Some Eyes Condemn

Some eyes condemn the earth they gaze upon:
Some wait patiently till they know far more
Than earth can tell them: some laugh at the whole
As folly of another's making: one
I knew that laughed because he saw, from core
To rind, not one thing worth the laugh his soul
Had ready at waking: some eyes have begun
With laughing; some stand startled at the door.

Others, too, I have seen rest, question, roll,
Dance, shoot. And many I have loved watching. Some
I could not take my eyes from till they turned
And loving died. I had not found my goal.
But thinking of your eyes, dear, I become
Dumb: for they flamed, and it was me they burned.

Edward Thomas  c.1917

Sonnet 90
from Astrophil and Stella

Stella, think not that I by verse seek fame,
Who seek, who hope, who love, who live but thee;
Thine eyes my pride, thy lips my history:
If thou praise not, all other praise is shame.
Nor so ambitious am I, as to frame
A nest for praise in my young laurel tree:
In truth I swear, I wish not there should be
Grav'd in mine epitaph a poet's name:
Ne if I would, could I just title make,
That any laud to me thereof should grow,
Without my plumes from others' wings I take.
For nothing from my wit or will doth flow,
Since all my words thy beauty doth indite,
And Love doth hold my hand, and makes me write.

Philip Sydney  1580s
from Dolphin

My Dolphin, you only guide me by surprise,
a captive as Racine, the man of craft,
drawn through his maze of iron composition
by the incomparable wandering voice of Phèdre.
When I was troubled in mind, you made for my body
caught in its hangman's-knot of sinking lines,
the glassy bowing and scraping of my will . . .
I have sat and listened to too many
words of the collaborating muse,
and plotted perhaps too freely with my life,
not avoiding injury to others,
not avoiding injury to myself—
to ask compassion . . . this book, half fiction,
an eelnet made by man for the eel fighting—
my eyes have seen what my hand did.

Robert Lowell 1973

Love Is Not All

Love is not all: it is not meat nor drink
Nor slumber nor a roof against the rain;
Nor yet a floating spar to men that sink
And rise and sink and rise and sink again;
Love can not fill
the thickened lung with breath,
Nor clean the blood, nor set the fractured bone;
Yet many a man is making friends with death
Even as I speak, for lack of love alone.
It well may be that in a difficult hour,
Pinned down by pain and moaning for release,
Or nagged by want past resolution's power,
I might be driven to sell your love for peace,
Or trade the memory of this night for food.
It well may be. I do not think I would.

Edna St. Vincent Millay 1931

Oh No

If you wander far enough
you will come to it
and when you get there
they will give you a place to sit
for yourself only, in a nice chair,
and all your friends will be there
with smiles on their faces
and they will likewise all have places.

Robert Creely
Some Men Create

Some men create an unintended
Beauty by default,
ever cut back the creeping ivy
so its stragglers vault
from crumbling wall to neighboring bridge
beside the arched lane,
to swing like hair from the parapet,
shining with spring rain;
never gravel out the timber pile
nor lop the dead oak
so that the seeding traveler’s joy
smothers them like smoke.
So among orderly husbandry
leave some plots alone
that the eye may reap with pleasure what
the hand has not sown.

Molly Holden

Chamber Thicket

As we sat at the feet of the string quartet,
in their living room, on a winter night,
through the hardwood floor spurts and gulps
and tips and shudders came up, and the candle-scent
air was thick-alive with pearwood,
ebony, spruce, poplar, and horse
howled, and cat skreeled, and then,
when the Grösse Fugue was around us, under us,
over us, in us, I felt I was hearing
the genes of my birth-family, pulled, keening
and grieving and scathing, along each other,
scraping and craving, I felt myself held in that
woods of hating longing, and I knew
and knew myself, and my parents, and their parents,
there—and then, at a distance, I sensed,
as if it were thirty years ago,
a being, far off yet, oblique-approaching,
straying toward, and then not toward,
and then toward this place, like a wandering dreaming
herdsman, my husband. And I almost wanted
to warn him away, to call out to him
to go back whence he came, into some calmer life,
but his beauty was too moving to me,
and I wanted too much to not be alone, in the
covert, any more, and so I prayed him
come to me, I bid him hasten, and good welcome.

Sharon Olds 2001
A Line-storm Song

The line-storm clouds fly tattered and swift,
The road is forlorn all day,
Where a myriad snowy quartz stones lift,
And the hoof-prints vanish away.
The roadside flowers, too wet for the bee,
Expend their bloom in vain.
Come over the hills and far with me,
And be my love in the rain.

The birds have less to say for themselves
In the wood-world's torn despair
Than now these numberless years the elves,
Although they are no less there:
All song of the woods is crushed like some
Wild, easily shattered rose.
Come, be my love in the wet woods; come,
Where the boughs rain when it blows.

There is the gale to urge behind
And bruit our singing down,
And the shallow waters aflutter with wind
From which to gather your gown.
What matter if we go clear to the west,
And come not through dry-shod?
For wilding brooch shall wet your breast
The rain-fresh goldenrod.

