Anthony Hecht (b. 1923)

*The Dover Bitch: A Criticism of Life*

So there stood Matthew Arnold and this girl

With the cliffs of England crumbling away behind them,

And he said to her, 'Try to be true to me,

And I'll do the same for you, for things are bad

*5* All over, etc., etc.'

Well now, I knew this girl. It's true she had read

Sophocles in a fairly good translation

And caught that bitter allusion to the sea,

But all the time he was talking she had in mind

*10* The notion of what his whiskers would feel like

On the back of her neck. She told me later on

That after a while she got to looking out

At the lights across the channel, and really felt sad,

Thinking of all the wine and enormous beds

*15* And blandishments in French and the perfumes.

And then she got really angry. To have been brought

All the way down from London, and then be addressed

As a sort of mournful cosmic last resort

Is really tough on a girl, and she was pretty.

*20* Anyway, she watched him pace the room

And finger his watch-chain and seem to sweat a bit,

And then she said one or two unprintable things.

But you mustn't judge her by that. What I mean to say is,

She's really all right. I still see her once in a while

*25* And she always treats me right. We have a drink

And I give her a good time, and perhaps it's a year

Before I see her again, but there she is,

Running to fat, but dependable as they come.

And sometimes I bring her a bottle of *Nuit d' Amour*. (expensive perfume)

“Dover Beach”/ “The Dover Bitch”

* Why do you think this poet chose “Dover Beach” as the subject for parody? What is being mocked, exactly? What’s the significance of the subtitle?
* Identify the tone of each poem, then compare and contrast the methods that the poets use to achieve that tone.
* Why does Hecht identify the female as “the Dover Bitch”? Provide support from either poem that supports or negates this characterization.