

## Dover Beach

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,  
 5 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!  
 10 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.

15 Sophocles long ago  
 Heard it on the Aegean, and it brought  
 Into his mind the turbid ebb and flow  
 Of human misery;<sup>2</sup> we  
 Find also in the sound a thought,  
 20 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.<sup>3</sup>  
 But now I only hear  
 25 Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,  
 Retreating, to the breath  
 Of the night wind, down the vast edges drear  
 And naked shingles<sup>4</sup> of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true  
 30 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;

would then come down from their inland hiding places and set gold beside the bales they wished to buy. When the natives withdrew in their turn, the Carthaginians would return to the beach and decide whether payments were adequate, a process repeated until agreement was reached. On the Atlantic coasts this method of bargaining persisted into the 19th century. As William Beloe, a translator of Herodotus, noted in 1844: "In this manner they transact their exchange without seeing one another, or without the least instance of dishonesty . . . on either side." For the solitary Tyrian trader such a procedure, with its avoidance of "contact" (line 221), would have been especially appropriate. 1. Cf. Wordsworth's *It Is a Beauteous Evening*, lines 6–8: "Listen! the mighty Being is awake, / And

doth with his eternal motion make / A sound like thunder—everlastingly."

2. A reference to a chorus in *Antigone*, which compares human sorrow to the sound of the waves moving the sand beneath them (lines 585–91).

3. This difficult line means, in general, that at high tide the sea envelops the land closely. Its forces are "gathered" up (to use Wordsworth's term for it) like the "folds" of bright clothing ("girdle") that have been compressed ("furled"). At ebb tide, as the sea retreats, it is unfurled and spread out. It still surrounds the shoreline but not as an "enclasping flow" (as in *To Marguerite—Continued*).

4. Beaches covered with pebbles.

35 And we are here as on a darkling plain  
 Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,  
 Where ignorant armies<sup>5</sup> clash by night.

ca. 1851

1867

Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse<sup>1</sup>

Through Alpine meadows soft-suffused  
 With rain, where thick the crocus blows,  
 Past the dark forges long disused,  
 The mule track from Saint Laurent goes.  
 5 The bridge is crossed, and slow we ride,  
 Through forest, up the mountainside.

The autumnal evening darkens round,  
 The wind is up, and drives the rain;  
 While, hark! far down, with strangled sound  
 10 Doth the Dead Guier's<sup>2</sup> stream complain,  
 Where that wet smoke, among the woods,  
 Over his boiling cauldron broods.

Swift rush the spectral vapors white  
 Past limestone scars<sup>3</sup> with ragged pines,  
 15 Showing—then blotting from our sight!—  
 Halt—through the cloud-drift something shines!  
 High in the valley, wet and drear,  
 The huts of Courrierie appear.

precipices

Strike leftward! cries our guide; and higher  
 20 Mounts up the stony forest way.  
 At last the encircling trees retire;  
 Look! through the showery twilight grey  
 What pointed roofs are these advance?—  
 A palace of the Kings of France?

25 Approach, for what we seek is here!  
 Alight, and sparely sup, and wait  
 For rest in this outbuilding near;  
 Then cross the sward and reach that gate.

5. Perhaps alluding to conflicts in Arnold's own time such as occurred during the revolutions of 1848 in Europe, or at the Siege of Rome by the French in 1849 (the date of composition of the poem is unknown, although generally assumed to be 1851.) But the passage also refers back to another battle, one that occurred more than two thousand years earlier when an Athenian army was attempting an invasion of Sicily at nighttime. As this "night battle" was described by Thucydides in his *History of the Peloponnesian War* (7, chap. 44), the invaders became confused by darkness and slaughtered many of their own men. Hence "ignorant armies."

1. A monastery situated high in the French Alps. It was established in 1084 by Saint Bruno, founder of the Carthusians (line 30), whose austere regimen of solitary contemplation, fasting, and religious exercises (lines 37–44) had remained virtually unchanged for centuries. Arnold visited the site on September 7, 1851, accompanied by his bride. His account may be compared with that by Wordsworth (*Prelude* 6.416–88), who had made a similar visit in 1790.  
 2. The Guiers Mort River flows down from the monastery and joins the Guiers Vif in the valley below. Wordsworth speaks of the two rivers as "the sister streams of Life and Death."



Knock; pass the wicket! Thou art come  
30 To the Carthusians' world-famed home.

The silent courts, where night and day  
Into their stone-carved basins cold  
The splashing icy fountains play—  
The humid corridors behold!

35 Where, ghostlike in the deepening night,  
Cowled forms brush by in gleaming white.

The chapel, where no organ's peal  
Invests the stern and naked prayer—  
With penitential cries they kneel  
40 And wrestle; rising then, with bare  
And white uplifted faces stand,  
Passing the Host from hand to hand;<sup>3</sup>

Each takes, and then his visage wan  
Is buried in his cowl once more.  
45 The cells!—the suffering Son of Man  
Upon the wall—the knee-worn floor—  
And where they sleep, that wooden bed,  
Which shall their coffin be, when dead!<sup>4</sup>

The library, where tract and tome  
50 Not to feed priestly pride are there,  
To hymn the conquering march of Rome,  
Nor yet to amuse, as ours are!  
They paint of souls the inner strife,  
Their drops of blood, their death in life.

