

Vernon Watkins (1906-67)

4 *Ballad of the Equinox*

Pwlldu — an eternal place!
The black stream under the stones
Carries the bones of the dead,
The starved, the talkative bones.

There the great shingle-bank 5
Props a theatrical scene
Where guess the generous dead
What lovers' words may mean.

When the sun and the moon are level
And the sky has a fish's scales 10
I stand by the foxy foam
On that groaning shingle of Wales.

Beyond Hunt's moonlike bay,
That pockmarked crescent of rocks,
White horses, dead white horses, 15
Priests of the equinox,

Deride my lonely curse,
And the moon rides over, pale,
Where the wicked wet dog in the hearse
And the devil in the wind prevail. 20

The wild wind screams they are mad
Whom the sun and moon delight.
I have followed the curve of the stones
Into this lonely night.

And I hurl a stick to the wave 25

And watch it slowly come,
By all the tides of the grave,
Stopped, like the tick of the foam.

Here, brought by foam, it lies,
A spent and weary log, 30
A crab with a million eyes
And a cast-up, wicked dog

Its marriage witnesses
On the sterile porch of Hell.
And yet I know this is 35
The last dead miracle,

Mightier than the mole
That draws with the strength of ten,
Yoke of great oxen,
Yoke, and mover of men. 40

Though itself a barren thing,
It has been where none has been,
Knows what no actor knows
On this theatrical scene:

‘O unsatisfied! 45
O terrible and alone!
Come to the edge of the tide
And find what none has known,

That the allegorical shadow
Of the lover will not swerve 50
Though the moon drive him to madness
With its sailing curve.’

Pwlldu — an eternal place!
The black stream under the stones
Carries the bones of the dead, 55

The starved, the talkative bones.

1954

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