

Leisure

Du français venir le mot loisir, leisure
a liquid word, a flowing promise of life,
of freedom from obligation's dragging burden,
its clanging demand to do, to be as others desire,
of the slavish labour to suffer fools gladly, to be
free of this and so much more, surely is life's leisure.

Yet praising that life of leisure *c'est facile*, an easy, empty
pleasure; better to consider what faults might tarnish
this seeming treasure, its siren's song of endless pleasure.

Among many images of leisure, our species turns
to islands, idyllic drifts of sands sans time's
slow fall, of skies blue lapis drift to seas rolling rise
scattering soft sounds of ease in nothing
to do until stars stage their silent celestial call.
John Donne knew islands are of no one, man nor woman;
knew islands are not oases of leisure but deserts of isolation,
alone to recall but not hear a voice, its crystal timber
in laughter, to invoke but not see lips arched in smile.
This retired, island life of leisure is Eden before Eve.

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Imagine now, a solitary bee, bumbling, tumbling in solitary leisure.
What would it be to be a bee without obligations to be a bee?
An endless flight in Andromeda's skies, scoffing at flowers below,
a solitary sojourn to be free of the hive, its unforgiving demands
For dances, for foraging, for more and more honey against winter's coming?

My praise is not to leisure but to the falcon and the falconer;
As Yeats knew, as well all know, the falcon and the falconer
Must each hear the chanting chanson of love's obligations;
must be against the widening gyre of fancy' flight, must feel
the tug of what others need is to grasp a pleasure beyond
the widening gyre of seeking, a solitary, soulless leisure.

