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# Love

**Sonnet 18**

William Shakespeare, 1564 - 1616

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

Thou art more lovely and more temperate:

Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,

And summer's lease hath all too short a date:

Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,

And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;

And every fair from fair sometime declines,

By chance, or nature's changing course, untrimm'd;

But thy eternal summer shall not fade

Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;

Nor shall Death brag thou wander'st in his shade,

When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st;

So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,

So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

**Sonnet 130**

William Shakespeare, 1564 - 1616

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;

Coral is far more red than her lips' red;

If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;

If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.

I have seen roses damask'd, red and white,

But no such roses see I in her cheeks;

And in some perfumes is there more delight

Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.

I love to hear her speak, yet well I know

That music hath a far more pleasing sound;

I grant I never saw a goddess go;

My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:

And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare

As any she belied with false compare.

**A Birthday**

Christina Rossetti 1830 – 1894

My heart is like a singing bird

Whose nest is in a water'd shoot;

My heart is like an apple-tree

Whose boughs are bent with thickset fruit;

My heart is like a rainbow shell

That paddles in a halcyon sea;

My heart is gladder than all these

Because my love is come to me.

Raise me a dais of silk and down;

Hang it with vair and purple dyes;

Carve it in doves and pomegranates,

And peacocks with a hundred eyes;

Work it in gold and silver grapes,

In leaves and silver fleurs-de-lys;

Because the birthday of my life

Is come, my love is come to me.

# Ideas

**What Are Heavy?**

Christina Rossetti 1830 - 1894

What are heavy? sea-sand and sorrow:

What are brief? today and tomorrow:

What are frail? Spring blossoms and youth:

What are deep ? the ocean and truth.

**Thought is a man in his wholeness, wholly attending**

D.H. Lawrence 1885 – 1930

Thought, I love thought.

But not the juggling and twisting of already existent ideas.

I despise that self-important game.

Thought is the welling up of unknown life into consciousness,

Thought is the testing of statements on the touchstone of consciousness,

Thought is gazing onto the face of life, and reading what can be read,

Thought is pondering over experience, and coming to conclusion.

Thought is not a trick, or an exercise, or a set of dodges,

Thought is a man in his wholeness, wholly attending.

**Mirror**

Sylvia Plath 1932 – 1963

I am silver and exact. I have no preconceptions.

What ever you see I swallow immediately

Just as it is, unmisted by love or dislike.

I am not cruel, only truthful---

The eye of a little god, four-cornered.

Most of the time I meditate on the opposite wall.

It is pink, with speckles.  I have looked at it so long

I think it is a part of my heart.  But it flickers.

Faces and darkness separate us over and over.

Now I am a lake.  A woman bends over me,

Searching my reaches for what she really is.

Then she turns to those liars, the candles or the moon.

I see her back, and reflect it faithfully.

She rewards me with tears and an agitation of hands.

I am important to her.  She comes and goes.

Each morning it is her face that replaces the darkness.

In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an old woman

Rises toward her day after day, like a terrible fish.

**A Martian Sends a Postcard Home**

Craig Raine 1944 –

Caxtons are mechanical birds with many wings

and some are treasured for their markings--

they cause the eyes to melt

or the body to shriek without pain.

I have never seen one fly, but

sometimes they perch on the hand.

Mist is when the sky is tired of flight

and rests its soft machine on the ground:

then the world is dim and bookish

like engravings under tissue paper.

Rain is when the earth is television.

It has the properites of making colours darker.

Model T is a room with the lock inside --

a key is turned to free the world

for movement, so quick there is a film

to watch for anything missed.

But time is tied to the wrist

or kept in a box, ticking with impatience.

In homes, a haunted apparatus sleeps,

that snores when you pick it up.

If the ghost cries, they carry it

to their lips and soothe it to sleep

with sounds. And yet, they wake it up

deliberately, by tickling with a finger.

Only the young are allowed to suffer

openly. Adults go to a punishment room

with water but nothing to eat.

They lock the door and suffer the noises

alone. No one is exempt

and everyone's pain has a different smell.

**Southbound On The Freeway**

May Swenson 1913 - 1989

A tourist came in from Orbitville,

parked in the air, and said:

The creatures of this star

are made of metal and glass.

Through the transparent parts

you can see their guts.

Their feet are round and roll

on diagrams--or long

measuring tapes--dark

with white lines.

They have four eyes.

The two in the back are red.

Sometimes you can see a 5-eyed

one, with a red eye turning

on the top of his head.

He must be special-

the others respect him,

and go slow,

when he passes, winding

among them from behind.

They all hiss as they glide,

like inches, down the marked

tapes. Those soft shapes,

shadowy inside

the hard bodies--are they

their guts or their brains?

**If You Could See Laughter**

Mandy Coe

Hey, it is blue! No, surely red

- the colour of each breath

pumped out by the joy of running,

the jumpstart of a joke.

Tickle-breath is long and spiral.

Pink.

I think.

If you could see laughter

it would look like balloons,

the sort magicians knot in squeaky twists.

Laugh a giraffe.

Guffaw a poodle.

A belly-laugh creates balloons that float.

At the pantomime,

the ceiling of the theatre jostles with colour.

