Part I: Representationalism
in Selected Twentieth Century Compositions about the Sea;
Part II: SENTENTIA, Sea Music
for Soprano, Woodwinds, Brass, and Percussion

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the degree Doctor of Musical Arts in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
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* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1984

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ABSTRACT

Sententia is a four movement work for soprano, woodwinds, brass, and percussion which represents various aspects of the sea in sound. The document, Representationalism in Selected Twentieth Century Compositions about the Sea, intended as an introduction to Sententia, is a study of compositional techniques used in Sententia as well as in three representational works about the sea: La Mer by Claude Debussy; Ancient Voices of Children, second movement, by George Crumb; and Storm from Four Sea Interludes by Benjamin Britten.
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Chapter I
REPRESENTATIONAL MUSIC

INTRODUCTION
This paper will discuss representational music, and describe its relationship to program music, using four twentieth-century pieces concerning the sea: La Mer by Claude Debussy, Ancient Voices of Children by George Crumb, Four Sea Interludes from Peter Grimes by Benjamin Britten, and Sententia by Susan Jenkins.

DEFINITION AND HISTORY OF CONCEPT
Representational music attempts to describe extra-musical phenomena and their effects in sound, to present an experience in a new way, and, according to John Dewey, to cause the listener to perceive the event as the composer communicates it. (1) All program music is representational, but not all representational music is program music. In this paper I limit my definition of program music so that it refers only to those works that have an explicit narrative program supplied by the composer. Representational music

occupies the middle of a continuum from so-called "absolute" music on the left, to music that is explicitly programmatic on the right. An example of a work on the extreme right of the continuum is *The Battle* by William Byrd, because it is totally shaped in terms of the program it represents. Of the examples chosen for this paper, none is program music in the pure sense, that is, instrumental music with a written program or explanation meant to accompany the performance.

The idea of program music is applied not only to the Lisztian idea of the close connection between narrative and emotional depiction, the telling of a story, but also to describe a scene. Two classic examples of program music are *Symphonie Fantastique* by Hector Berlioz and *Ein Heldenleben* by Richard Strauss. Such music expresses its program by way of imitation and expression generally without the use of words that are sung, although there are notable exceptions to this, such as *A Survivor from Warsaw* by Arnold Schoenberg and *A Faust Symphony* by Franz Liszt. Representational music may use the human voice and words to convey meaning, as does *Daphnis et Chloe* by Maurice Ravel.
Certain compositions have been described as the representation in sound of something visual, creating a story or a picture of events. (2) In discussing his composition Pacific 231, Arthur Honegger said,

What I have endeavoured to describe in Pacific 231 is not an imitation of the sounds of the locomotive, but the translation into musical terms of the visual impression and the physical sensation of it. (3)

Honegger exploited a correlation between the visual and aural senses. Correlation of sensations, for example that of music and color, has intrigued composers such as Alexander Scriabin and Nicolas Rimsky-Korsakov. In Prometheus, Scriabin instructed that the concert hall be flooded with colored light during performance. Rimsky-Korsakov was known for his use of orchestral color in works such as Scheherazade, and the Russian Easter Overture.

Just how music expresses the composer's subjective experience of an object or scene in nature is a controversial issue. Hindemith states that the reactions which music evokes are not feelings, but they are images, memories of feelings. (4) I believe that music can suggest subjective experience in three ways:

- direct imitation using evocative pitches and rhythms
- approximate imitation
- suggestion or symbolization using similar or parallel constructs.

This list will be expanded and discussed in more detail later in this paper.

According to Wilson Coker, by using musical gesture and musical symbolism music may affect the listener in ways that usually occur when stimulated by such non-musical objects. Thus music can cause the listener to experience emotions similar to those evoked by the event or object in nature itself. The listener's experience can also be affected by stimulation of another sense, notably the visual. Meyer takes this concept one step further when he minimizes the literal distinction between art and nature. For him art should be teleological: it should not be judged on its detail, but by the utility in its overall design. With this process he believes that art functions in a way similar to that of nature.

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Arguments have been raised since ancient times as to whether music is representative of nature and expresses experience or emotion. Aristotle declared that music is the most representative of all the arts, in contrast to the views of many modern philosophers, who view it as the least representative. (8) "Music reproduces by means of sounds the affections, the emotional impressions, that are produced by martial, sad, triumphant, sexually orgasmic, objects and scenes. Representation in the sense of expression covers all the qualities and values of any possible aesthetic experience." (9)

Medieval theorists in the tenth century sought to identify their system of church modes with the ancient Greek modes which were considered by Greek theorists to influence the emotions. In the Renaissance the term "musica reservata" came into use to denote a style of music where composers were motivated by a strong desire to give a strong and detailed reflection of the words.

