**Adam’s Curse**

We sat together at one summer’s end,

That beautiful mild woman, your close friend,

And you and I, and talked of poetry.

I said, ‘A line will take us hours maybe;

Yet if it does not seem a moment’s thought,

Our stitching and unstitching has been naught.

Better go down upon your marrow-bones

And scrub a kitchen pavement, or break stones

Like an old pauper, in all kinds of weather;

For to articulate sweet sounds together

Is to work harder than all these, and yet

Be thought an idler by the noisy set

Of bankers, schoolmasters, and clergymen

The martyrs call the world.’

                                          And thereupon

That beautiful mild woman for whose sake

There’s many a one shall find out all heartache

On finding that her voice is sweet and low

Replied, ‘To be born woman is to know—

Although they do not talk of it at school—

That we must labour to be beautiful.’

I said, ‘It’s certain there is no fine thing

Since Adam’s fall but needs much labouring.

There have been lovers who thought love should be

So much compounded of high courtesy

That they would sigh and quote with learned looks

Precedents out of beautiful old books;

Yet now it seems an idle trade enough.’

We sat grown quiet at the name of love;

We saw the last embers of daylight die,

And in the trembling blue-green of the sky

A moon, worn as if it had been a shell

Washed by time’s waters as they rose and fell

About the stars and broke in days and years.

I had a thought for no one’s but your ears:

That you were beautiful, and that I strove

To love you in the old high way of love;

That it had all seemed happy, and yet we’d grown

As weary-hearted as that hollow moon.

 —W. B. Yeats

**[Euclid alone has looked on Beauty bare]**

Euclid alone has looked on Beauty bare.

Let all who prate of Beauty hold their peace,

And lay them prone upon the earth and cease

To ponder on themselves, the while they stare

At nothing, intricately drawn nowhere

In shapes of shifting lineage; let geese

Gabble and hiss, but heroes seek release

From dusty bondage into luminous air.

O blinding hour, O holy, terrible day,

When first the shaft into his vision shone

Of light anatomized! Euclid alone

Has looked on Beauty bare. Fortunate they

Who, though once only and then but far away,

Have heard her massive sandal set on stone.

 —Edna St. Vincent Millay

**Morbidezza**

You leave the back door wide open,

            your bare feet thudding against the dirt,

the dirt cracked with hairy-fisted shoots,

            pummeling their messages skyward.

You walk straight into the garden

            wild with jetting juiced stalks.

You listen to the bees’ talk harden.

            Pines swish their wrists, discarding needles

like clock hands. It is 4 p.m.; the garden’s edges brown.

            The clouds drop; the sky goes blueberry blue.

You hear the night push her plausive voice,

            glistering with perfumeries.

You rush back in, clutching a bouquet of irises,

            the crumbling farmhouse blushing with dusk.

You place the irises in a vase on the hutch. The irises’ beards

            purple with sweat while you go off to sleep,

your gorgeous middle-aged torso yielding,

            your nostrils drumming like dove chests.

Have I added too many strokes? I want so much

            to make you real, to get it right.

 —Spencer Reece

**Some Say**

Some say a host

of horsemen, a horizon

of ships under sail

is most beautiful &

some say a mountain

embraced by the clouds &

some say the badass

booty-shakin’ shorties

in the club are most

beautiful and some say

the truth is most

beautiful dutifully singing

what beauty might

sound under stars

of a day. I say

what they say

is sometimes

what I say

Her legs long

and bare shining

on the bed the hair

the small tuft

the brown languor

of a long line

of sunlit skin I say

whatever you say

I’m saying is beautiful

& whither truth beauty

and whither whither

in the weather of an old day

suckerpunched by a spiral

of Arctic air blown

into vast florets of ice

binding the Great Lakes

into a single cracked sheet

the airplanes fly

unassuming over     O they eat

and eat the steel mouths

and burn what the earth

spun eons to form

Some say calamity

and some catastrophe

is beautiful     Some say

porn     Some jolie laide

Some say beauty

is hanging there at a dank bar

with pretty and sublime

those sad bitches left behind

by the horsemen

 —Maureen McLane