See this baby reaching for the light?

A yellow hiccup of laughter pops out,

floats above us for days.

We could rise off the ground with laughter,

tie strings on it and sail around the world.

**This Is Just To Say**

William Carlos Williams, 1883 - 1963

I have eaten

the plums

that were in

the icebox

and which

you were probably

saving

for breakfast

Forgive me

they were delicious

so sweet

and so cold

**Ironing**

Vicki Feaver 1943 –

I used to iron everything:

my iron flying over sheets and towels

like a sledge chased by wolves over snow;

the flex twisting and crinking

until the sheath frayed, exposing

wires like nerves. I stood like a horse

with a smoking hoof,

inviting anyone who dared

to lie on my silver padded board,

to be pressed to the thinness

of dolls cut from paper.

I'd have commandeered a crane

if I could, got the welders at Jarrow

to heat me an iron the size of a tug

to flatten the house.

Then for years I ironed nothing.

I put the iron in a high cupboard.

I converted to crumpledness.

And now I iron again: shaking

dark spots of water onto wrinkled

silk, nosing into sleeves, round

buttons, breathing the sweet heated smell

hot metal draws from newly-washed

cloth, until my blouse dries

to a shining, creaseless blue,

an airy shape with room to push

my arms, breasts, lungs, heart into.

**Elegy**

Chidiock Tichborne 1558 – 1586

My prime of youth is but a frost of cares;

My feast of joy is but a dish of pain,

My crop of corn is but a field of tares,

And all my good is but vain hope of gain:

The day is past, and yet I saw no sun,

And now I live, and now my life is done.

My tale was heard, and yet it was not told,

My fruit is fallen, and yet my leaves are green,

My youth is spent, and yet I am not old,

I saw the world, and yet I was not seen:

My thread is cut, and yet it is not spun,

And now I live, and now my life is done.

I sought my death, and found it in my womb,

I looked for life, and saw it was a shade,

I trod the earth, and knew it was my tomb,

And now I die, and now I was but made;

The glass is full, and now the glass is run,

And now I live, and now my life is done.

**A Blockhead**

Amy Lowell 1874 – 1925

Before me lies a mass of shapeless days,

Unseparated atoms, and I must

Sort them apart and live them. Sifted dust

Covers the formless heap. Reprieves, delays,

There are none, ever. As a monk who prays

The sliding beads asunder, so I thrust

Each tasteless particle aside, and just

Begin again the task which never stays.

And I have known a glory of great suns,

When days flashed by, pulsing with joy and fire!

Drunk bubbled wine in goblets of desire,

And felt the whipped blood laughing as it runs!

Spilt is that liquor, my too hasty hand

Threw down the cup, and did not understand.

**Cut**

Sylvia Plath 1932 – 1963

For Susan O'Neill Roe

What a thrill ----

My thumb instead of an onion.

The top quite gone

Except for a sort of a hinge

Of skin,

A flap like a hat,

Dead white.

Then that red plush.

Little pilgrim,

The Indian's axed your scalp.

Your turkey wattle

Carpet rolls

Straight from the heart.

I step on it,

Clutching my bottle

Of pink fizz. A celebration, this is.

Out of a gap

A million soldiers run,

Redcoats, every one.

Whose side are they on?

O my

Homunculus, I am ill.

I have taken a pill to kill

The thin

Papery feeling.

Saboteur,

Kamikaze man ---

The stain on your

Gauze Ku Klux Klan

Babushka

Darkens and tarnishes and when

The balled

Pulp of your heart

Confronts its small

Mill of silence

How you jump----

Trepanned veteran,

Dirty girl,

Thumb stump.

24.10.62**To Sleep**

William Wordsworth 1770–1850

A FLOCK of sheep that leisurely pass by

One after one; the sound of rain, and bees

Murmuring; the fall of rivers, winds and seas,

Smooth fields, white sheets of water, and pure sky;—

I’ve thought of all by turns, and still I lie

Sleepless; and soon the small birds’ melodies

Must hear, first utter’d from my orchard trees,

And the first cuckoo’s melancholy cry.

Even thus last night, and two nights more I lay,

And could not win thee, Sleep! by any stealth:

So do not let me wear to-night away:

Without Thee what is all the morning’s wealth?

Come, blesséd barrier between day and day,

Dear mother of fresh thoughts and joyous health!

**Last Lesson of the Afternoon**

D H Lawrence 1885 – 1930

When will the bell ring, and end this weariness?

How long have they tugged the leash, and strained apart,

My pack of unruly hounds! I cannot start

Them again on a quarry of knowledge they hate to hunt,

I can haul them and urge them no more.

No longer now can I endure the brunt

Of the books that lie out on the desks; a full threescore

Of several insults of blotted pages, and scrawl

Of slovenly work that they have offered me.

I am sick, and what on earth is the good of it all?

What good to them or me, I cannot see!

So, shall I take

My last dear fuel of life to heap on my soul

And kindle my will to a flame that shall consume

Their dross of indifference; and take the toll

Of their insults in punishment? — I will not! -

I will not waste my soul and my strength for this.

What do I care for all that they do amiss!

