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USES

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NANCY SULLIVAN

The Death of the First Man

What was it?
 How could they know what it was?
 It had never happened before.
 No one had ever gone out.
 Whatever it was was happening. 5
 Something was over.
 Curled in a loose shape
 the first dead man
 drained out of himself 10
 while the others shifted
 the dead weight
 (because it was dead);
 they tried to make him get up.
 They kicked and prodded.
 Where had he gone? 15
 Dead we now call that place
 where he stayed in a heap
 for maybe a week
 until the stink told them
 something was wrong. 20
 Someone thought to bury him.
 How could they know
 from the animals that fell to their clubs
 that they too could go down? 25
 The first grave
 mounded up over his weight.

 What was it,
 this going out?
 That was what no one knew 30
 even as it happened.
 Even as it happens. 1975

ROBERT FROST

Never Again Would Birds' Song Be the Same

He would declare and could himself believe
 That the birds there in all the garden round
 From having heard the daylong voice of Eve
 Had added to their own an oversound,
 Her tone of meaning but without the words. 5
 Admittedly an eloquence so soft

estate
 and the least thing
 of his king,
 lance had to wait 5

 place
 and trees
 these.
 laked face.

 ming down amid 10
 elds of Cain,
 en graces hid,
 of grain,

 time took on
 s fruits. 15
 ed lawn
 for attributes,

 rthest tower
 elds of war,
 evening hour,
 val⁴ door, 20

 westward ships
 , changed again—
 cclipse,
 dreams of men. 25

 gazelle, machine,
 than the morning star,
 l unseen,
 ou as you are,

 me until 30
 e latter age,
 f our will
 es like saxifrage.⁶ 1961

5. Adorn.
 6. A tufted plant with bright flowers,
 often rooted in the clefts of rocks.

Could only have had an influence on birds
 When call or laughter carried it aloft.
 Be that as may be, she was in their song. 10
 Moreover her voice upon their voices crossed
 Had now persisted in the woods so long
 That probably it never would be lost.
 Never again would birds' song be the same.
 And to do that to birds was why she came. 1942

Classical History and Myth

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

Ulysses¹

It little profits that an idle king,
 By this still hearth, among these barren crags,
 Matched with an agéd wife,² I mete and dole
 Unequal laws unto a savage race, 5
 That hoard, and sleep, and feed, and know not me.
 I cannot rest from travel; I will drink
 Life to the lees.³ All times I have enjoyed
 Greatly, have suffered greatly, both with those
 That loved me, and alone; on shore, and when 10
 Through scudding drifts the rainy Hyades⁴
 Vexed the dim sea. I am become a name;
 For always roaming with a hungry heart
 Much have I seen and known—cities of men
 And manners, climates, councils, governments, 15
 Myself not least, but honored of them all—
 And drunk delight of battle with my peers,
 Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.
 I am a part of all that I have met;
 Yet all experience is an arch wherethrough 20
 Gleams that untraveled world, whose margin fades
 For ever and for ever when I move.
 How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
 To rust unburnished, not to shine in use!
 As though to breathe were life. Life piled on life 25
 Were all too little, and of one to me

1. After the end of the Trojan War, Ulysses (or Odysseus), King of Ithaca and one of the Greek heroes of the war, returned to his island home (line 34). Homer's account of the situation is in the *Odyssey*, Book XI, but Dante's account of Ulysses in *The Inferno*, XXVI, is the more

immediate background of the poem.

2. Penelope.

3. All the way down to the bottom of the cup.

4. A group of stars which were supposed to predict rain when they rose at the same time as the sun.

Little remains; but every ho
 From that eternal silence, so
 A bringer of new things; an
 For some three suns to store
 And this gray spirit yearning
 To follow knowledge like a
 Beyond the utmost bound o

This is my son, mine own
 To whom I leave the scepter
 Well-loved of me, discernin
 This labor by slow prudenc
 A rugged people, and throu
 Subdue them to the useful
 Most blameless is he, cente
 Of common duties, decent
 In offices of tenderness, an
 Meet adoration to my hous
 When I am gone. He works

There lies the port; the v
 There gloom the dark, bro
 Souls that have toiled, and
 That ever with a frolic wel
 The thunder and the sunsh
 Free hearts, free foreheads
 Old age hath yet his hono
 Death closes all; but somet
 Some work of noble note, r
 Not unbecoming men that
 The lights begin to twinkl
 The long day wanes; the s
 Moans round with many v
 'Tis not too late to seek a n
 Push off, and sitting well i
 The sounding furrows; for
 To sail beyond the sunset
 Of all the western stars, un
 It may be that the gulfs w
 It may be we shall touch t
 And see the great Achilles
 Though much is taken, m
 We are not now that stren
 Moved earth and heaven,
 One equal temper of hero
 Made weak by time and f
 To strive, to seek, to find,

1833

5. Beyond the Gulf of Gibraltar supposed to be a chasm that led to Hades.
6. Elysium, the Islands of the Blessed.