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Methodological Inspiration

Essays could be lists of single-line observations, often culled—imitated, stolen—from a student's reading. They could be slightly more mortared prose that threads a way through the borrowed quotations to narrate the thought lit by those sparks. And they could be masterful voices that seem less to hold the citations together than flow through them.

— Scott Black, *Of Essays and Reading in Early Modern Britain* (2006)

There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in.

Making Light of Essays

Light can be gentle, dangerous, dreamlike, bare, living, dead,
misty, clear, hot, dark, violent, springlike, falling, straight,
sensual, limited, poisonous, calm, and soft.

— Sven Nykvist

Making Essays of Light

I.

Glinting | Of Accident

The citizens of utopia wonder that any mortal takes pleasure in the uncertain sparkle of a tiny jewel or precious stone, when he can look at a star, or even the sun itself. To fall short of this utopia is to be destined to see the illuminated, not the light. To fall short of this is utopia.

*

True expression, like the prismatic glass, spreads its gaudy colours; false eloquence, like the unchanging sun—the devil in the simply perfect sun—clears and improves whatever it shines upon. A brilliance takes up residence in flaws, which all the unchipped faces of design refuse: wine collects starlets at a lip's fault, sunlight where nicked glass angles, affection where the eye is least correctible (there is a crack in everything God has made, that's how the light gets in). Her moments of joy make her a flame of many colours of precious jewels—if for a moment she were clearly visible to me, I think I'd fall forever, out of love. To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame: quartz, contentment.

*

The illuminated/the light: why the separation? The sun itself (uncertain sparkle!) fractures; one sun by day, by night ten thousand shine. And the sun's light is not of one continued piece, we just cannot perceive the space between its rays, themselves in number numberless—the sun cutting the cliff with its embroidered cloths, its thousand silky hairs of amber and green light (but who, from that clue of sunbeams, could ever steal one thread?). Day shines down in waves and particles, orbits all isosceles-bespangled The many sides or facets of gem-like light: the light *as* the illuminated.

*



*

If life (standing on a street corner, channel surfing, trying to navigate the web or a declining relationship, hearing that a close friend died last night) flies at us in bright splinters (the summer sun will drive its splinters straight into your brain, strike into the head), then the essay is what remains: the chipped glass in the light, light like chipped glass. It breaks the bottle of the eye, to see what lights are spun of accident. If fortune is glass, shattering just as it gleams brightest, then shattering is the fortune of the bright and brittle essay; the sentence as knowledge broken, wonder nothing else but contemplation broken off. When suddenly the surface breaks or complicates, unexpectedness emerges. I'm talking about bottles, and ruin, and what we flash at the darkness, and what for. . .

*

Shepherds flecked, as the heavens and the fields are, with an infinitude of points of light; the sunlight-sidled, like dewdrops, like dandled diamonds; the entire length of the opposite shore glittering, blurred kaleidoscope; stained-glass canopy; snow in the sun a shower of diamond spearlets; even the dragonfly, hanging like lapis lazuli in the sun. Rays emerge most copiously in

different angles, separated from one another each in their proper colours. Bright particles of sand like jewels of light, translucent and with many angles. Each angle a lovely heaven.

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Angles and angels: the essay, spangled with eyes.

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And is not sight itself a jewel? The eye is formed by light and for light, all at once what Christ is: immortal diamond, immortal diamond. Rayed into you, like beams into a brittle, crazy glass.

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It's as if a sequence of displaced but identical images of the same object were being produced by refraction through a prism, but with the element of time replacing the role of light. Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass, stains the white radiance of eternity.

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Ethiopia: an injured miner is dragged to a clearing. He looks to be in agonising pain. Blood spews from a compound fracture which has forced a bone from his leg clear out his skin (a wound gives off its own light). Miners congregate around the injured miner. Fracture of poverty and blood. What does the essay know of fracture?

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Moving into the mined uncut gem: light and colour engulf in a shifting melange of abstract shapes and patterns, diving deeper and deeper. Fracture of wealth and illumination.

