**[From *In Memoriam A. H. H*., VII]**

Dark house, by which once more I stand

Here in the long unlovely street,

   Doors, where my heart was used to beat

So quickly, waiting for a hand,

A hand that can be clasped no more —

Behold me, for I cannot sleep,

   And like a guilty thing I creep

At earliest morning to the door.

He is not here; but far away

The noise of life begins again,

   And ghastly through the drizzling rain

On the bald street breaks the blank day.

—Alfred Tennyson

**At the Door**

  The waters roll, quick-bubbling by the shoal,

     Or leap the rock, outfoaming in a bow.

  The wind blows free in gushes round the tree,

     Along the grove of oaks in double row,

  Where lovers seek the maidens’ evening floor,

  With stip-step light, and tip-tap slight,

        Against the door.

  With iron bound, the wheel-rims roll around,

     And crunch the crackling flint below their load.

  The gravel, trod by horses ironshod,

     All crackles shrill along the beaten road,

  Where lovers come to seek, in our old place,

  With stip-step light, and tip-tap slight,

        The maiden’s face.

  And oh! how sweet’s the time the lover’s feet

     May come before the door to seek a bride,

  As he may stand and knock with shaking hand,

     And lean to hear the sweetest voice inside;

  While there a heart will leap, to hear once more

  The stip-step light, and tip-tap slight,

        Against the door.

  How sweet’s the time when we are in our prime,

     With children, now our care and aye our joy,

  And child by child may scamper, skipping wild,

     Back home from school or play-games, girl or boy,

  And there upon the door-stone leap once more,

  With stip-step light, and tip-tap slight,

        Against the door.

—William Barnes

**The Listeners**

‘Is there anybody there?’ said the Traveller,

   Knocking on the moonlit door;

And his horse in the silence champed the grasses

   Of the forest’s ferny floor:

And a bird flew up out of the turret,

   Above the Traveller’s head:

And he smote upon the door again a second time;

   ‘Is there anybody there?’ he said.

But no one descended to the Traveller;

   No head from the leaf-fringed sill

Leaned over and looked into his grey eyes,

   Where he stood perplexed and still.

But only a host of phantom listeners

   That dwelt in the lone house then

Stood listening in the quiet of the moonlight

   To that voice from the world of men:

Stood thronging the faint moonbeams on the dark stair,

   That goes down to the empty hall,

Hearkening in an air stirred and shaken

   By the lonely Traveller’s call.

And he felt in his heart their strangeness,

   Their stillness answering his cry,

While his horse moved, cropping the dark turf,

   ’Neath the starred and leafy sky;

For he suddenly smote on the door, even

   Louder, and lifted his head:—

‘Tell them I came, and no one answered,

   That I kept my word,’ he said.

Never the least stir made the listeners,

   Though every word he spake

Fell echoing through the shadowiness of the still house

   From the one man left awake:

Ay, they heard his foot upon the stirrup,

   And the sound of iron on stone,

And how the silence surged softly backward,

   When the plunging hoofs were gone.

—Walter de la Mare

**Willful Homing**

It is getting dark and time he drew to a house,

But the blizzard blinds him to any house ahead.

The storm gets down his neck in an icy souse

That sucks his breath like a wicked cat in bed.

The snow blows on him and off him, exerting force

Downward to make him sit astride a drift,

Imprint a saddle and calmly consider a course.

He peers out shrewdly into the thick and swift.

Since he means to come to a door he will come to a door,

Although so compromised of aim and rate

He may fumble wide of the knob a yard or more,

And to those concerned he may seem a little late.

—Robert Frost

**The Forge**

All I know is a door into the dark.

Outside, old axles and iron hoops rusting;

Inside, the hammered anvil’s short-pitched ring,

The unpredictable fantail of sparks

Or hiss when a new shoe toughens in water.

The anvil must be somewhere in the centre,

Horned as a unicorn, at one end square,

Set there immoveable: an altar

Where he expends himself in shape and music.

Sometimes, leather-aproned, hairs in his nose,

He leans out on the jamb, recalls a clatter

Of hoofs where traffic is flashing in rows;

Then grunts and goes in, with a slam and flick

To beat real iron out, to work the bellows.

—Seamus Heaney

**The Door**

Too little

has been said

of the door, its one

face turned to the night’s

downpour and its other

to the shift and glisten of firelight.

Air, clasped

by this cover

into the room’s book,

is filled by the turning

pages of dark and fire

as the wind shoulders the panels, or unsteadies that burning.

Not only

the storm’s

breakwater, but the sudden

frontier to our concurrences, appearances,

and as full of the offer of space

as the view through a cromlech is.

For doors

are both frame and monument

to our spent time,

and too little

has been said

of our coming through and leaving by them.

—Charles Tomlinson