55 The garden, overgrown—yet mild,  
See, fragrant herbs<sup>5</sup> are flowering there!  
Strong children of the Alpine wild  
Whose culture is the brethren's care;  
Of human tasks their only one,  
60 And cheerful works beneath the sun.

Those halls, too, destined to contain  
Each its own pilgrim-host of old,  
From England, Germany, or Spain—  
All are before me! I behold  
65 The House, the Brotherhood austere!  
—And what am I, that I am here?

For rigorous teachers seized my youth,  
And purged its faith, and trimmed its fire,

3. Arnold, during his short visit, may not actually have witnessed the service of the Mass in the monastery. The consecrated wafer ("the Host") is not passed from the hand of the officiating priest to the hands of the communicant (as is the practice in Arnold's own Anglican Church) but placed, instead, on the tongue of the communicant (who

kneels rather than stands).

4. A Carthusian is buried on a wooden plank but does not sleep in a coffin.

5. From which the liqueur Chartreuse is manufactured. Sales of this liqueur provide the principal revenues for upkeep of the monastery.

70 Showed me the high, white star of Truth,  
There bade me gaze, and there aspire.  
Even now their whispers pierce the gloom:  
What dost thou in this living tomb?

Forgive me, masters of the mind!<sup>6</sup>  
At whose behest I long ago  
75 So much unlearned, so much resigned—  
I come not here to be your foe!  
I seek these anchorites, not in ruth,<sup>7</sup>  
To curse and to deny your truth;

Not as their friend, or child, I speak!  
80 But as, on some far northern strand,  
Thinking of his own Gods, a Greek  
In pity and mournful awe might stand  
Before some fallen Runic stone<sup>8</sup>—  
For both were faiths, and both are gone.

85 Wandering between two worlds, one dead,  
The other powerless to be born,  
With nowhere yet to rest my head,  
Like these, on earth I wait forlorn.  
Their faith, my tears, the world deride—  
90 I come to shed them at their side.

Oh, hide me in your gloom profound,  
Ye solemn seats of holy pain!  
Take me, cowled forms, and fence me round,  
Till I possess my soul again;  
95 Till free my thoughts before me roll,  
Not chafed by hourly false control!

For the world cries your faith is now  
But a dead time's exploded dream;  
My melancholy, sciolists<sup>9</sup> say,  
100 Is a passed mode, an outworn theme—  
As if the world had ever had  
A faith, or sciolists been sad!

Ah, if it *be* passed, take away,  
At least, the restlessness, the pain;  
105 Be man henceforth no more a prey  
To these out-dated stings again!

6. Writers whose insistence on testing religious beliefs in the light of fact and reason persuaded Arnold that faith in Christianity (especially in the Roman Catholic or Anglo Catholic forms) was no longer tenable in the modern world.

7. Remorse for having adopted the rationalist view of Christianity.

8. A monument inscribed in Teutonic letters

(runes), emblematic of a Nordic religion that has become extinct. The relic reminds the Greek that his own religion is likewise dying and will soon be extinct (see *Preface to Poems* [1853], p. 1504, para. 2).

9. Superficial-minded persons who pretend to know the answers to all questions.

The nobleness of grief is gone—  
Ah, leave us not the fret alone!

110 But—if you<sup>1</sup> cannot give us ease—  
Last of the race of them who grieve  
Here leave us to die out with these  
Last of the people who believe!  
Silent, while years engrave the brow;  
Silent—the best are silent now.

115 Achilles<sup>2</sup> ponders in his tent,  
The kings of modern thought<sup>3</sup> are dumb;  
Silent they are, though not content,  
And wait to see the future come.  
They have the grief men had of yore,  
120 But they contend and cry no more.

Our fathers<sup>4</sup> watered with their tears  
This sea of time whereon we sail,  
Their voices were in all men's ears  
Who passed within their puissant hail.  
125 Still the same ocean round us raves,  
But we stand mute, and watch the waves.

For what availed it, all the noise  
And outcry of the former men?—  
Say, have their sons achieved more joys,  
130 Say, is life lighter now than then?  
The sufferers died, they left their pain—  
The pangs which tortured them remain.

What helps it now, that Byron bore,  
With haughty scorn which mocked the smart,  
135 Through Europe to the Aetolian shore<sup>5</sup>  
The pageant of his bleeding heart?  
That thousands counted every groan,  
And Europe made his woe her own?

140 What boots it, Shelley! that the breeze  
Carried thy lovely wail away,  
Musical through Italian trees  
Which fringe thy soft blue Spezzian bay?<sup>6</sup>  
Inheritors of thy distress  
Have restless hearts one throb the less?

1. It is not clear whether the speaker has resumed addressing his "rigorous teachers" (line 67) or (as would seem more likely) a combination of the sciolists, who scorn the speaker's melancholy, and the worldly, who scorn the faith of the monks. See his address to the "sons of the world" (lines 161–68).  
2. Until the death of Patroclus, he refused to participate in the Trojan war, hence similar to modern intellectual leaders who refuse to speak out about their frustrated sense of alienation.

