

### The Warship in the Channel

My dream ends. Our eyes meet, inquire, then swoop  
 down on grass, rocks, surf; the evening sky bends  
 away on the heaving ocean. A loop  
 of shingle winds around to the west, ends  
 at the burnished hinge of earth and air. The group  
 on the beach below mime a grace none intends.  
 Things shimmer into focus, remain obscure,  
 the mystery of objects will endure.

When I stumble out of my windy dream,  
 conning my thread of light through the dark  
 tunnel of things, you are there. We are abeam  
 of a warship in the channel, a silent mark  
 on the navigator's chart. We will mean  
 at the right degree to wheel to port, embark  
 on the wild, Sundering sea. Our hearts whip  
 like wind on the rip-tide's ragged fabric to the ship.

Our fortress, this ship, are briefly bound  
 in destinies, moored each to each by silent  
 bonds beyond our human sense. Not a sound  
 betrays the muffled seascape, nothing is sent  
 from the distant ship to tell of her estate. Around  
 her bows the silent spume is folded like a tent.  
 The leveled sun warms us, gilds the western course;  
 erect now, we strain to hear the rough tongue of force.

For there is mayhem in the channel.  
 Behind the calm face of mute beauty, a sleek  
 destroyer lightly arching on the swell  
 of a gilded sea, lurks the creak  
 of bulkheads, the deadly yaw of tons of sliding steel,  
 roaring waters denying visions to the weak.  
 I think of how seamen can without logs, tables  
 set a course, or charm truth out of old sea fables.

— *Eric Trethewey*