Oh, never this whelming east wind swells
But it seems like the sea's return
To the ancient lands where it left the shells
Before the age of the fern;
And it seems like the time when after doubt
Our love came back amain.
Oh, come forth into the storm and rout
And be my love in the rain.

Robert Frost 1917

A Reasonable Affliction

On his death-bed poor Lubin lies:
His spouse is in despair:
With frequent sobs, and mutual cries,
They both express their care.

A different cause, says Parson Sly,
The same effect may give:
Poor Lubin fears that he may die;
His wife, that he may live.

Matthew Prior 1718
The Merry Month of May

O the month of May, the merry month of May,
So frolic, so gay, and so green, so green, so green!
O, and then did I unto my true love say,
Sweet Peg, thou shalt be my Summer's Queen.

Now the nightingale, the pretty nightingale,
The sweetest singer in all the forest quire,
Entreats thee, sweet Peggy, to hear thy true love's tale:
Lo, yonder she sitteth, her breast against a brier.

But O, I spy the cuckoo, the cuckoo, the cuckoo;
See where she sitteth; come away, my joy:
Come away, I prithee, I do not like the cuckoo
Should sing where my Peggy and I kiss and toy.

O, the month of May, the merry month of May,
So frolic, so gay, and so green, so green; so green;
And then did I unto my true love say,
Sweet Peg, thou shalt be my Summer's Queen.

Thomas Dekker  1600

The Month of May

"O! the month of May, the merry month of May . . ."
—Thomas Dekker (d. 1632)

The month of May, the merry month of May,
So long awaited, and so quickly past
The winter's over, and it's time to play.

I saw a hundred shades of green today
And everything that Man made was outclassed.
The month of May, the merry month of May.

Now hello pink and white and farewell grey.
My spirits are no longer overcast.
The winter's over, and it's time to play.

Sing 'Fa la la la la,' I dare to say,
(Tried being modern but it didn't last)
'The month of May, the merry month of May.'

I don't know how much longer I can stay.
The summers come, the summers go so fast,
And soon there will be no more time to play.

So carpe diem, gather buds, make hay.
The world is glorious. Compare, contrast
December with the merry month of May.
Now is the time, now is the time to play.

Wendy Cope  2006
Fish in the Unruffled Lake

Fish in the unruffled lakes
Their swarming colours wear,
Swans in the winter air
A white perfection have,
And the great lion walks
Through his innocent grove;
Lion, fish and swan
Act, and are gone
Upon Time's toppling wave.

We, till shadowed days are done,
We must weep and sing
Duty's conscious wrong,
The Devil in the clock,
The goodness carefully worn
For atonement or for luck;
We must lose our loves,
On each beast and bird that moves
Turn an envious look.

Sighs for folly done and said
Twist our narrow days,
But I must bless, I must praise
That you, my swan, who have
All gifts that to the swan
Impulsive Nature gave,
The majesty and pride,
Last night should add
Your voluntary love.

W. H. Auden 1939

Narcissus and Echo

Shall the water not remember Ember
my hand’s slow gesture, tracing above of its mirror my half-imaginary airy portrait? My only belonging longing;
is my beauty, which I take ache away and then return, as love of teasing playfully the one being unbeing.
whose gratitude I treasure Is your moves me. I live apart heart from myself, yet cannot not live apart. In the water's tone, stone?
that brilliant silence, a flower Hour, whispers my name with such slight light:
moment, it seems filament of air, fare the world becomes cloudswell. well.

Fred Chappell 1983
haiku
Water reflects sky
Summer of my soul open
Under the spell still

senryu
long commuter ride
a stranger discusses
his incontinence

Raymond A. Foss
Francine Porad

Mother, among the Dustbins
Mother, among the dustbins and the manure
I feel the measure of my humanity, an allure
As of the presence of God, I am sure

In the dustbins, in the manure, in the cat at play,
Is the presence of God, in a sure way
He moves there. Mother, what do you say?

I too have felt the presence of God in the broom
I hold, in the cobwebs in the room,
But most of all in the silence of the tomb.

Ah! but that thought that informs the hope of our kind
Is but an empty thing, what lies behind?—
Naught but the vanity of a protesting mind

That would not die. This is the thought that bounces
Within a conceited head and trounces
Inquiry. Man is most frivolous when he pronounces.

Well Mother, I shall continue to think as I do,
And I think you would be wise to do so too,
Can you question the folly of man in the creation of God?
Who are you?

Stevie Smith

Some of the Literary Terms with Which We (Might)’ve Worked

alliteration  elision / syncope  melopoeia  run-on line  foot
allusion  enjambment  metaphor  scansion  iambic
ambiguity  folder  meter  sester  spondaic
anaphora  formula  metonymy  sigmatism  trochaic
anastrophe  haiku / senryu  octave  simile  pyrrhic
hyperbaton  heroic couplet  onomatopoeia  synæsthesia  anapestic
inversion  hyperbole  oxymoronic  synecdoche  dactylic
apostrophe  imagery  paradox  metrics
assonance  visual  personification  tone
consonance  auditory quatrain  volta
couplet  tactile  reification  zeugma
diction  olfactory  Redende Name
echo poetry  gustatory