3. Various but never satisfactorily identified as Newman or Carlyle (the latter was said to have preached the gospel of silence in forty volumes). Another advocate of stoical silence was the French poet Alfred de Vigny (1797–1863).

4. Predecessors among the Romantic writers such as Byron.

5. Region in Greece where Byron died.

6. The Gulf of Spezia in Italy, where Shelley was drowned.

145 Or are we easier, to have read,  
O Obermann!<sup>7</sup> the sad, stern page,  
Which tells us how thou hidd'st thy head  
From the fierce tempest of thine age  
In the lone brakes of Fontainebleau,  
150 Or chalets near the Alpine snow?

Ye slumber in your silent grave!  
The world, which for an idle day  
Grace to your mood of sadness gave,  
Long since hath flung her weeds<sup>8</sup> away. *mourning clothes*  
155 The eternal trifler<sup>8</sup> breaks your spell;  
But we—we learnt your lore too well!

Years hence, perhaps, may dawn an age,  
More fortunate, alas! than we,  
Which without hardness will be sage,  
160 And gay without frivolity.  
Sons of the world, oh, speed those years;  
But, while we wait, allow our tears!

165 Allow them! We admire with awe  
The exulting thunder of your race;  
You give the universe your law,  
You triumph over time and space!  
Your pride of life, your tireless powers,  
We laud them, but they are not ours.

We are like children reared in shade  
170 Beneath some old-world abbey wall,  
Forgotten in a forest glade,  
And secret from the eyes of all.  
Deep, deep the greenwood round them waves,  
Their abbey, and its close<sup>9</sup> of graves! *enclosure*

175 But, where the road runs near the stream,  
Oft through the trees they catch a glance  
Of passing troops in the sun's beam—  
Pennon, and plume, and flashing lance!  
Forth to the world those soldiers fare,  
180 To life, to cities, and to war!

And through the wood, another way,  
Faint bugle notes from far are borne,  
Where hunters gather, staghounds bay,<sup>9</sup>  
Round some fair forest-lodge at morn.  
185 Gay dames are there, in sylvan green;  
Laughter and cries—those notes between!

7. Melancholy hero of *Obermann* (1804), a novel by the French writer Senancour.

8. The sciolist, as in line 99.

9. Cf. the contrast between recluses and hunters in *The Scholar Gypsy*, lines 71–81 (pp. 1487–88).

The banners flashing through the trees  
 Make their blood dance and chain their eyes;  
 That bugle music on the breeze  
 190 Arrests them with a charmed surprise.  
 Banner by turns and bugle woo:  
*Ye shy recluses, follow too!*

O children, what do ye reply?—  
 "Action and pleasure, will ye roam  
 195 Through these secluded dells to cry  
 And call us?—but too late ye come!  
 Too late for us your call ye blow,  
 Whose bent was taken long ago.

"Long since we pace this shadowed nave;  
 200 We watch those yellow tapers shine,  
 Emblems of hope over the grave,  
 In the high altar's depth divine;  
 The organ carries to our ear  
 Its accents of another sphere.<sup>1</sup>

"Fenced early in this cloistral round  
 Of reverie, of shade, of prayer,  
 How should we grow in other ground?  
 How can we flower in foreign air?  
 —Pass, banners, pass, and bugles, cease;  
 210 And leave our desert to its peace!"

1852(?)

1855

Thyrsis<sup>1</sup>

*A Monody, to Commemorate the Author's Friend, Arthur Hugh Clough,  
 Who Died at Florence, 1861*

How changed is here each spot man makes or fills!  
 In the two Hinkseys<sup>2</sup> nothing keeps the same;  
 The village street its haunted mansion lacks,  
 And from the sign is gone Sibylla's<sup>3</sup> name,  
 5 And from the roofs the twisted chimney stacks—

1. The organ music is from the abbey in the green-wood (line 174), as contrasted with the monastery on the mountaintop in which there is no organ (line 37).

1. In the 1840s, at Oxford, Clough had been one of Arnold's closest friends. After the death of this fellow poet twenty years later, Arnold revisited the Thames valley countryside that they had explored together. The familiar scenes prompted him to review the changes wrought by time on the ideals shared in his Oxford days with Clough, ideals symbolized, in part, by a distant elm and by the story of the Scholar Gypsy. The survival of these ideals in the face of the difficulties of modern life is the subject of this elegy. Unlike Tennyson in such elegies as *In Memoriam*, Arnold rarely touches here

on other kinds of immortality.

As a framework for his elegy, Arnold draws on the same Greek and Latin pastoral tradition from which Milton's *Lycidas* and Shelley's *Adonais* were derived. Hence Clough is referred to by one of the traditional names for a shepherd poet, Thyrsis, and Arnold himself as Corydon. The sense of distancing that results from this traditional elegiac mode is reduced considerably by the realism of the setting with its bleak wintry landscape at twilight, a landscape that is brightened, in turn, by evocations of the return of hopeful springtime.

2. The villages of North Hinksey and South Hinksey.

3. Sibylla Kerr had been the proprietress of a tavern in South Hinksey.