What is the point of this teaching of mine, and of this

Learning of theirs? It all goes down the same abyss.

What does it matter to me, if they can write

A description of a dog, or if they can't?

What is the point? To us both, it is all my aunt!

And yet I'm supposed to care, with all my might.

I do not, and will not; they won't and they don't; and that's all!

I shall keep my strength for myself; they can keep theirs as well.

Why should we beat our heads against the wall

Of each other? I shall sit and wait for the bell.

**Not Waving but Drowning**

Stevie Smith 1902 – 1971

Nobody heard him, the dead man,

But still he lay moaning:

I was much further out than you thought

And not waving but drowning.

Poor chap, he always loved larking

And now he’s dead

It must have been too cold for him his heart gave way,

They said.

Oh, no no no, it was too cold always

(Still the dead one lay moaning)

I was much too far out all my life

And not waving but drowning.

**Do not go gentle into that good night**

Dylan Thomas, 1914 - 1953

Do not go gentle into that good night,

Old age should burn and rave at close of day;

Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,

Because their words had forked no lightning they

Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright

Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,

Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,

And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,

Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight

Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,

Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,

Curse, bless, me now with your fierce tears, I pray.

Do not go gentle into that good night.

Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

**Merlin**

Edwin Muir 1887 – 1959

O Merlin in your crystal cave

Deep in the diamond of the day,

Will there ever be a singer

Whose music will smooth away

The furrow drawn by Adam's finger

Across the memory and the wave?

Or a runner who'll outrun

Man's long shadow driving on,

Break through the gate of memory

And hang the apple on the tree?

Will your magic ever show

The sleeping bride shut in her bower,

The day wreathed in its mound of snow

and Time locked in his tower?

# Poetry

**Ars Poetica**

Archibald MacLeish, 1892 - 1982

A poem should be palpable and mute

As a globed fruit,

Dumb

As old medallions to the thumb,

Silent as the sleeve-worn stone

Of casement ledges where the moss has grown—

A poem should be wordless

As the flight of birds.

\*

A poem should be motionless in time

As the moon climbs,

Leaving, as the moon releases

Twig by twig the night-entangled trees,

Leaving, as the moon behind the winter leaves,

Memory by memory the mind—

A poem should be motionless in time

As the moon climbs.

\*

A poem should be equal to:

Not true.

For all the history of grief

An empty doorway and a maple leaf.

For love

The leaning grasses and two lights above the sea—

A poem should not mean

But be.

**Poetry Jump-up**

John Agard 1949 –

Tell me if ah seeing right

Take a look down de street

Words dancin

words dancin

till dey sweat

words like fishes

jumpin out a net

words wild and free

joinin de peotry revelry

words back to back

words belly to belly

Come on everybody

come and join de poetry band

dis is poetry carnival

dis is poetry bacchanal

when inspiration call

take yu pen in yu hand

if yu dont have a pen

take yu pencil in yu hand

if yu dont have a pencil

what the hell

so long de feelin start to swell

just shout de poem out

Words jumpin off de page

tell me if Ah seein right

words like birds

jumpin out a cage

take a look down de street

words shakin dey waist

words shakin dey bum

words wit black skin

words wit white skin

words wit brown skin

words wit no skin at all

words huggin up words

an sayin I want to be a poem today

rhyme or no rhymeI is a poem today

I mean to have a good time

Words feelin hot hot hot

big words feelin hot hot hot

lil words feelin hot hot hot

even sad words cant help

tappin dey toe

to de riddum of de poetry band

Dis is poetry carnival

dis is poetry bacchanal

so come on everybody

join de celebration

all yu need is plenty perspiration

an a little inspiration

plenty perspiration

an a little inspiration

# Animals

**Considering the Snail**

Thom Gunn 1929 – 2004

The snail pushes through a green

night, for the grass is heavy

with water and meets over

the bright path he makes, where rain

has darkened the earth’s dark. He

moves in a wood of desire,

pale antlers barely stirring

as he hunts. I cannot tell

what power is at work, drenched there

with purpose, knowing nothing.

What is a snail’s fury? All

I think is that if later

I parted the blades above

the tunnel and saw the thin

trail of broken white across

litter, I would never have

imagined the slow passion

to that deliberate progress.

**The Swallows**

Andrew Young 1885 – 1971

All day – when early morning shone

With every dewdrop its own dawn

And when cockchafers were abroad

Hurtling like missiles that had lost their road–

The swallows twisting here and there

Round unseen corners in the air

Upstream and down so quickly passed

I wondered that their shadows flew as fast.

They steeple-chased over the bridge

And dropped down to a drowning midge

Sharing the river with the fish,

Although the air itself was their chief dish.

Blue-winged snowballs! until they turned

And then with ruddy breasts they burned;

All in one instant everywhere,

Jugglers with their own bodies in the air.

**Bat**

D H Lawrence 1885 – 1930

At evening, sitting on this terrace,

When the sun from the west, beyond Pisa, beyond the mountains of Carrara

Departs, and the world is taken by surprise ...

When the tired flower of Florence is in gloom beneath the glowing

Brown hills surrounding ...

When under the arches of the Ponte Vecchio

A green light enters against stream, flush from the west,

Against the current of obscure Arno ...

