

### **At the beginning**

It was the time of bombs or rumours of them  
When ash from burnt towers fell upon the lips  
Like an unanswered prayer. From your great height  
You know what we did then

Whether we fought long wars, so young men died  
In the cold passes; the solid shops,  
Bus stations, rose in dust; if our great planes  
Blazed on the mountainside.

Trust me, it was a time when we would start  
At dusked skin of a wrist, at a plane's drone.  
I could predict, unsleeping, their success.  
The war was theirs. The terror was our own.

From *Bricks and Ballads* (Carcenet, 2004) by Alison Brackenbury.