

## **Dover Beach**

BY MATTHEW ARNOLD

The sea is calm tonight.  
The tide is full, the moon lies fair  
Upon the straits; on the French coast the light  
Gleams and is gone; the cliffs of England stand,  
Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.  
Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!  
Only, from the long line of spray  
Where the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,  
Listen! you hear the grating roar  
Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,  
At their return, up the high strand,  
Begin, and cease, and then again begin,  
With tremulous cadence slow, and bring  
The eternal note of sadness in.

Sophocles long ago  
Heard it on the Ægean, and it brought  
Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow  
Of human misery; we  
Find also in the sound a thought,  
Hearing it by this distant northern sea.

The Sea of Faith  
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore  
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.  
But now I only hear  
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,  
Retreating, to the breath  
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear  
And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true  
To one another! for the world, which seems  
To lie before us like a land of dreams,  
So various, so beautiful, so new,  
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,  
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;  
And we are here as on a darkling plain  
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

Loveliest of Trees

**A. E. Housman, 1859 - 1936**

Loveliest of trees, the cherry now  
Is hung with bloom along the bough,  
And stands about the woodland ride  
Wearing white for Eastertide.

Now, of my threescore years and ten,  
Twenty will not come again,  
And take from seventy springs a score,  
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom  
Fifty springs are little room,  
About the woodlands I will go  
To see the cherry hung with snow.

The Whipping  
Robert Hayden

The old woman across the way  
is whipping the boy again  
and shouting to the neighborhood  
her goodness and his wrongs.  
Wildly he crashes through elephant ears,  
pleads in dusty zinnias,  
while she in spite of crippling fat  
pursues and corners him.  
She strikes and strikes the shrilly circling  
boy till the stick breaks  
in her hand. His tears are rainy weather  
to woundlike memories:  
My head gripped in bony vise  
of knees, the writhing struggle  
to wrench free, the blows, the fear  
worse than blows that hateful  
Words could bring, the face that I  
no longer knew or loved . . .  
Well, it is over now, it is over,  
and the boy sobs in his room,  
And the woman leans muttering against  
a tree, exhausted, purged—  
avenged in part for lifelong hidings  
she has had to bear.

## **To an Athlete Dying Young**

BY A. E. HOUSMAN

The time you won your town the race  
We chaired you through the market-place;  
Man and boy stood cheering by,  
And home we brought you shoulder-high.

Today, the road all runners come,  
Shoulder-high we bring you home,  
And set you at your threshold down,  
Townsmen of a stiller town.

Smart lad, to slip betimes away  
From fields where glory does not stay,  
And early though the laurel grows  
It withers quicker than the rose.

Eyes the shady night has shut  
Cannot see the record cut,  
And silence sounds no worse than cheers  
After earth has stopped the ears.

Now you will not swell the rout  
Of lads that wore their honours out,  
Runners whom renown outran  
And the name died before the man.

So set, before its echoes fade,  
The fleet foot on the sill of shade,  
And hold to the low lintel up  
The still-defended challenge-cup.

And round that early-laurelled head  
Will flock to gaze the strengthless dead,  
And find unwithered on its curls  
The garland briefer than a girl's.

## **Holy Sonnets: Batter my heart, three-person'd God**

BY JOHN DONNE

Batter my heart, three-person'd God, for you  
As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;  
That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend  
Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.  
I, like an usurp'd town to another due,  
Labor to admit you, but oh, to no end;  
Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,  
But is captiv'd, and proves weak or untrue.  
Yet dearly I love you, and would be lov'd fain,  
But am betroth'd unto your enemy;  
Divorce me, untie or break that knot again,  
Take me to you, imprison me, for I,  
Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,  
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