During the Baroque era, composers used a series of stereotyped musical-rhetorical figures known as the Doctrine of Affections, which is considered by some to be an extension of the "musica reservata" idea. The figures


which included all aspects of the crafting of a composition — scales, rhythm, harmonic structure, tonality, melodic range, form, and instrumental color — were used to arouse in listeners certain emotional responses such as sadness, hate, love, joy, anger, doubt, and others. (10)

Many composers in the nineteenth century were concerned with expressing what extra-musical phenomena their music could represent. The argument has continued into the twentieth century. In Poetics of Music, Stravinsky, discussing Wagner’s leitmotives as symbolizing abstract ideas and representing objects or concrete persons, expresses skepticism concerning the concept of representationalism. (11) He has gone further in other writings to reject the idea that music is in any fundamental sense expressive:

I consider that music, by its very nature, is essentially powerless to express anything at all, whether a feeling, an attitude of mind, a psychological mood, a phenomenon of nature, etc.… Expression has never been an inherent property of music. (12)

Many composers and philosophers have taken the opposite view. Wagner believed that music, specifically the singing

voice. (13) is the direct expression of feeling. Liszt stated that "music embodies feeling without forcing it... to contend with thought." (14) He felt that the emotional response to music was more important than an intellectual one in responding to and understanding music. Composers Čedrich Smetana and Richard Strauss have spoken of music's ability to describe or represent life situations. (15)

In discussing musical aesthetics certain philosophers have claimed that the value of music lies in its effects. (16) Philosophers have traditionally recognized that a primary goal of composers is to produce in other minds the sounds and impressions of the world around them. Music has been regarded as the key to understanding the universe and a means for preparation for the study of philosophy. "The Platonists have described music as an imitation of reality, and the Aristotelians have regarded the art of music as an idealization of reality." (17) Both theologians and philosophers have recognized music's power to corrupt or improve morals. Music has been described as

(14) Ibid., 109.
(17) Ibid., 220.
appealing to the sensual pleasures, or as therapeutic for body and soul.

Copland summarizes succinctly the two opposing views which he feels are interconnected.

One is that the meaning of music, if there is any meaning, must be sought in the music itself, for music has no extramusical connotation; and the other is that music is a language without a dictionary whose symbols are interpreted by the listener according to some unwritten esperanto of the emotions... I cannot be persuaded that Bach when he penned the Orgelbuchlein, thought he was creating an object of "just notes;" or that Tchaikovsky in composing Swan Lake was wallowing in nothing but uncontrolled emotion.(18)

Although many composers insist that music can be representational, critics of this point of view bring to mind an important consideration. For them, a work should achieve its intended goals without the crutch of the composer's verbiage about his or her intentions or inspiration. As Wilson Coker puts it, "what matters in considering the stated intentions of artists, after carefully comparing the composer's intentions to the work alone and to our own interpretations, is whether on returning to hear the work again we find the work itself more meaningful, satisfying, or emotionally stirring."(19)

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Representationalism in music is taken to an extreme in the music of composers who seek to control their listeners. This music, so-called "new age" music of the 1980's, does not seek simply to be representational of extra-musical phenomena, but to bring about a certain mental state in its listeners. This music is usually slow moving and repetitive, and is intended to provide an atmosphere for psychological expansion, inner experience, and relaxation.(20) This music is discussed here in that it uses some of the same techniques that are described in this paper. Composers of "new age" music use music as a means towards assisting listeners to achieve a state of trance-related oblivion to self. There are dangers inherent in music which uses these techniques to control listeners. Subliminal advertising and movie music composers affect listeners by using music to influence listeners' buying decisions and to underscore the mood of a film.

