

To Rosamond¹

Madame, ye been of alle beautee shrine
 As fer as cercled is the mapemounde:²
 For as the crystal glorious ye shine,
 And like ruby been youre cheekes rounde.
 5 Therwith ye been so merye and so jocounde
 That at a revel whan that I see you daunce
 It is an oinement unto my wounde,
 Though ye to me ne do no daliaunce.³

For though I weepe of teres ful a tine,⁴ *tub*
 10 Yit may that wo myn herte nat confounde;
 Youre semy⁵ vois, that ye so smale outtwine,⁴ *small*
 Maketh my thought in joye and blis habounde:⁶ *abound*
 So curteisly I go with love bounde
 That to myself I saye in my penaunce,⁵
 15 "Suffiseth me to love you, Rosemounde,
 Though ye to me ne do no daliaunce."

Was nevere pik walwed in galauntine⁶
 As I in love am walwed and vwounde,
 For which ful ofte I of myself divine
 20 That I am trewe Tristam⁷ the secounde;
 My love may not refreide nor affounde;⁸
 I brenne⁸ ay in amorous plesaunce: *burn*
 Do what you list, I wol youre thral⁸ be founde, *slave*
 Though ye to me ne do no daliaunce.

1. This lyric extends the extravagant images of the stylized courtly-love lyric to outrageous lengths: a lover might well weep a flood of tears but would hardly measure them by the tubful (line 9), and he might be overwhelmed with love—but not like a fish buried in sauce (line 17). The general imperturbability of tone contrasts ironically with the grotesque metaphors.

2. I.e., to the farthest circumference of the map

of the world.

3. I.e., show me no encouragement.

4. That you so delicately spin out.

5. I.e., pangs of unrequited love.

6. Pike rolled in galantine sauce.

7. The famous lover of Isolt (Iseult, Isolde) in medieval legend, renowned for his constancy.

8. Cool nor chill.

The Unquiet Grave

“The wind doth blow today, my love,
And a few small drops of rain;
I never had but one true-love,
In cold grave she was lain.

“I’ll do as much for my true-love
As any young man may;
I’ll sit and mourn all at her grave
For a twelvemonth and a day.”

The twelvemonth and a day being up,
The dead began to speak:
“Oh who sits weeping on my grave,
And will not let me sleep?”

“’T is I, my love, sits on your grave,
And will not let you sleep;
For I crave one kiss of your clay-cold lips,
And that is all I seek.”

“You crave one kiss of my clay-cold lips,
But my breath smells earthy strong;
If you have one kiss of my clay-cold lips,
Your time will not be long.

“’T is down in yonder garden green,
Love, where we used to walk,
The finest flower that e’er was seen
Is withered to a stalk.

“The stalk is withered dry, my love,
So will our hearts decay;
So make yourself content, my love,
Till God calls you away.”

Sonnet 87

William Shakespeare

Farewell! thou art too dear for my possessing,
And like enough thou knowst thy estimate.
The Charter of thy worth gives thee releasing;
My bonds in thee are all determinate.
For how do I hold thee but by thy granting,
And for that riches where is my deserving?
The cause of this fair gift in me is wanting,
And so my patent back again is swerving.
Thy self thou gav'st, thy own worth then not knowing,
Or me, to whom thou gav'st is, else mistaking,
So thy great gift, upon misprision growing,
Comes home again, on better judgement making.
Thus have I had thee as a dream doth flatter:
In sleep a king, but waking no such matter.

Idea 61

Michael Drayton

Since there's no help, come let us kiss and part.
Nay, I have done, you get no more of me;
And I am glad, yea glad with all my heart,
That thus so cleanly I myself can free.
Shake hands for ever, cancel all our vows,
And when we meet at any time again,
Be it not seen in either of our brows
That we one jot of former love retain.
Now at the last gasp of Love's latest breath,
When, his pulse failing, Passion speechless lies;
When Faith is kneeling by his bed of death,
And Innocence is closing up his eyes—
Now, if thou wouldst, when all have given him over,
From death to life thou might'st him yet recover!

Love's Diet

John Donne

TO what a cumbersome unvioldiness
And burdenous corpulence my love had grown,
But that I did, to make it less,
And keep it in proportion,
Give it a diet, made it feed upon
That which love worst endures, discretion.

Above one sigh a day I allow'd him not,
Of which my fortune, and my faults had part;
And if sometimes by stealth he got
A she sigh from my mistress' heart,
And thought to feast on that, I let him see
'Twas neither very sound, nor meant to me.

If he wrung from me a tear, I brined it so
With scorn or shame, that him it nourish'd not;
If he suck'd hers, I let him know
'Twas not a tear which he had got;
His drink was counterfeit, as was his meat;
For eyes, which roll towards all, weep not, but sweat.

Whatever he would dictate I writ that,
But burnt her letters when she writ to me;
And if that favour made him fat,
I said, "If any title be
Convey'd by this, ah! what doth it avail,
To be the fortieth name in an entail?"

Thus I reclaim'd my buzzard love, to flie
At what, and when, and how, and where I choose.
Now negligent of sports I lie,
And now, as other falconers use,
I spring a mistress, swear, write, sigh, and weep;
And the game kill'd, or lost, go talk or sleep.

Ebb

Edna St. Vincent Millay

I know what my heart is like
 Since your love died:
It is like a hollow ledge
Holding a little pool
 Left there by the tide,
 A little tepid pool,
Drying inward from the edge.

Advice to a Discarded Lover

Fleur Adcock

Think, now: if you have found a dead bird,
not only dead, not only fallen,
but full of maggots: what do you feel -
more pity or more revulsion?

Pity is for the moment of death,
and the moments after. It changes
when decay comes, with the creeping stench
and the wriggling, munching scavengers.

Returning later, though, you will see
a shape of clean bone, a few feathers,
an inoffensive symbol of what
once lived. Nothing to make you shudder.

It is clear then. But perhaps you find
the analogy I have chosen
for our dead affair rather gruesome -
too unpleasant a comparison.

It is not accidental. In you
I see maggots close to the surface.
You are eaten up by self-pity,
crawling with unlovable pathos.

If I were to touch you I should feel
against my fingers fat, moist worm-skin.
Do not ask me for charity now:
go away until your bones are clean.

[Sonnet] You jerk you didn't call me up

Bernadette Mayer

You jerk you didn't call me up
I haven't seen you in so long
You probably have a fucking tan
& besides that instead of making love tonight
You're drinking your parents to the airport
I'm through with you bourgeois boys
All you ever do is go back to ancestral comforts
Only money can get—even Catullus was rich but

Nowadays you guys settle for a couch
By a soporific color cable t.v. set
Instead of any arc of love, no wonder
The G.I. Joe team blows it every other time

Wake up! It's the middle of the night
You can either make love or die at the hands of the Cobra Commander

To make love, turn to page 121.
To die, turn to page 172.