**Chapter Thirteen**

**Sound and Meaning**

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**A Fire- Truck**

**The Dance**

**Pease Porridge Hot   
Anonymous**

Pease porridge hot,  
 Pease porridge cold,   
Pease porridge in the pot   
 Nine days old.

**Song: Come unto these yellow sands   
William Shakespeare (1564-1616)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Come unto these yellow sands, |  |
| And then take hands: |  |
| Court’sied when you have, and kiss’d |  |
| The wild waves whist, |  |
| Foot it featly here and there; | *5* |
| And, sweet sprites, the burden bear. |  |
| Hark, hark! |  |
| Bowgh, wowgh. |  |
| The watch-dogs bark: |  |
| Bowgh, wowgh. | *10* |
| Hark, hark! I hear |  |
| The strain of strutting chanticleer |  |
| Cry, Cock-a-diddle-do. |  |

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|  |

**Eight O’ Clock   
A. E. Housman (1859- 1936)**

He stood, and heard the steeple

Sprinkle the quarters on the morning town.

One, two, three, four, to market-place and people

It tossed them down.

Strapped, noosed, nighing his hour,

He stood and counted them and cursed his luck;

And then the clock collected in the tower

Its strength, and struck.

**Sound and Sense   
Alexander Pope (1688-1744)**

True ease in writing comes from art, not chance,

As those move easiest who have learned to dance.

'Tis not enough no harshness gives offense,

The sound must seem an echo to the sense:

Soft is the strain when Zephyr gently blows,

And the smooth stream in smoother numbers flows;

But when loud surges lash the sounding shore,

The hoarse, rough verse should like the torrent roar;

When Ajax strives some rock's vast weight to throw,

The line too labors, and the words move slow;

Not so, when swift Camilla scours the plain,

Flies o'er the unbending corn, and skims along the main.

Hear how Timotheus' varied lays surprise,

And bid alternate passions fall and rise!

**I heard s Fly buzz—when I died   
Emily Dickinson (1830-1886)**

I heard a Fly buzz - when I died -

The Stillness in the Room

Was like the Stillness in the Air -

Between the Heaves of Storm -

The Eyes around - had wrung them dry -

And Breaths were gathering firm

For that last Onset - when the King

Be witnessed - in the Room -

I willed my Keepsakes - Signed away

What portion of me be

Assignable - and then it was

There interposed a Fly -

With Blue - uncertain - stumbling Buzz -

Between the light - and me -

And then the Windows failed - and then

I could not see to see -

**Heaven- Haven   
Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| I have desired to go |  |
| Where springs not fail, |  |
| To fields where flies no sharp and sided hail, |  |
| And a few lilies blow. |  |
|  |  |
| And I have asked to be | *5* |
| Where no storms come, |  |
| Where the green swell is in the havens dumb, |  |
| And out of the swing of the sea. |  |

**Anthem for Doomed Youth   
Wilfred Owen (1893-1918)**

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?

— Only the monstrous anger of the guns.

Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle

Can patter out their hasty orisons.

No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells;

Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs,—

The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;

And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

What candles may be held to speed them all?

Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes

Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.

The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;

Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,

And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

**Landcrab  
Margaret Atwood (b. 1939)**

A lie, that we come from water.  
The truth is we were born  
from stones, dragons, the sea’s   
teeth, as you testify,   
with your crust and jagged scissors.

Hermit, hard socket  
for a timid eye  
you’re a soft gut scuttling  
sideways, a bone skull,  
round bone on the prowl.  
Wolf of treeroots and gravelly holes,  
a mount on stilts,   
the husk of a small demon,

Attack, voracious  
eating, and flight:  
it’s a sound routine  
for staying alive on edges.  
Then there’s the tide, and that dance  
you do for the moon  
on wet sand, claws raised  
to fend off your mate,   
your coupling a quick  
dry clatter of rocks.   
For mammals  
with their lobes and bulbs,  
scruples and warm milk,  
you’ve nothing but contempt.

Here you are, a frozen scowl  
targeted in flashlight,  
then gone: a piece of what   
we are, not all, my stunted child, my momentary   
face in the mirror,  
my tiny nightmare.

**Nurture   
Maxine Kumin (b. 1925)**

From a documentary on marsupials I learn

that a pillowcase makes a fine

substitute pouch for an orphaned kangaroo.

I am drawn to such dramas of animal rescue.

They are warm in the throat. I suffer, the critic proclaims,

from an overabundance of maternal genes.

Bring me your fallen fledgling, your bummer lamb,

lead the abused, the starvelings, into my barn.

Advise the hunted deer to leap into my corn.

And had there been a wild child—

*filthy* *and fierce* as a ferret, he is called

in one nineteenth-century account—

a wild child to love, it is safe to assume,

given my fireside inked with paw prints,

there would have been room.

Think of the language we two, same and not-same,

might have constructed from sign,

scratch, grimace, grunt, vowel:

Laughter our first noun, and our long verb, howl.From a documentary on marsupials I learn

that a pillowcase makes a fine

substitute pouch for an orphaned kangaroo.

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**At the round earth’s imagined corners   
John Donne (1572-1631)**

At the round earth's imagin'd corners, blow

Your trumpets, angels, and arise, arise

From death, you numberless infinities

Of souls, and to your scatter'd bodies go;

All whom the flood did, and fire shall o'erthrow,

All whom war, dearth, age, agues, tyrannies,

Despair, law, chance hath slain, and you whose eyes

Shall behold God and never taste death's woe.

But let them sleep, Lord, and me mourn a space,

For if above all these my sins abound,

'Tis late to ask abundance of thy grace

When we are there; here on this lowly ground

Teach me how to repent; for that's as good

As if thou'hadst seal'd my pardon with thy blood.

**Blackberry Eating  
Galway Kinnell (b. 1927)**

I love to go out in late September

among the fat, overripe, icy, black blackberries

to eat blackberries for breakfast,

the stalks very prickly, a penalty

they earn for knowing the black art

of blackberry-making; and as I stand among them

lifting the stalks to my mouth, the ripest berries

fall almost unbidden to my tongue,

as words sometimes do, certain peculiar words

like strengths or squinched,

many-lettered, one-syllabled lumps,

which I squeeze, squinch open, and splurge well

in the silent, startled, icy, black language

of blackberry -- eating in late September.

**A Fire- Truck   
Richard Wilbur (b. 1921)**

Right down the shocked street with a

siren-blast

That sends all else skittering to the

curb,

Redness, brass, ladders and hats hurl

past,

Blurring to sheer verb,

Shift at the corner into uproarious gear

And make it around the turn in a squall

of traction,

The headlong bell maintaining sure and

clear,

Thought is degraded action!

Beautiful, heavy, unweary, loud,

obvious thing!

I stand here purged of nuance, my

mind a blank.

All I was brooding upon has taken

wing,

And I have you to thank.

As you howl beyond hearing I carry you

into my mind,

Ladders and brass and all, there to

admire

Your phoenix-red simplicity, enshrined

In that not extinguished fire.

**The Dance   
William Carlos Williams (1883-1963)**

In Brueghel's great picture, The Kermess,

the dancers go round, they go round and

around, the squeal and the blare and the

tweedle of bagpipes, a bugle and fiddles

tipping their bellies (round as the thick-

sided glasses whose wash they impound)

their hips and their bellies off balance

to turn them. Kicking and rolling about

the Fair Grounds, swinging their butts, those

shanks must be sound to bear up under such

rollicking measures, prance as they dance

in Brueghel's great picture, The Kermess.