

Across the Bay

By Donald Davie

A queer thing about those waters: there are no

Birds there, or hardly any.

I did not miss them, I do not remember

Missing them, or thinking it uncanny.

The beach so-called was a blinding splinter of limestone,

A quarry outraged by hulls.

We took pleasure in that: the emptiness, the hardness

Of the light, the silence, and the water's stillness.

But this was the setting for one of our murderous scenes.

This hurt, and goes on hurting:

The venomous soft jelly, the undersides.

We could stand the world if it were hard all over.

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Source: *Selected Poems* (Carcanet Press Ltd, 1985)



Donald Davie was born in Barnsley, Yorkshire, received his early education at Barnsley Holgate Grammar School, and spent his boyhood in "the industrially ravaged landscape," as he called it, of

the West Riding. An English professor for many years, he was an English Movement poet as well as a literary critic.

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