

WINTER SEASCAPE

The sea runs back against itself
With scarcely time for breaking wave
To cannonade a slatey shelf
And thunder under in a cave.

Before the next can fully burst
The headwind, blowing harder still,
Smooths it to what it was at first -
A slowly rolling water-hill.

Against the breeze the breakers haste,
Against the tide their ridges run
And all the sea's a dappled waste
Criss-crossing underneath the sun.

Far down the beach the ripples drag
Blown backward, rearing from the shore,
And wailing gull and shrieking shag
Alone can pierce the ocean roar.

Unheard, a mongrel hound gives tongue,
Unheard are shouts of little boys;
What chance has any inland lung
Against this multi-water noise?

Here where the cliffs alone prevail
I stand exultant, neutral, free,
And from the cushion of the gale
Behold a huge consoling sea.

Sir John Betjeman