

IT WILL BUT SHAKE & TOTTER

Spencer Short

Many poems have been written about the turgid sea.
For instance the one about the man & his lover on the cliffs above the turgid sea.
It is the English Channel
& he is Matthew Arnold in 1851.
Across from him: "ignorant armies", "clashing by night".

The armies are not French.
They may be stars if what we've always thought
Of as stars tuned out to be the fading chalk of a fading language,
Turned out to be nothing but the small sparks of rocks
being struck by chains in the corners of the sky.

Like a Russian novel, the sea roils and cedes, roils and cedes.
Fish do their fish-like work among its atavistic depths.

Notice how the moonlight glistens like lacquer
Between the crests and troughs,
The heavy, salt-stung air.

All night the moon rings and rings.
No one answers. The telephone has not yet been invented.
All night the wind searches the cliffs for a flag,
A kite, a woman's hat. It would like
To reassert its authority,

It would like to say a few words about
Divine provenance, but it is 1851 and God is dying or dead.
Love, I say, let us be true. Let us *be*.
The world is but a darkling plain. A hill of beans.
We are the few & we are the far between.