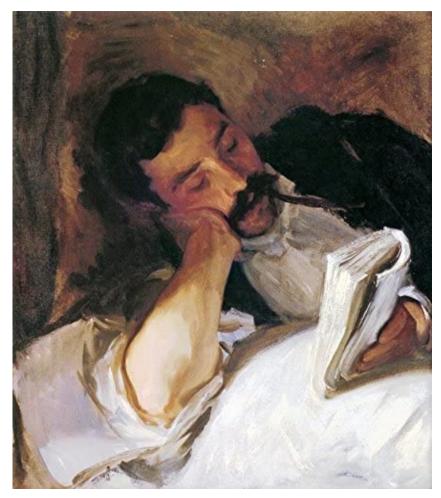
## Six Sonnets



Man Reading, John Singer Sargeant

## Schopenhauer

These are days I think of Schopenhauer who thought of life as Creation's error when from his high solitary tower he could see no consolation in the fairer sex or a good meal at the local pub.

Even these he could readily forego for a comfy armchair and syllabub to soothe the distempered mind. The warm glow of intellectual sobriety gave a kind of poetry to his prose, a kind of sweet, reflective piety.

I confess these days I envy his repose.

He will not seek a dulcet fling or mood

for he is not alone in solitude.

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Jealousy, Edvard Munch, 1895

Jealousy

I see him naked in the very bed that I have shared with you these many nights of coupled passion and love requited as if no other sampled your delights.

And yet I can't forget that he was here, my predecessor, whom I envy more than hate, as in a sonnet of Shakespeare writhing with paradoxes, and deplore my need to enter you as he once did. I enter by his body as if his thrust were mine, knowing it, putting in my bid to be another and possess your lust. This is my consolation and my myth. I am the other you betray me with.

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Nude Old Man in the Sun, Marià Fortuny, 1871

Requiem for Peenie

Not with a bang but a whimper —T.S. Eliot

Civilizations die from suicide, not by murder —Arnold Toynbee

Once proud and sagittal and priapic and going where every man has boldly gone before, now, falling on sciatic times when he has grown flaccid and coldly unresponsive to adventure, Peenie flags, signaling the end of Western Civ.

What was large and mighty has grown weenie.

Now the prophets mourn. What! Shall this bone live?

Apparently not. I sing a requiem

for all that was majestic turned weak, ill,

and limp. Once it was us or them. Now, them.

The remnant grieve like old Ezekiel.

It's over now, all vitality spent.

Peenie's folded up like a camping tent.

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Squelette arrêtant masques (detail), James Ensor, 1891
Dressed to Kill

I see them walk in every walk of life.

I see them earn their daily living wage.

I see them in the midst of tempered strife or bloody outcomes where the foes engage.

I see them at the circus masquerade and at the theaters where all applaud to watch deception expertly displayed.

I see them grow indifferent to God.

I see them shopping at the local mall.

I see them glittering and confident.

I see them where they rise and where they fall.

I see them feral and irreverent and know there is no "rather," no "instead."

The ghosts are dressed to kill. I see the dead.

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Consciousness of Shock, Victor Brauner, 1951

Against the Grain

As when the sudden electric sickle

cuts through every independent thought and the circuits, partly chemical, scatter the tainted seed of neural rot over the soil of the fertile spirit— there is no help for decency or love to work their blessèd will. This is where "it" will undermine the thought I'm thinking of. Well, that's the nature and impediment of errant scything and untimely blight to take from meaning all that meaning meant. The only course before synaptic night? To lead one's life against the inner grain and let the mind do battle with the brain.

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The Invisible Man, Salvador Dalí, 1932

Dolph McKenzie

"The collected poems of Dolphe McKenzie. Just what I wanted."
"Who the hell?"

"Don't know but we ain't here for the poetry." —John Grisham, Camino Island

I've not read the poems of Dolphe McKenzie, the reason being he doesn't exist—unless you've been reading up a frenzy of second-raters who like to insist they've been misprised or lost in the shuffle. I know of such a one and do wish him a slender chance to survive the scuffle and live in the pages of John Grisham.

Oblivious to the contradiction of being in the world and not being, these Dolphes demand to live in a fiction of accomplishment, unfortunate seeing how they still produce their consummate tripe like fruit that rots before it's even ripe.