HOW MUSIC CAN BE REPRESENTATIONAL

From an examination of several examples from the performance literature I have identified seven techniques common to representational and programmatic pieces:

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- modelling: using a description of an object in nature to shape the musical structure in a general way to determine the mood or character of a work or part of a work
- use of a program: any verbal commentary or explanation of music included in the score; words not actually set to music, but used in composition; includes use of descriptive titles
- use of elements of drama or dance to influence the structure of the composition
- direct or indirect imitation of natural sounds
- word painting: in realizing a text, emphasizing the meaning of the words in singing or playing
- recurring melodic and rhythmic phrases: some recurring phrases subject to transformation and which represent objects or persons
- quotation: musical quotation which is instantly recognizable, is subject to transformation, and often has symbolic meaning

The impetus for this paper was to explore how Sententia is related to its genre, compositions which describe aspects of the sea in sound. Four works were culled from an original list of twentieth century sea compositions incorporating voice and instruments, and instruments alone. These works are: La Mer (1905) by Claude Debussy; Ancient Voices

**STRUCTURAL TECHNIQUES**

Three of the seven techniques—modelling, use of a program, and use of elements of drama or dance—are methods primarily used in organizing the structure of a composition generally; knowledge of them assists in understanding the organization of the form of a movement or large section of a composition.

**Modelling**

In modelling, the composer begins with a verbal description of a series of events or scene in nature, usually not in the form of a poem or libretto, but rather phrases or words written directly in the score or titles of movements.

Debussy said "music is the expression of the movements of the waters, the play of curves described by changing breezes."

(21) He spoke of representing what he heard around him: "... my desire is to reproduce only what I hear...."

(22) In discussing why he wrote music, Debussy said "I wanted music to have a freedom that was perhaps


(22) Ibid., 10.
more inherent than in any other act, for it is not limited to a more or less exact representation of nature, but rather to the mysterious affinity between Nature and the Imagination." (23) Debussy affirms the connection between his interpretation of objects in nature, i.e. the sea, and his compositions. In La Mer the titles of the movements contain evidence of a structural plan based on the progression of a set of events in nature: "From dawn to noon at the sea," "The games of the waves," and "Dialogue between the wind and the sea."

Program

Another technique for the construction of a representational composition is the use of a program. Poems or a story written or compiled by the composer are used to communicate a narrative to the listener. Although it is possible to perform the piece without knowing the program, since in many cases the words are not actually set to music, I believe performers have as much an obligation to communicate a composer's program to the listener as they would to realize the music notation symbols in the score. Knowing the program in most cases changes the way the composition is perceived. Making the program available to the listener, however they choose to do it, is ultimately the performers' duty.

The program used in Sententia is specific and consists of a walk toward the sea (first movement); description of the sea (second movement); a reverse after looking down into the water (third movement); and diving into the sea (fourth movement). A poem which spells out the details of the program in the first movement, was used to form the sequence of musical events in the movement. In the beginning of the second section of the movement the first verses of "Corson's Inlet" by A.K. Ammons were set to a melody played by the first trumpet. The rhythm of the melody is dependent on the poetic meter of the words in the poem. Although the entire composition incorporates a program using poems describing the sea, the first movement is the only movement in which the text is not sung.

A program may be established by using poems in a song cycle, a group of poems or text set to music and performed together in sequence. The texts are often by the same author and are related by theme or subject. Such is the case in a work by George Crumb entitled Ancient Voices of Children, which contains settings of excerpts of poems by Federico Garcia Lorca. Crumb has long been attracted to the poetry of Lorca. (24) "I have lost myself in the sea many times" is the second of four excerpts of poems by Lorca. (See Appendix A, page 95, for an English translation of ————————————

(24) George Crumb, Ancient Voices of Children, notes by the composer. Nonesuch N-71255.
the poem used in the second movement.)

The movement is marked "Musically." It is played pianissimo by musical saw, harp, electric piano, antique cymbal, and vibraphone. See below, page 15, Example 1. The formal structure of the work is dependent on the poetic structure of the poem. Instrumental and vocal whisperings alternate; the soprano repeatedly whispers each stanza of the poem, followed in each case by an instrumental comment. She hums a echo of the melody played by the musical saw melody at the end of the movement. See below, page 15, Example 2.

Despite its use of related texts, Sestetia is not a song cycle for several reasons: the voice part is not the most important one; the soprano in the second, third and fourth movements has the same prominence as any of the other instrumental parts; the structure of Sestetia is dependent on its program and the selection of the poems was based on its program as well.

Drama or Dance

The final technique that may be employed as a basis for organizing the structure in representational music is the use of drama or dance. This idea is related to that of a program, but generally the program originates with the composer and the dramatic ideas for the opera, play, or dance originate with another artist. In many operas, as is the
Example 1

[I have lost myself in the sea many times]

Measurably [As ca. ½]

Example 2
case with Peter Grimes, the composer and librettist, work in collaboration on the dramatic ideas.