Look up, and you see things flying

Between the day and the night;

Swallows with spools of dark thread sewing the shadows together.

A circle swoop, and a quick parabola under the bridge arches

Where light pushes through;

A sudden turning upon itself of a thing in the air.

A dip to the water.

And you think:

"The swallows are flying so late!"

Swallows?

Dark air-life looping

Yet missing the pure loop ...

A twitch, a twitter, an elastic shudder in flight

And serrated wings against the sky,

Like a glove, a black glove thrown up at the light,

And falling back.

Never swallows!

Bats!

The swallows are gone.

At a wavering instant the swallows gave way to bats

By the Ponte Vecchio ...

Changing guard.

Bats, and an uneasy creeping in one's scalp

As the bats swoop overhead!

Flying madly.

Pipistrello!

Black piper on an infinitesimal pipe.

Little lumps that fly in air and have voices indefinite, wildly vindictive;

Wings like bits of umbrella.

Bats!

Creatures that hang themselves up like an old rag, to sleep;

And disgustingly upside down.

Hanging upside down like rows of disgusting old rags

And grinning in their sleep.

Bats!

In China the bat is symbol for happiness.

Not for me!

**Woodpecker**

Ted Hughes 1930 – 1998

Woodpecker is rubber-necked

But has a nose of steel.

He bangs his head against the wall

And cannot even feel.

When Woodpecker’s jack-hammer head

Starts up its dreadful din

Knocking the dead bough double dead

How do his eyes stay in?

Pity the poor dead oak that cries

In terrors and in pains.

But pity more Woodpecker’s eyes

And bouncing rubber brains.

**Owl**

Phoebe Hesketh 1909 – 2005

The owl’s a clock-face without fingers,

two keyholes for seeing,

striking silent as frost.

Soft, unexpected as snow,

its flight a wash

through trees without flicker of leaf,

a pocket of air

bulging with warm swallowed blood.

Out there the wood grown stiller

than winter with spring breathing blue-

bells and fern under cover;

each feather pinned; fur and whisker

twitching in the windless night.

And Time flying white from the clock-tower

screeching the hour of death.

**Work and Play**

Ted Hughes 1930 – 1998

The swallow of summer, she toils all the summer,

A blue-dark knot of glittering voltage,

A whiplash swimmer, a fish of the air.

But the serpent of cars that crawls through the dust

In shimmering exhaust

Searching to slake

Its fever in ocean

Will play and be idle or else it will bust.

The swallow of summer, the barbed harpoon,

She flings from the furnace, a rainbow of purples,

Dips her glow in the pond and is perfect.

But the serpent of cars that collapsed on the beach

Disgorges its organs

A scamper of colours

Which roll like tomatoes

Nude as tomatoes

With sand in their creases

To cringe in the sparkle of rollers and screech.

The swallow of summer, the seamstress of summer,

She scissors the blue into shapes and she sews it,

She draws a long thread and she knots it at the corners.

But the holiday people

Are laid out like wounded

Flat as in ovens

Roasting and basting

With faces of torment as space burns them blue

Their heads are transistors

Their teeth grit on sand grains

Their lost kids are squalling

While man-eating flies

Jab electric shock needles but what can they do?

They can climb in their cars with raw bodies, raw faces

And start up the serpent

And headache it homeward

A car full of squabbles

And sobbing and stickiness

With sand in their crannies

Inhaling petroleum

That pours from the foxgloves

While the evening swallow

The swallow of summer, cartwheeling through crimson,

Touches the honey-slow river and turning

Returns to the hand stretched from under the eaves -

A boomerang of rejoicing shadow.

**Pike**

Ted Hughes 1930 – 1998

Pike, three inches long, perfect

Pike in all parts, green tigering the gold.

Killers from the egg: the malevolent aged grin.

They dance on the surface among the flies.

Or move, stunned by their own grandeur,

Over a bed of emerald, silhouette

Of submarine delicacy and horror.

A hundred feet long in their world.

In ponds, under the heat-struck lily pads -

Gloom of their stillness:

Logged on last year's black leaves, watching upwards.

Or hung in an amber cavern of weeds

The jaws' hooked clamp and fangs

Not to be changed at this date;

A life subdued to its instrument;

The gills kneading quietly, and the pectorals.

Three we kept behind glass,

Jungled in weed: three inches, four,

And four and a half: fed fry to them -

Suddenly there were two. Finally one.

With a sag belly and the grin it was born with.

And indeed they spare nobody.

Two, six pounds each, over two feet long

High and dry and dead in the willow-herb -

One jammed past its gills down the other's gullet:

The outside eye stared: as a vice locks -

The same iron in this eye

Though its film shrank in death.

A pond I fished, fifty yards across,

Whose lilies and muscular tench

Had outlasted every visible stone

Of the monastery that planted them -

Stilled legendary depth:

It was as deep as England. It held

Pike too immense to stir, so immense and old

That past nightfall I dared not cast

But silently cast and fished

With the hair frozen on my head

For what might move, for what eye might move.

The still splashes on the dark pond,

Owls hushing the floating woods

Frail on my ear against the dream

Darkness beneath night's darkness had freed,

That rose slowly towards me, watching.

