

Stephen Robertson

Tidesong

The tide is out, the creek a gentle trickle
Hear the marsh-birds calling
the drying sand with muddy spots bespeckled.
Breath the scents the sea-winds bring

The trickle slackens, changes in the harbour;
Hear the marsh-birds calling
at the bar the waves are washing over.
Breath the scents the sea-winds bring

The tide begins its steady, slow accretion
Hear the marsh-birds calling
in places it has lost, reoccupation
Breath the scents the sea-winds bring

of the mudflats and the sandbanks. Listing
Hear the marsh-birds calling
boats are stranded at their stations, waiting
Breath the scents the sea-winds bring

as the rising waters reach and lift them
Hear the marsh-birds calling
echoes of the distant sea-swell rock them
Breath the scents the sea-winds bring

straining at their lines. The bows face seaward
Hear the marsh-birds calling
against the current pushing strongly townward.
Breath the scents the sea-winds bring

In the saltmarsh channels water rises
Hear the marsh-birds calling
to the edges of the sea-grass—pauses,
Breath the scents the sea-winds bring

makes another lingering turn, begins
Hear the marsh-birds calling
retreating back the way it came, regains
Breath the scents the sea-winds bring

the channel, turns the boats around once more
Hear the marsh-birds calling
to face the town, runs headlong for the bar,
Breath the scents the sea-winds bring

becomes a trickle. On the soft, receding
Hear the marsh-birds calling
water's edge, the birds are searching, finding.
Breath the scents the sea-winds bring