

Martin Robertson

The Sea

for Lucy, by request

The land stoops to the sea.
Cliff, rock, sand, pebble beach,
yielding or hard
throw back the wild
inconstant water that cries against the shore.
Yet that sea shall endure
its round of calm and storm
when all we see
of land shall cease
to be, or change its nature, structure, form.

Within this same salt tide
the other end of time
saw life begin.
Beetle and man,
grass and cedar, climbed to complexity
from cells formed in the sea
—elementals that float on
past (they the same)
eel, dolphin, weed,
coral, as when all seas were theirs alone.

Its temperate depth sustains
the coelacanth unchanged
from years ere light,
that falls now caught
in the wide dew-pond of Mount Palomar,
leapt from some galaxy, far
past the faint nebula
remotest ranged
within our sense
behind the jewels of Andromeda.

Andromeda, who naked
chained on a sea-rock, waited
out of the wave
a monstrous love
—but her wind-wooer struck him to a stone
humped in the tides, gull-lone,
gull-tenanted, and soon
gull-dropping-white
on the myth-dark
sea; that is yet this sea, moved by this moon.

By moon-heaped ocean, strait
and firth where the tides race,
Leif Ericsson,
Magellan, one
seeking a golden fleece, a white whale,
legend and life, by sail
or steam or dream driven,
criss-cross the seas.
The sea remains
indifferent, inviolate.