**Spider**

Harold Massingham 1932 – 2011

Trickling rope-trickster,

You could almost vanish

In this mirage-weather.

You know the knack, don’t you?

Imagination’s envy.

You’re your own yoyo, aren’t you?

Born to no distraction –

You better most of us

In pretty design,

Are versatile:

Have made frosty doilies,

Could rig a galleon-model;

And also, with more ingenuity,

Have made a circus safety-net

For the hurtling fly.

**The Mosquito**

D H Lawrence 1885 – 1930

When did you start your tricks

Monsieur?

What do you stand on such high legs for?

Why this length of shredded shank

You exaltation?

Is it so that you shall lift your centre of gravity upwards

And weigh no more than air as you alight upon me,

Stand upon me weightless, you phantom?

I heard a woman call you the Winged Victory

In sluggish Venice.

You turn your head towards your tail, and smile.

How can you put so much devilry

Into that translucent phantom shred

Of a frail corpus?

Queer, with your thin wings and your streaming legs

How you sail like a heron, or a dull clot of air,

A nothingness.

Yet what an aura surrounds you;

Your evil little aura, prowling, and casting a numbness on my mind.

That is your trick, your bit of filthy magic:

Invisibility, and the anæsthetic power

To deaden my attention in your direction.

But I know your game now, streaky sorcerer.

Queer, how you stalk and prowl the air

In circles and evasions, enveloping me,

Ghoul on wings

Winged Victory.

Settle, and stand on long thin shanks

Eyeing me sideways, and cunningly conscious that I am aware,

You speck.

I hate the way you lurch off sideways into air

Having read my thoughts against you.

Come then, let us play at unawares,

And see who wins in this sly game of bluff.

Man or mosquito.

You don't know that I exist, and I don't know that you exist.

Now then!

It is your trump

It is your hateful little trump

You pointed fiend,

Which shakes my sudden blood to hatred of you:

It is your small, high, hateful bugle in my ear.

Why do you do it?

Surely it is bad policy.

They say you can't help it.

If that is so, then I believe a little in Providence protecting the innocent.

But it sounds so amazingly like a slogan

A yell of triumph as you snatch my scalp.

Blood, red blood

Super-magical

Forbidden liquor.

I behold you stand

For a second enspasmed in oblivion,

Obscenely ecstasied

Sucking live blood

My blood.

Such silence, such suspended transport,

Such gorging,

Such obscenity of trespass.

You stagger

As well as you may.

Only your accursed hairy frailty

Your own imponderable weightlessness

Saves you, wafts you away on the very draught my anger makes in its snatching.

Away with a pæan of derision

You winged blood-drop.

Can I not overtake you?

Are you one too many for me

Winged Victory?

Am I not mosquito enough to out-mosquito you?

Queer, what a big stain my sucked blood makes

Beside the infinitesimal faint smear of you!

Queer, what a dim dark smudge you have disappeared into!

**Frogs**

Norman MacCaig 1910 – 1996

Frogs sit more solid

than anything sits. In mid-leap they are

parachutists falling

in a free fall. They die on roads

with arms across their chests and

heads high.

I love frogs that sit

like Buddha, that fall without

parachutes, that die

like Italian tenors.

Above all, I love them because,

pursued in water, they never

panic so much that they fail

to make stylish triangles

with their ballet dancer's

legs.

**A Case of Murder**

Vernon Scannell 1922 – 2007

They should not have left him there alone,

Alone that is except for the cat.

He was only nine, not old enough

To be left alone in a basement flat,

Alone, that is, except for the cat.

A dog would have been a different thing,

A big gruff dog with slashing jaws,

But a cat with round eyes mad as gold,

Plump as a cushion with tucked-in paws---

Better have left him with a fair-sized rat!

But what they did was leave him with a cat.

He hated that cat; he watched it sit,

A buzzing machine of soft black stuff,

He sat and watched and he hated it,

Snug in its fur, hot blood in a muff,

And its mad gold stare and the way it sat

Crooning dark warmth: he loathed all that.

So he took Daddy's stick and he hit the cat.

Then quick as a sudden crack in glass

It hissed, black flash, to a hiding place

In the dust and dark beneath the couch,

And he followed the grin on his new-made face,

A wide-eyed, frightened snarl of a grin,

And he took the stick and he thrust it in,

Hard and quick in the furry dark.

The black fur squealed and he felt his skin

Prickle with sparks of dry delight.

Then the cat again came into sight,

Shot for the door that wasn't quite shut,

But the boy, quick too, slammed fast the door:

The cat, half-through, was cracked like a nut

And the soft black thud was dumped on the floor.

Then the boy was suddenly terrified

And he bit his knuckles and cried and cried;

But he had to do something with the dead thing there.

His eyes squeezed beads of salty prayer

But the wound of fear gaped wide and raw;

He dared not touch the thing with his hands

So he fetched a spade and shovelled it

And dumped the load of heavy fur

In the spidery cupboard under the stair

Where it's been for years, and though it died

It's grown in that cupboard and its hot low purr

Grows slowly louder year by year:

There'll not be a corner for the boy to hide

When the cupboard swells and all sides split

And the huge black cat pads out of it.

