

## Unpopular Fisherman / George Mackay Brown

They've carried a seven-foot coffin  
Down to the shore.  
In Quoylay, look for no net-reft  
Or rants any more.

(Who is it dead? A man  
With a shortage of friends.  
God send us more grief when we  
Come to our ends.

Is it the laird? That great one  
With five or six fawners  
Might reach his long porphyry home  
—But who'd be the mourners?

Is it Ezra the tinker? Not him.  
There'll be pipers to blow,  
Fist-fights and reels and whisky  
The day he's laid low.

Is it Swart who gives the short measure  
For the ale and the rum?  
That one could stretch the length of his counter, unmourned  
Till kingdom come.

What unpopular man is dead?  
The slow feet pass  
Among the tombs. . . . *As for a man, his days  
Are brief as grass.*)

The cold tumultuous hands they fold  
In the lee of the kirk  
For seven winters were at the plundering westwards  
Of herring and shark.

Look for no lawless cradles in Quoylay more.  
Wholesome the fights  
With no more gouging, blasphemy, broken bottles  
On Saturday nights.