

A Grave By Marianne Moore

Man looking into the sea,
taking the view from those who have as much right to it as you
have to yourself,
it is human nature to stand in the middle of a thing,
but you cannot stand in the middle of this:

the sea has nothing to give but a well excavated grave.
The firs stand in a procession, each with an emerald turkey-
foot at the top,
reserved as their contours, saying nothing;

repression, however, is not the most obvious characteristic of
the sea;

the sea is a collector, quick to return a rapacious look.

There are others besides you who have worn that look—

whose expression is no longer a protest; the fish no longer investigate them for their bones have not lasted: men lower nets, unconscious of the fact that they are desecrating a grave, and row quickly away—the blades of the oars moving together like the feet of water-spiders as if there were no such thing as death.

The wrinkles progress among themselves in a phalanx—beautiful under networks of foam, and fade breathlessly while the sea rustles in and out of the seaweed;

The birds swim through the air at top speed, emitting cat-calls as heretofore—the tortoise-shell scourges about the feet of the cliffs, in motion beneath them; and the ocean, under the pulsation of lighthouses and noise of bell-buoys, advances as usual, looking as if it were not that ocean in which dropped things are bound to sink—

in which if they turn and twist, it is neither with volition nor consciousness.