## **The Immortal Part**

When I meet the morning beam,  
Or lay me down at night to dream,  
I hear my bones within me say,  
"Another night, another day."  
"When shall this slough of sense be cast,  
This dust of thoughts be laid at last,  
The man of flesh and soul be slain  
And the man of bone remain?"  
"This tongue that talks, these lungs that shout,  
These thews that hustle us about,  
This brain that fills the skull with schemes,  
And its humming hive of dreams,—"  
"These to-day are proud in power  
And lord it in their little hour:  
The immortal bones obey control  
Of dying flesh and dying soul."  
" 'Tis long till eve and morn are gone:  
Slow the endless night comes on,  
And late to fulness grows the birth  
That shall last as long as earth."  
"Wanderers eastward, wanderers west,  
Know you why you cannot rest?  
'Tis that every mother's son  
Travails with a skeleton."  
"Lie down in the bed of dust;  
Bear the fruit that bear you must;  
Bring the eternal seed to light,  
And morn is all the same as night."  
"Rest you so from trouble sore,  
Fear the heat o' the sun no more,  
Nor the snowing winter wild,  
Now you labour not with child."  
"Empty vessel, garment cast,  
We that wore you long shall last.  
—Another night, another day."  
So my bones within me say.  
Therefore they shall do my will  
To-day while I am master still,  
And flesh and soul, now both are strong,  
Shall hale the sullen slaves along,  
Before this fire of sense decay,  
This smoke of thought blow clean away,  
And leave with ancient night alone  
The stedfast and enduring bone.

**Sorting Laundry**  
**by Elisavietta Ritchie**

Folding clothes,  
I think of folding you  
into my life.  
Our king-sized sheets  
like tablecloths  
for the banquets of giants,  
pillowcases, despite so many  
washings, seems still  
holding our dreams.  
Towels patterned orange and green,  
flowered pink and lavender,  
gaudy, bought on sale,  
reserved, we said, for the beach,  
refusing, even after years,  
to bleach into respectability.  
So many shirts and skirts and pants  
recycling week after week, head over heels  
recapitulating themselves.  
All those wrinkles  
To be smoothed, or else  
ignored; they're in style.  
Myriad uncoupled socks  
which went paired into the foam  
like those creatures in the ark.  
And what's shrunk  
is tough to discard  
even for Goodwill.  
In pockets, surprises:  
forgotten matches,  
lost screws clinking the drain;  
well-washed dollars, legal tender  
for all debts public and private,  
intact despite agitation;  
and, gleaming in the maelstrom,  
one bright dime,  
broken necklace of good gold  
you brought from Kuwait,  
the strangely tailored shirt  
left by a former lover...  
If you were to leave me,  
if I were to fold  
only my own clothes,  
the convexes and concaves

of my blouses, panties, stockings, bras  
turned upon themselves,  
a mountain of unsorted wash  
could not fill  
the empty side of the bed .



**I felt a Funeral, in my Brain**

BY EMILY DICKINSON

I felt a Funeral, in my Brain,  
And Mourners to and fro  
Kept treading - treading - till it seemed  
That Sense was breaking through -

And when they all were seated,  
A Service, like a Drum -  
Kept beating - beating - till I thought  
My mind was going numb -

And then I heard them lift a Box  
And creak across my Soul  
With those same Boots of Lead, again,  
Then Space - began to toll,

As all the Heavens were a Bell,  
And Being, but an Ear,  
And I, and Silence, some strange Race,  
Wrecked, solitary, here -

And then a Plank in Reason, broke,  
And I dropped down, and down -  
And hit a World, at every plunge,  
And Finished knowing - then -

The Sound of Night  
By Maxine Kumin

And now the dark comes on, all full of chitter noise.  
Birds huggermugger crowd the trees,  
the air thick with their vesper cries,  
and bats, snub seven-pointed kites,  
skitter across the lake, swing out,  
squeak, chirp, dip, and skim on skates  
of air, and the fat frogs wake and prinkwide-lipped,  
noisy as ducks, drunk  
on the boozy black, gloating chink-chunk.

And now on the narrow beach we defend ourselves from dark.  
The cooking done, we build our firework  
bright and hot and less for outlook  
than for magic, and lie in our blankets  
while night nickers around us. Crickets  
chorus hallelujahs; paws, quiet  
and quick as raindrops, play on the stones  
expertly soft, run past and are gone;  
fish pulse in the lake; the frogs hoarsen.

Now every voice of the hour--the known, the supposed,  
the strange,  
the mindless, the witted, the never seen--  
sing, thrum, impinge, and rearrange  
endlessly; and debarred from sleep we wait  
for the birds, importantly silent,  
for the crease of first eye-licking light,  
for the sun, lost long ago and sweet.  
By the lake, locked black away and tight,  
we lie, day creatures, overhearing night.