# Family

**The Shoes**

John Mole 1941 –

These are the shoes

Dad walked about in

When we did jobs

In the garden,

When his shed

Was full of shavings,

When he tried

To put the fence up,

When my old bike

Needed mending,

When the car

Could not get started,

When he got up late

On Sunday.

These are the shoes

Dad walked about in

And I’ve kept them

In my room.

These are not the shoes

That Dad walked out in

When we didn’t know

Where he was going,

When I tried to lift

His suitcase,

When he said goodbye

And kissed me,

When he left his door-key

On the table,

When he promised Mum

He’d send a postcard,

When I couldn’t hear

His special footsteps.

These are not the shoes

That Dad walked out in

But he’ll need them

When he comes back home.

**Slow Reader**

Vicki Feaver 1943 –

He can make sculptures

and fabulous machines,

invent games, tell jokes,

give solemn, adult advice -

but he is slow to read.

When I take him on my knee

with his Ladybird book

he gazes into the air,

sighing and shaking his head

like an old man

who knows the mountains

are impassable.

He toys with words,

letting them go cold

as gristly meat,

until I relent

and let him wriggle free:

a fish returning

to its element,

or a white-eyed colt - shying

from the bit - who sees

that if he takes it

in his mouth

he'll never run

quite free again.

**Song (‘You Are As Gold’)**

H. D. [Hilda Doolittle] 1886 – 1961

You are as gold

as the half-ripe grain

that merges to gold again,

as white as the white rain

that beats through

the half-opened flowers

of the great flower tufts

thick on the black limbs

of an Illyrian apple bough.

Can honey distill such fragrance

as your bright hair--

for your face is as fair as rain,

yet as rain that lies clear

on white honey-comb,

lends radiance to the white wax,

so your hair on your brow

casts light for a shadow.

**Baby running barefoot**

D H Lawrence 1885 - 1930

When the bare feet of the baby beat across the grass

The little white feet nod like white flowers in the wind,

They poise and run like ripples lapping across the water;

And the sight of their white play among the grass

Is like a little robin's song, winsome,

Or as two white butterflies settle in the cup of one flower

For a moment, then away with a flutter of wings.

I long for the baby to wander hither to me

Like a wind-shadow wandering over the water,

So that she can stand on my knee

With her little bare feet in my hands,

Cool like syringa buds,

Firm and silken like pink young peony flowers.

**Timothy Winters**

Charles Causley 1917 – 2003

Timothy Winters comes to school

With eyes as wide as a football-pool,

Ears like bombs and teeth like splinters:

A blitz of a boy is Timothy Winters.

His belly is white, his neck is dark,

And his hair is an exclamation-mark.

His clothes are enough to scare a crow

And through his britches the blue winds blow.

When teacher talks he won't hear a word

And he shoots down dead the arithmetic-bird,

He licks the pattern off his plate

And he's not even heard of the Welfare State.

Timothy Winters has bloody feet

And he lives in a house on Suez Street,

He sleeps in a sack on the kithen floor

And they say there aren't boys like him anymore.

Old Man Winters likes his beer

And his missus ran off with a bombardier,

Grandma sits in the grate with a gin

And Timothy's dosed with an aspirin.

The welfare Worker lies awake

But the law's as tricky as a ten-foot snake,

So Timothy Winters drinks his cup

And slowly goes on growing up.

At Morning Prayers the Master helves

for children less fortunate than ourselves,

And the loudest response in the room is when

Timothy Winters roars "Amen!"

So come one angel, come on ten

Timothy Winters says "Amen

Amen amen amen amen."

Timothy Winters, Lord. Amen

**Eden Rock**

Charles Causley 1917 – 2003

They are waiting for me somewhere beyond Eden Rock:

My father, twenty-five, in the same suit

Of Genuine Irish Tweed, his terrier Jack

Still two years old and trembling at his feet.

My mother, twenty-three, in a sprigged dress

Drawn at the waist, ribbon in her straw hat,

Has spread the stiff white cloth over the grass.

Her hair, the colour of wheat, takes on the light.

She pours tea from a Thermos, the milk straight

From an old H.P. sauce-bottle, a screw

Of paper for a cork; slowly sets out

The same three plates, the tin cups painted blue.

The sky whitens as if lit by three suns.

My mother shades her eyes and looks my way

Over the drifted stream. My father spins

A stone along the water. Leisurely,

They beckon to me from the other bank.

I hear them call, 'See where the stream-path is!

Crossing is not as hard as you might think.'

I had not thought that it would be like this.

**You’re**

Sylvia Plath 1932 – 1963

Clownlike, happiest on your hands,

Feet to the stars, and moon-skulled,

Gilled like a fish. A common-sense

Thumbs-down on the dodo’s mode.

Wrapped up in yourself like a spool,

Trawling your dark as owls do.

Mute as a turnip from the Fourth

Of July to All Fools’ Day,

O high-riser, my little loaf.

Vague as fog and looked for like mail.

Farther off than Australia.

Bent-backed Atlas, our traveled prawn.