Four Sea Interludes are excerpts from Benjamin Britten's opera, Peter Grimes. The fourth interlude, "Storm," sets the scene dramatically for what is to follow. Peter Grimes descending into madness and grappling with his own fate. Marked "Presto con fuoco" it is furiously played, contains extreme contrasts in dynamics (see one measure before Section 9, Section 10), and a brilliant ending. See below, pages 17 and 18, Examples 3a and 3b. The drama of depicting the course of a storm dictates the structure of the piece.

OTHER TECHNIQUES

Four techniques are used in crafting the compositional detail of a piece and can be found in the selected representational compositions.

Imitation

Imitation which has had a long history in composition, can be found in many examples of representational music. There are two categories of imitation that can be found in the examples of music representing nature, direct imitation and indirect imitation. Direct imitation copies a natural sound directly by scoring that sound instrumentally or
Example 3a
vocally with the same pitches, rhythms, dynamics, and timbre as the natural sound. Direct imitation has been attempted in some pieces written in the twentieth century. For example, Les Oiseaux by Messiaen contains notated bird calls. Beneath the Horizon by Priscilla McLean uses actual whale sounds and electronic imitation and manipulation of whale sounds. Direct imitation is also known as naturalism in the theoretical writings of Norman Casden. According to Casden, imitation of this type provides a simple and direct means for communicating a certain idea or image. (25) Although direct imitation is employed by some twentieth-century composers such as the ones mentioned above, there are no examples of direct imitation in the compositions selected for study in this paper.

Indirect imitation is called pictorialism by Casden. It is a method by which the process of association between the senses is used by the listener. (26) Many examples of indirect imitation can be found in all four of the works by Debussy, Britten, Crumb and Jenkins. Note the muted tremolo in the strings in the beginning of "De l'aube à midi sur la mer," which is an imitation of the glimmering effect of first light at dawn. See previous page, page 20, Example 4. The use of harps and strings in sections 5, 8, and 11

(26) Ibid., 139.
Example 4
evokes the motion of waves. See below, pages 22, 23, and 23, Examples 5, 6, and 7.

Britten imitates the howling of a storm by a set of chromatic runs which repeatedly get louder and higher, after Section 2, (see below, pages 25 and 26, Examples 8 and 9), and again three measures after Section 6. See below, pages 27, 28, and 29, Examples 10a, 10b, and 10c. Repetition of a melodic pattern is used to signify the repeating action of flowing water, see Section 12. See below, page 30, Example 11. The repeating figure E-flat, A, B-flat, A begins in unison strings starting pianissimo, and comes to a climax at Section 13 ending fortissimo with a change of articulation. See below, page 31, Example 12. It has the effect of growing and retreating, as the storm would.

Many examples of indirect imitation can also be found in Sententia. Some examples can be found in the second movement: the suspended cymbal in measures 4-5 imitates the sound of the hissing that a receding wave makes; the sound of the wind and brass players blowing through their instruments first used in measure 6 imitates the wind; the timpani roll in measure 8-10 imitates the sound of the surf breaking on shore; the sound of the instrumentalists clattering the keys on their instruments imitates the sound of
Example 5
Example 7
Example 9
Example 10a
Example 10c
a wave rushing over a pocket of shells. The sandpaper blocks in the last movement (first used in measure 3), plays an imitation of the sound that sand and shells make when rubbed together under water.

The use of the percussion in "I have lost myself" is a stylized imitation of sea sounds, repeating short rhythmic phrases, and moving back and forth. See below, page 33, Example 13. The musical saw part, marked "hauntingly," represents the word "lost" which occurs in the poem.

Word Painting

In the two works in which poetry is sung there are many examples of word painting. One example is in the Crumb second movement; the soprano whispers the entire text, as if she is whispering to herself. She is singing "I have lost myself in the sea many times." Every stanza uses the same rhythm. See below, page 33, Example 14.

