

Stephen Robertson

Shingle Street

The sea is never still. Even in my sleep
I hear the ground-swell gently break and sift,
pushing the shingle back and forth and to and fro,
in a flat calm air. A winter storm
brings wild mountains of water crashing down
to redefine the contours of the shore.

Around the river mouth the tides run strong.
Channels and banks of shingle shift and melt,
form and reform each ebb and flow, each moonphase
and each season (the navigation buoys must needs
be relocated every spring, the charts
redrawn).

The line of pebble-dunes protects
a calmer green oasis, band of salt-marsh
where barn-owls hunt their prey. But not for long
—impermanence's permanence the rule.
Change will last forever.

At intervals along the south horizon
container ships in stately progress pass
destined for Harwich or for Felixstowe.