haggard hawk loosed from its traces.

It was to end with sea: a dark green swell,  
Morning wind blowing gorse smell and camomile  
to the ships brought round  
To the anchorage of summer we had found –

Sloughed like a napkin one bird posts past reach  
Coasts listlessly down by wave as you wade there  
Something like sunlight, something like skin.

This poem was originally included in the sequence *Link-light*. It weaves in Rimbaud's "Marine" – as well as bits of "Petit Air" by Mallarmé.

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