

Stephen Robertson

Ebb tide

First I carefully let go
just as far as I can reach
the flotsam brought in on the flow:
time to mark the beach.

Now I start to trickle back
over wet ground, under sky,
from marsh just covered in the slack:
time to let it dry.

Now I cut new rivulets
to drain the chains of pools that lace
the spreading sands and soft mudflats:
time to gather pace.

Now I rush on down the creek
bearing loose things left afloat.
Behind each moored boat runs a wake:
time to gush full spate.

Now my headlong dash abates—
where I once was, the waders team,
rich foraging is in their sights—
time for a gentler stream.

Now I feel the flood's return
push against my trickle home,
to creep back in when I have gone.
It's time: my end has come.