Some examples of word painting can be found in Sextentia. In the second movement, in measure 14, "around" is notated with alternating notes, E and F and glissandi from F to E. Three measures before in measure 11 the soprano whispers the word "whisperings," and the vocalization of the "s" continues the rhythmic setting of the word in the beginning part of the measure. The rhythm is also echoed by the snare drum and maracas in the next measure. In
measure 18 the word "swell" is written with a glissando from G to F and is sung in chest voice. In measure 22 the word "swell," which is notated as a triplet beginning on B-flat that falls in pitch after it is first sung and returns to B-flat at the beginning of each word. An example from the third movement occurs in measures 15-16 to the words "moving back and forth." The melody oscillates between two pitches. Three examples of word painting also occur in the last movement. In measure 14 the soprano has the word "mist" in *sprechstimme*. The "at" is extended into the next measure with a half note. "Chilly" is sung to a chromatic figure moving up and down and lasting throughout measure 16. In measure 45 the word "rose" rises in pitch by a glissando from A to D on beat three.

*Recurring Rhythmic and Melodic Motives*

Recurring rhythmic motives are used frequently in *La Mer*, first movement, and in *Sententia*, fourth movement. In the first movement of *La Mer* most of the development is based on the composing out of a motive representing the motion of sea waves. See measure 5 for this rhythm in its musical context. See below, page 35, Example 15. The grace-note figure is transformed into a sixteenth-note figure and this figure recurs throughout the movement, see measures 7, 8, 17, 18, 20, 24, 26, 28, 30. See previous page and below,
pages 35 and 37, Examples 16, 17, 18, and 19. In measure 59 it is changed slightly, but (see below, page 38, Example 20), returns to its original form in measure 84. See below, page 39, Example 21. It actually becomes a grace note in measures 96 and 97, (see previous page, page 39, Example 22), then a sixteenth note again in measures 98, 105, and 107. See below, page 40, Examples 23, 24, and 25. then returns to end the movement in measure 138. See below, page 41, Example 26.

Another rhythmic motive, a triplet figure, (see measure 33 in the flutes in below, page 42, Example 27), recurs with other figuration in measures 41, (see below, page 42, Example 28), 44, 46, 51, 53, 63-67, 69-70. See below, pages 43, 44, 45, and 46, Examples 29, 30, 31, and 32. The figuration of this triplet rhythmic motive is vital to the overall effect of undulation, typical of the motion of the sea. The strings frequently accompany this figuration in the winds by repeating tremolo passages which crescendo into strong beats, (see measures 74-75 and 103-104, for example). See below, pages 47 and 48, Examples 33 and 34.

An example of the repeating rhythmic motive occurs in the fourth movement of Sententiae in the case of the rhythm played throughout the movement by the sandpaper blocks. The beginning rhythm (measure 3) is altered slightly in measure 24 and represents the hissing of the sea foam.
Example 20

[Music notation diagram]
Example 21

Example 22
A recurring melodic motive is used in *Sententia* which represents the motion of waves and water. An expanded version of the motive is treated canonically in all instruments in the first and last sections of the first movement. See previous page, page 48, Example 35. In the third movement the motive occurs in measure 5 in the first and second trumpets, and forms the basis for the melodic material in the movement. In the last movement the transformed motive played by the horns and accompanied by the larger group of instruments and percussion, is heard in measure 31 and again in measure 34.

**Quotation**

The final technique of quotation, the direct quoting of other compositions, is used in the composition *Sententia*. It is found in the third and last movements. The folk hymn, "Go Tell It on the Mountain," is played by the trombone in measure 15, interrupted in measure 16, and continued in measure 17. It is briefly exposed as a solo in measure 19 while the soprano is singing the words, "the singer sings wildly moving back and forth." The image the poem portrays is a reverie inspired by gales into a tide pool. The seaweed waving back and forth reminds the poet of hands waving back and forth at a church revival.
CONCLUSION

The idea of representationalism in music is not a new one -- composers have attempted to represent extra-musical phenomena in sound for centuries, although not always with the same priorities in mind. Many twentieth-century composers such as Britten, Crumb, and Debussy, have looked to the sea for inspiration and have attempted to represent the sea in their music. It is in this spirit that Sententia was composed.
Chapter II
SENTENTIA

Sententia was completed in 1984, and was dedicated to the Ohio State University Woodwind Ensemble, Craig Kirchhoff, conductor, and Sylvia Humsel, soprano. The score that follows is a xerox copy of the original ink and velum score.
SENTENTIA
Susan Jenkins