Snug as a bud and at home

Like a sprat in a pickle jug.

A creel of eels, all ripples.

Jumpy as a Mexican bean.

Right, like a well-done sum.

A clean slate, with your own face on.

# Nature

**What is… the sun?**

Wes Magee 1939 –

The sun is an orange dinghy

sailing across a calm sea.

It is a gold coin

dropped down a drain in heaven.

It is a yellow beach ball

kicked high into the yellow sky.

It is a red thumb print

on a sheet of pale blue paper.

It is a gold top from a milk bottle

floating on a puddle.

**Rainbow**

John Agard 1949 –

When you see de rainbow you know God know wha he doing -

one big smile across the sky -

I tell you God got style the man got style

When you see

raincloud pass

and de rainbow

make a show

I tell you

is God doing

limbo

the man doing limbo

But sometimes

you know

when I see

de rainbow

so full of glow

and curving

like she bearing child

I does want know

if God

ain’t a woman

If that is so

the woman got style

man she got style

**Spring Nature Notes**

Ted Hughes 1930 – 1998

I

The sun lies mild and still on the yard stones.

The clue is a solitary daffodil – the first.

And the whole air struggling in soft excitements

Like a woman hurrying into her silks.

Birds everywhere zipping and unzipping

Changing their minds, in soft excitements,

Warming their wings and trying their voices.

The trees still spindle bare.

Beyond them, from the warmed blue hills

An exhilaration swirls upward, like a huge fish.

As under a waterfall, in the bustling pool.

Over the whole land

Spring thunders down in brilliant silence.

II

An oak tree on the first day of April

Is as bare as the same oak in December

But it looks completely different.

Now it bristles, it is a giant brazier

Of invisible glare, an invisible sun.

The oak tree’s soul has returned and flames its strength.

You feel those rays – even though you can’t see them

They touch you.

(Just as you feel touched, and turn round

To meet eyes staring straight at the back of your head.)

III

A spurt of daffodils, stiff, quivering –

Plumes, blades, creases, Guardsmen

At attention

Like sentinels at the tomb of a great queen.

(Not like what they are – the advance guard

Of a drunken slovenly army

Which will leave this whole place wrecked.)

IV

The crocuses are too naked. Space shakes them.

They remind you the North Sky is one vast hole

With black space blowing out of it

And that you too are being worn thin

By the blowing atoms of decomposed stars.

Down the moonbeams come hares

Hobbling on their square wheels.

What space has left, the hares eat.

What the hares do not want

Looks next morning like the leavings of picnickers

Who were kidnapped by a fright from space.

The crocus bulb stays hidden – veteran

Of terrors beyond man.

V

Spring bulges the hills.

The bare trees creak and shift.

Some buds have burst in tatters –

Like firework stubs.

But winter’s lean bullocks

Only pretend to eat

The grass that will not come.

Then they bound like lambs, they twist in the air

They bounce their half tons of elastic

When the bale of hay breaks open.

They gambol from heap to heap,

Finally stand happy chewing their beards

Of last summer’s dusty whiskers.

VI

With arm swinging, a tremendous skater

On the flimsy ice of space,

The earth leans into its curve –

Thrilled to the core, some flies have waded out

An inch onto my window, to stand on the sky

And try their buzz.

**July (from *The Shepherd’s Calendar*)**

John Clare 1793 – 1864

Till noon burns with its blistering breath

Around, and day dies still as death.

The busy noise of man and brute

Is on a sudden lost and mute;

Even the brook that leaps along

Seems weary of its bubbling song,

And, so soft its waters creep,

Tired silence sinks in sounder sleep.

The cricket on its banks is dumb,

The very flies forget to hum;

And, save the waggon rocking round,

The landscape sleeps without a sound.

The breeze is stopt, the lazy bough

Hath not a leaf that dances now;

The tottergrass upon the hill,

And spiders’ threads, are standing still;

The feathers dropt from moorhen’s wing,

Which to the water’s surface cling,

Are steadfast, and as heavy seem

As stones beneath them in the stream;

Hawkweed and groundsel’s fanning downs

Unruffled keep their seedy crowns;

And in the oven-heated air,

Not one light thing is floating there,

Save that to the earnest eye,

The restless heat seems twittering by.

**Who has seen the wind**

Christina Rossetti 1830 – 1894

Who has seen the wind?

Neither I nor you:

But when the leaves hang trembling,

The wind is passing through.

Who has seen the wind?

Neither you nor I:

But when the trees bow down their heads,

The wind is passing by.

**The warm and the cold**

Ted Hughes 1930 – 1998

Freezing dusk is closing

Like a slow trap of steel

On trees and roads and hills and all

That can no longer feel.

But the carp is in its depth

Like a planet in its heaven.

And the badger in its bedding

Like a loaf in the oven.

And the butterfly in its mummy

Like a viol in its case.

And the owl in its feathers

Like a doll in its lace.

Freezing dusk has tightened

Like a nut screwed tight

On the starry aeroplane

Of the soaring night.

But the trout is in its hole

Like a chuckle in a sleeper.

The hare strays down the highway

Like a root going deeper.

The snail is dry in the outhouse

Like a seed in a sunflower.