## **Ode to a Nightingale**

**BY JOHN KEATS**

My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains  
    My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk,  
Or emptied some dull opiate to the drains  
    One minute past, and Lethe-wards had sunk:  
'Tis not through envy of thy happy lot,  
    But being too happy in thine happiness,—  
    That thou, light-winged Dryad of the trees  
        In some melodious plot  
Of beechen green, and shadows numberless,  
    Singest of summer in full-throated ease.

O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been  
    Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth,  
Tasting of Flora and the country green,  
    Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!  
O for a beaker full of the warm South,  
    Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,  
    With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,  
    And purple-stained mouth;  
That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,  
    And with thee fade away into the forest dim:

Fade far away, dissolve, and quite forget  
    What thou among the leaves hast never known,  
The weariness, the fever, and the fret  
    Here, where men sit and hear each other groan;  
Where palsy shakes a few, sad, last gray hairs,  
    Where youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies;  
    Where but to think is to be full of sorrow  
    And leaden-eyed despairs,  
Where Beauty cannot keep her lustrous eyes,  
    Or new Love pine at them beyond to-morrow.

Away! away! for I will fly to thee,  
    Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,  
But on the viewless wings of Poesy,  
    Though the dull brain perplexes and retards:  
Already with thee! tender is the night,  
    And haply the Queen-Moon is on her throne,  
    Cluster'd around by all her starry Fays;  
    But here there is no light,  
Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown  
    Through verdurous glooms and winding mossy ways.

I cannot see what flowers are at my feet,  
Nor what soft incense hangs upon the boughs,  
But, in embalmed darkness, guess each sweet  
Wherewith the seasonable month endows  
The grass, the thicket, and the fruit-tree wild;  
White hawthorn, and the pastoral eglantine;  
Fast fading violets cover'd up in leaves;  
And mid-May's eldest child,  
The coming musk-rose, full of dewy wine,  
The murmurous haunt of flies on summer eves.

Darkling I listen; and, for many a time  
I have been half in love with easeful Death,  
Call'd him soft names in many a mused rhyme,  
To take into the air my quiet breath;  
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,  
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,  
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad  
In such an ecstasy!  
Still wouldst thou sing, and I have ears in vain—  
To thy high requiem become a sod.

Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!  
No hungry generations tread thee down;  
The voice I hear this passing night was heard  
In ancient days by emperor and clown:  
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path  
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,  
She stood in tears amid the alien corn;  
The same that oft-times hath  
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam  
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

Forlorn! the very word is like a bell  
To toll me back from thee to my sole self!  
Adieu! the fancy cannot cheat so well  
As she is fam'd to do, deceiving elf.  
Adieu! adieu! thy plaintive anthem fades  
Past the near meadows, over the still stream,  
Up the hill-side; and now 'tis buried deep  
In the next valley-glades:  
Was it a vision, or a waking dream?  
Fled is that music:—Do I wake or sleep?

## **I'm Not Complaining**

By Philip Schultz

It isn't as if I never enjoyed good wine  
or walked along the Hudson in moonlight,  
I have poignant friends & a decent job,  
I read good books even if they're about  
miserable people but who's perfectly happy,  
I didn't go hungry as a kid & I'm not constantly  
oppressed by fascists, what if my apartment  
never recovered from its ferocious beating  
no one ever said life was easy, I admit  
my hands turn to cardboard during love-making  
& I often sweat through two wool blankets-  
but anxiety is good for weight-loss, listen,  
who isn't frightened of late night humming  
in the walls, I don't live in a police state,  
I own a passport & can travel even if I can't  
afford to, almost everyone is insulted daily,  
what if love is a sentence to hard labor &  
last year I couldn't pay my taxes, I didn't  
go to prison, yes, I've lost friends to alcohol  
& cancer but life is an adventure & I enjoy  
meeting new people, sure it's hard getting older  
& mysteriously shorter but insomnia & depression  
afflict even the rich and famous, okay my folks  
were stingy with affection & my pets didn't live long,  
believe me, sympathy isn't what I'm after, I'm basically  
almost happy, God in all His wisdom knows that at heart  
I'm really not complaining...

We Real Cool  
Gwendolyn Brooks

THE POOL PLAYERS.  
SEVEN AT THE GOLDEN SHOVEL.

We real cool. We  
Left school. We

Lurk late. We  
Strike straight. We

Sing sin. We  
Thin gin. We

Jazz June. We  
Die soon.