SEA MUSIC FOR SOPRANO, WOODWINDS, BRASS, AND PERCUSSION

1. Indian River Inlet
2. On the Sea
3. Looking Into a Tide Pool
4. Morning Swim

EXCERPTS OF POEMS BY:
A.R. Ammons, John Keats,
Robert Bly, Maxine Kumin
INSTRUMENTATION

tranposed score

Soprano
1 Piccolo
2 Flutes
1 Oboe
1 English horn in F
3 Clarinets in B-flat
1 Bassoon
2 Horns in F
2 Trumpets in B-flat
2 Trombones
1 Bass trombone
1 String bass
1 Piano

4–5 Percussion
  Vibraphone
  Celeste
  Timpani
  Suspended cymbal
  Bass drum
  Temple blocks
  Triangles 6" 8" 10"

Timbales
Sandpaper blocks
Tambourine
Gong
Snare drum
Cabasa
Vibra slap
Maracas
Güiro
Bongos
On the Sea

Susan Jenkins

Allegro (d = 76)

Winds:
Baritone:
Flute:
Soprano:
Piano:
String Orchestra:
Cello:
Violin:
Timpani:

"Soprano sounds:
1) Whisper - soft, ethereal
2) Speech - speaking voice, dramatic
3) Spoken lines - almost approximates, silent
4) Sing-song - singing without vibrato
5) Song - with vibrato"
Looking into a Tide Pool

It is a tide pool.

clear,

[

Susan Jenkins

Soprano

(Timpani, 2nd)
I took the lake between my legs.
I went o'er-hand in the sky
and wondered I
and in the rhythm of the hill
I hummed a two-four-time slow hymn.
I sang A-bide with me, the boat rose in the stress of my feet.
in the bubbles, I put out slanting tracks through my mouth.
I was the well
through all my days.

bitter droll in the
was the fell

blesk
Appendix A

ANCIENT VOICES OF CHILDREN, II

Excerpts of a poem by Federico García Lorca, translated by Stephen Spender and J.L. Gili

I have lost myself in the sea many times

I have lost myself in the sea many times
with my ear full of freshly cut flowers,
with my tongue full of love and agony.
I have lost myself in the sea many times
as I lose myself in the heart of certain children.

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Appendix B
SENTENTIA

Excerpts of poems by A.R. Ammons, John Keats, Robert Bly,
and Maxine Kumin.

Corsons Inlet by A.R. Ammons

I went for a walk over the dunes this morning
to the sea,
then turned right along
the surf
rounded a naked headland
and returned
along the inlet shore:

it was muggy sunny, the wind from the sea steady and high,
crisp in the running sand,
some breakthroughs of sun
but after a bit
continuous overcast:

the walk liberating, I was released from forms,
from the perpendiculars,
straight lines, blocks, boxes, binds
of thought
into the hues, shadings, rises, flowing bends and blends
of sight:

I allow myself eddies of meaning:
yield to a direction of significance
running
like a stream through the geography of my work:

- 100 -
you can find
in my sayings

swerves of action
like the inlet's cutting edge:
there are duses of motion,
or organizations of grass, white sandy paths of remembrance
in the overall wandering of mirroring mind.

On the Sea by John Keats, written in 1816.

It keeps eternal whisperings around
Desolate shores, and with its mighty swell
Gluts twice ten thousand Caverns, till the spell
Of Hecate leaves them their old shadowy sound.

Looking into a Tide Pool by Robert Bly.

It is a tide pool, shallow, water coming in, clear, tiny
white shell-people on the bottom, asking nothing, not even
directions. On the surface the noduled seaweed, lying like
hands, slowly drawing back and returning, hands laid on
fevered bodies, moving back and forth, as the healer sings
wildly, shouting to Jesus and his dead mother.

Morning Swim by Maxine Kumin.

Into my head there come
a cotton beach, a dock wherefrom
I set out, oily and nude
through mist, in chilly solitude.
There was no line, net roof or floor
to tell the water from the air.

Night fog thick as a terry cloth
closed me in its fuzzy growth.

I hung my bathrobe on two pegs,
I tore the lake (sea) between my legs.

Invaded and invader, I
went overhand on that flat sky.

Fish twitched beneath me, quick and tame,
in their green zone they sang my name

and in the rhythm of the swim
I hummed a two-four-time slow hymn.

I hummed Abide with Me. The beat
rose in the fine thrash of my feet,
rose in the bubbles I put out
slantwise, trailing through my mouth.

My bones drank water; water fell
through all my doors. I was the well
that fed the lake that met my sea
in which I sang Abide with Me.
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