

TRUMPELDOR BEACH

Glimmering and vast

-- Matthew Arnold

Beside you, water breaks brightly
on sand –
a rhythmic

exhalation

then the delicate downward raking
through a scree of shells;

salt-blisters bloom between your toes
like the blossom of foam

gathering,

dissolving

the edge of pure glair
silked here

with ocean pink and blue.

Through each pale colour
you can almost see light

itself:

filamented waves, each pulling a dot of pigment
up to the brink of your eye
and back,

a continual tearing/raking to and fro
of smudge

and reflection –

your glimpsed lash

like a small fault in the view,

Sou'wester

the next
 open
to biting molecules of air;
their challenge
and relinquishment.

 One moment after another
taking you up
 and dropping you
as if there can be no rest
for this splay-fingered apparatus,
this dogged deliquescing
and refiguring
 (mucus, blush,
pressure on the kidney),
the machinery
 with which you convert water to light,
daily miraculous –
each eye;

each fingertip a meniscus
lit like sky.

*

Standing in smart clothes, holding your shoes clear,
the sea seems a radiant screen

sometimes suffused with shivers, or stretched
tight as skin

over itself.
It screens the beach-room

you've inhabited since childhood;
it's built against your ear.

Easy to exchange elephant-hide-Atlantic
for the mercurial Med,
 this dazzler

Sou'wester

a myth
in which water combusts.

These are the fictional angels,
these bursts of supra-natural radiance
you could put your hand through;
that melt
 at the shadow of your foot
when you try to step in
to accept the cold brilliance
of their baptism.

 Coins of shadow
shift in the pebbled water,
 tipped, balanced;
always this intermingling
as if of strands within streams
rolling over each other, stone over stone
rounded on each other
 but indissoluble –

in the valves and ventricles of your own body
shadow
 and deep red luminescence;

the ghost of another country
rolling against light,
 among the shipping lanes,

floating towards some notional horizon –
a slur of light on water.