Wild Nights - Wild Nights!

Were I with thee

Wild Nights should be

Our luxury!

Futile - the Winds -

To a Heart in port -

Done with the Compass -

Done with the Chart!

Rowing in Eden -

Ah, the Sea!

Might I but moor - Tonight -

In Thee!

—Emily Dickinson

**Meeting at Night**

I   
The grey sea and the long black land;  
And the yellow half-moon large and low;  
And the startled little waves that leap  
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,  
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,  
And quench its speed i’ the slushy sand.

II  
Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach;  
Three fields to cross till a farm appears;  
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch  
And blue spurt of a lighted match,  
And a voice less loud, thro’ its joys and fears,  
Than the two hearts beating each to each!

**Parting at Morning**

Round the cape of a sudden came the sea,  
And the sun looked over the mountain’s rim –  
And straight was a path of gold for him,  
And the need of a world of men for me.

—Robert Browning

**A Grave**

Man looking into the sea,

taking the view from those who have as much right to it as you have it to yourself,

it is human nature to stand in the middle of a thing

but you cannot stand in the middle of this:

the sea has nothing to give but a well excavated grave.

The firs stand in a procession, each with an emerald turkey-foot at the top,

reserved as their contours, saying nothing;

repression, however, is not the most obvious characteristic of the sea;

the sea is a collector, quick to return a rapacious look.

There are others besides you who have worn that look—

whose expression is no longer a protest; the fish no longer investigate them

for their bones have not lasted;

men lower nets, unconscious of the fact that they are desecrating a grave,

and row quickly away—the blades of the oars

moving together like the feet of water-spiders as if there were no such thing as death.

The wrinkles progress upon themselves in a phalanx—beautiful under networks of foam,

and fade breathlessly while the sea rustles in and out of the seaweed;

the birds swim through the air at top speed, emitting cat-calls as heretofore—

the tortoise-shell scourges about the feet of the cliffs, in motion beneath them

and the ocean, under the pulsation of lighthouse and noise of bell-buoys,

advances as usual, looking as if it were not that ocean in which dropped things are bound to sink—

in which if they turn and twist, it is neither with volition nor consciousness.

—Marianne Moore

**The Idea of Order at Key West**

She sang beyond the genius of the sea.

The water never formed to mind or voice,

Like a body wholly body, fluttering

Its empty sleeves; and yet its mimic motion

Made constant cry, caused constantly a cry,

That was not ours although we understood,

Inhuman, of the veritable ocean.

The sea was not a mask. No more was she.

The song and water were not medleyed sound

Even if what she sang was what she heard,

Since what she sang was uttered word by word.

It may be that in all her phrases stirred

The grinding water and the gasping wind;

But it was she and not the sea we heard.

For she was the maker of the song she sang.

The ever-hooded, tragic-gestured sea

Was merely a place by which she walked to sing.

Whose spirit is this? we said, because we knew

It was the spirit that we sought and knew

That we should ask this often as she sang.

If it was only the dark voice of the sea

That rose, or even colored by many waves;

If it was only the outer voice of sky

And cloud, of the sunken coral water-walled,

However clear, it would have been deep air,

The heaving speech of air, a summer sound

Repeated in a summer without end

And sound alone. But it was more than that,

More even than her voice, and ours, among

The meaningless plungings of water and the wind,

Theatrical distances, bronze shadows heaped

On high horizons, mountainous atmospheres

Of sky and sea.

                           It was her voice that made

The sky acutest at its vanishing.

She measured to the hour its solitude.

She was the single artificer of the world

In which she sang. And when she sang, the sea,

Whatever self it had, became the self

That was her song, for she was the maker. Then we,

As we beheld her striding there alone,

Knew that there never was a world for her

Except the one she sang and, singing, made.

Ramon Fernandez, tell me, if you know,

Why, when the singing ended and we turned

Toward the town, tell why the glassy lights,

The lights in the fishing boats at anchor there,

As the night descended, tilting in the air,

Mastered the night and portioned out the sea,

Fixing emblazoned zones and fiery poles,

Arranging, deepening, enchanting night.

Oh! Blessed rage for order, pale Ramon,

The maker’s rage to order words of the sea,

Words of the fragrant portals, dimly-starred,

And of ourselves and of our origins,

In ghostlier demarcations, keener sounds.

—Wallace Stevens

**Stanzas Before Time**

Quietly as if it could be

otherwise, the ocean turns

and slinks back into her panties.

Reefs must know something of this,

and all the incurious red fish

that float ditsily in schools,

wondering which school is best.

I’d take you for a drive

in my flivver, Miss Ocean, honest, if I could.

—John Ashbery