

Let's explore and reclaim pleasure

Post by “Joshua” of September 26, 2021 at 4:25 PM

This is a wide subject! Allow me to narrow it through the lens of a few poems I like.

Romance:

Quote

Drink to me only with thine eyes,
And I will pledge with mine;
Or leave a kiss but in the cup,
And I'll not look for wine.
The thirst that from the soul doth rise
Doth ask a drink divine;
But might I of Jove's nectar sup,
I would not change for thine.
I sent thee late a rosy wreath,
Not so much honouring thee
As giving it a hope, that there
It could not withered be.
But thou thereon didst only breathe,
And sent'st it back to me;
Since when it grows, and smells, I swear,
Not of itself, but thee.

-Ben Jonson

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simple hospitalities:

Quote

Arrived there, the little house they fill, Ne looke for entertainment, where none was:
Rest is their feast, and all things at their will; The noblest mind the best contentment
has.

-Edmund Spenser

The countryside: (from a much longer poem)

Quote

[...] Now, Penshurst, they that will proportion thee
With other edifices, when they see
Those proud, ambitious heaps, and nothing else,
May say their lords have built, but thy lord dwells.

-Ben Jonson

Wine: (from a much longer poem)

Quote

O, for a draught of vintage! that hath been Cool'd a long age in the deep-delved earth.
Tasting of Flora and the country green, Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt
mirth!

-John Keats

Traversing the landscape:

Quote

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.

-Robert Frost

Walking alone by night:

Quote

The Curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

-Thomas Gray

Thinking about nature and the cosmos:

Quote

There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
There is society, where none intrudes,
By the deep Sea, and music in its roar:
I love not Man the less, but Nature more,
From these our interviews, in which I steal
From all I may be, or have been before,
To mingle with the Universe, and feel
What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal.

-Lord Byron

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Finding a good translation of a classic text:

Quote

Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.

Of that wide expanse had I been told
That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne;
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He star'd at the Pacific—and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

-John Keats

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And now one or two of my own:

Quote

No more! Aye, fly! Fly to thine pleasure
Great noble bird, sun-midst sailing,
Prow a-gleaming, southward seeking;
Seek thee still a sweeter shore
And I, a sweet philosophy.
Yet I will linger here a time
Tasting of the morning's fruits—
'Ere long the yawning sea shall call:
The tide shall fail, and then the light,
And we shall mingle, you and I
Void with void, and mote with mote.

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And in lieu of a lucrative synecure for writing poetry: the pleasure of my day job, land-surveying!

Quote

Thoreau and the Geometry of Misattribution: Field Notes

Mid-morning, June the twenty-fifth. Clear, calm;

The water's edge of Choctawhatchee Bay—

All glass and brass and darting precision—

Where little fins answer the noiseless psalm

Of some invisible magnetism.

Our survey maps the shore's meandering way

Easterly; thence perambulates this marsh

And cypress swamp. "Never look back unless

You are planning to go that way"? A harsh

And hollow saw; return is not regress—

A surveyor's first sight is his backsight.

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That last one I sent off to the Walden Woods Project (Thoreau was a surveyor by trade), and they (allegedly) filed it away in their archives. 😄