The owl is pale on the gatepost

Like a clock on its tower.

Moonlight freezes the shaggy world

Like a mammoth of ice –

The past and the future

Are the jaws of a steel vice.

But the cod is in the tide-rip

Like a key in a purse.

The deer are on the bare-blown hill

Like smiles on a nurse.

The flies are behind the plaster

Like the lost score of a jig.

Sparrows are in the ivy-clump

Like money in a pig.

Such a frost

The flimsy moon

Has lost her wits.

A star falls.

The sweating farmers

Turn in their sleep

Like oxen on spits.

**London Snow**

Robert Bridges 1844 – 1930

When men were all asleep the snow came flying,

In large white flakes falling on the city brown,

Stealthily and perpetually settling and loosely lying,

Hushing the latest traffic of the drowsy town;

Deadening, muffling, stifling its murmurs failing;

Lazily and incessantly floating down and down:

Silently sifting and veiling road, roof and railing;

Hiding difference, making unevenness even,

Into angles and crevices softly drifting and sailing.

All night it fell, and when full inches seven

It lay in the depth of its uncompacted lightness,

The clouds blew off from a high and frosty heaven;

And all woke earlier for the unaccustomed brightness

Of the winter dawning, the strange unheavenly glare:

The eye marvelled—marvelled at the dazzling whiteness;

The ear hearkened to the stillness of the solemn air;

No sound of wheel rumbling nor of foot falling,

And the busy morning cries came thin and spare.

Then boys I heard, as they went to school, calling,

They gathered up the crystal manna to freeze

Their tongues with tasting, their hands with snowballing;

Or rioted in a drift, plunging up to the knees;

Or peering up from under the white-mossed wonder,

‘O look at the trees!’ they cried, ‘O look at the trees!’

With lessened load a few carts creak and blunder,

Following along the white deserted way,

A country company long dispersed asunder:

When now already the sun, in pale display

Standing by Paul’s high dome, spread forth below

His sparkling beams, and awoke the stir of the day.

For now doors open, and war is waged with the snow;

And trains of sombre men, past tale of number,

Tread long brown paths, as toward their toil they go:

But even for them awhile no cares encumber

Their minds diverted; the daily word is unspoken,

The daily thoughts of labour and sorrow slumber

At the sight of the beauty that greets them, for the charm they have broken.

**The Evening Darkens Over**

Robert Bridges 1844 – 1930

The evening darkens over

After a day so bright

The windcapt waves discover

That wild will be the night.

There’s sound of distant thunder.

The latest sea-birds hover

Along the cliff’s sheer height;

As in the memory wander

Last flutterings of delight,

White wings lost on the white.

There’s not a ship in sight;

And as the sun goes under

Thick clouds conspire to cover

The moon that should rise yonder.

Thou art alone, fond lover.

**Windy Nights**

Robert Louis Stevenson 1850 – 1894

Whenever the moon and stars are set,

Whenever the wind is high,

All night long in the dark and wet,

A man goes riding by.

Late in the night when the fires are out,

Why does he gallop and gallop about?

Whenever the trees are crying aloud,

And ships are tossed at sea,

By, on the highway, low and loud,

By at the gallop goes he.

By at the gallop he goes, and then

By he comes back at the gallop again.

**Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening**

Robert Frost 1874 – 1963

Whose woods these are I think I know.

His house is in the village though;

He will not see me stopping here

To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer

To stop without a farmhouse near

Between the woods and frozen lake

The darkest evening of the year.

He gives his harness bells a shake

To ask if there is some mistake.

The only other sound’s the sweep

Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,

But I have promises to keep,

And miles to go before I sleep,

And miles to go before I sleep.

**The Trees**

Philip Larkin 1922 – 1985

The trees are coming into leaf

Like something almost being said;

The recent buds relax and spread,

Their greenness is a kind of grief.

Is it that they are born again

And we grow old? No, they die too,

Their yearly trick of looking new

Is written down in rings of grain.

Yet still the unresting castles thresh

In fullgrown thickness every May.

Last year is dead, they seem to say,

Begin afresh, afresh, afresh.

# Place

**America**

Claude McKay 1889 – 1948

Although she feeds me bread of bitterness,

And sinks into my throat her tiger’s tooth,

Stealing my breath of life, I will confess

I love this cultured hell that tests my youth.

Her vigor flows like tides into my blood,

Giving me strength erect against her hate,

Her bigness sweeps my being like a flood.

Yet, as a rebel fronts a king in state,

I stand within her walls with not a shred

Of terror, malice, not a word of jeer.

Darkly I gaze into the days ahead,

And see her might and granite wonders there,

Beneath the touch of Time’s unerring hand,

Like priceless treasures sinking in the sand.

**Prelude I**

T. S. Eliot 1888 – 1965

The winter evening settles down

With smell of steaks in passageways.

Six o’clock.

The burnt-out ends of smoky days.

And now a gusty shower wraps

The grimy scraps

Of withered leaves about your feet

And newspapers from vacant lots;

The showers beat

On broken blinds and chimney-pots,

And at the corner of the street

A lonely cab-horse steams and stamps.

And then the lighting of the lamps.