The Sea and the Rock by Fedor Tyutchev

Charles Tomlinson

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Sconset

I have never been
To Sconset, but the gleam
Of painted houses
Adding a snow-tone
To the sea-tone in the mind’s
Folder of the principal views
With the courthouse
Seen from the harbour, the harbour
Obscured by the whiteness
Of the church, crouched
Behind a dark shrub
Whose serrated leaves
Hang mounted (as it were)
On the spine of a feather—
These have invaded
All I shall ever hear
To their contrary.

—Charles Tomlinson

The Sea and the Rock

by Fëdor Tyutchev

The sea, that leveller
Would have it down. Rebellion
Roars in the water now
That seethes and climbs, hisses
Against the untaken height.
Here, devils’ fires
Bubble Gehenna’s cauldron, then
Upend it, streaming.

Incessant on rock and shore
This bestial, bawling
Sibilance of the risen waves.
Mountain serenity, creation’s
Sole giant contemporary
Stands over them, contained
In its pride of patience.

Mocked, they mass to regain,
Reclamber the granite sides
And howl their hopes
Into the teeth of stone, already torn
Turned by it backward
And the enfeebled onrush
Peters to turbid foam.

That space is small, measured
Against your waiting strength,
In which the sea must sicken
And the worn rollers, tamed
Make way for the spreading calm
And, uncomplaining, steal
Downwards to lick in peace your granite heel.

—translated by Charles Tomlinson

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