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New York City: a man cuts diagonally across the space to behold the gem (straight against the light I cross)—journey through a melange of colour, light and swirling abstract shapes, akin to before except much faster, with hairpin turns, and broken up by flashes of images from his past, sent through the star filter of memory. His elbows break through the glass showcase beneath him, which splinters; blood everywhere, glass shards eased one by one from the flesh. The entire entourage rallies around him with great concern. It's a sign.

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America: the night's yawn absorbs you as you lie down at the wrong angle to the sun, ready already to let go of your hand.

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If something glints, the light cannot be consistent. One inch of pain and an inch of light; the sun gleams upon ice, thin ice. The hard faces of the jewels seem to warn you, impenetrable crystals (multifaceted, multifaceted). Rotate the husband and expose a hidden side. Add a second light, get a second darkness—it's only fair.

II.

Shining | Of Silence

The full moon is saying, *O!* But the sun is silent. Speak to me, sun. Where must I stand to hear your voice?

*

True beauty never strikes us directly; the setting sun is beautiful because of all it makes us lose (weightless, unclarified light, lying like despair on the ginger root). Truer beauty strikes us directly: we stare right at the sun at its highest point in the sky, and it says nothing, and we see less.

*

Extreme light, by overcoming the organs of sight, obliterates all objects, so as in its effect exactly to resemble darkness (dark with excess of light). After looking for some time at the sun, two black spots, the impression which it leaves, seem to dance before our eyes.

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Eudoxus wished, and prayed to the Gods, that he might once view the sun near at hand, to comprehend its form, its greatness and its beauty, on condition he might immediately be burnt and consumed by it. With the price of his own life he would attain a science where both use and possession would immediately be taken from him; for such sudden and fleeting knowledge, he would lose or forgo all the knowledges he either now has, or may have. A man should be satisfied with the light which it pleases the sun to communicate to us by virtue of his beams, and he that lifts up his eyes to take a greater within his body, let him not think it strange if for a reward of his overweening and arrogance he loses his sight.

*

Where am I?—Where is earth?—No, where are you, O sun? And shall the sun be seen at midnight, rising in my song?

*

Where was I?—Medea is a direct descendant of the sun god Helios (son of the Titan Hyperion) through her father Aeëtes of Colchis. Your sensitivity to noise can affect relationships, school, or work, and your general wellbeing. Hyperacusis can affect 1 or both ears; it can come on suddenly or develop over time. There's a light in sound, a sound-*like* power in light—lightnesses, likenesses (similitude often seems more revealing than verisimilitude). Have we seen or heard anything comparable to the sun?

*



*

To like, to light. I like a view but I like to sit with my back turned to it; if I don't see the sun, I know it's there, and there's a whole life in that, in knowing that the sun is there. I like to speak and lucubrate, I like the government (but that's not it), I like the freedom of the press and quill, I like

the *habeas corpus* (when we've got it), I like a parliamentary debate, taxes, a sea-coal fire, beef-steak, beer, the weather (two months of every year), regent, church, king—which means essentially that I like all and everything. I like to leave too-long sentences out in the sun for too long: upon collection, they say less. The sun's nonsense, terrible vowels, glossolalia of fire, the smears of light retrenching and repeating their alphabet, the drenched wings of sunclusters rising like thousands of tiny cathedrals into their new language, bow-wow and arf, the Great Light, sentences, sentences. For the sky my eye sees and the one that it cannot find, for the light for the light for the light. Etc.

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A little pinkish flame is snuffed in my mouth. There is a light that fails in my mouth.

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Unless light seeming silent because delayed (sun: 8 minutes, stars: . . .). Unless we know that this ghost light is coming, the darkness only light that has not yet reached us, a fire that will discover itself, from never-setting suns.

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There are bones that are suns in the quick earth; faster than starlight the body goes to the quick earth. Only make-believe people can endure for long, and some, like Hamlet, are permanent, at least until the sun burns out. Sun and sky, do these things go out with life? Sun and sky, must life go out with them?

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The sun, these stars, are the very same which our forefathers enjoyed, and which will also entertain our posterity—unerring nature, still divinely bright: one clear, unchanged, and universal light. If nothing can now be said but what has been said before (ever the same, never done), if there be nothing new under the sun. . .

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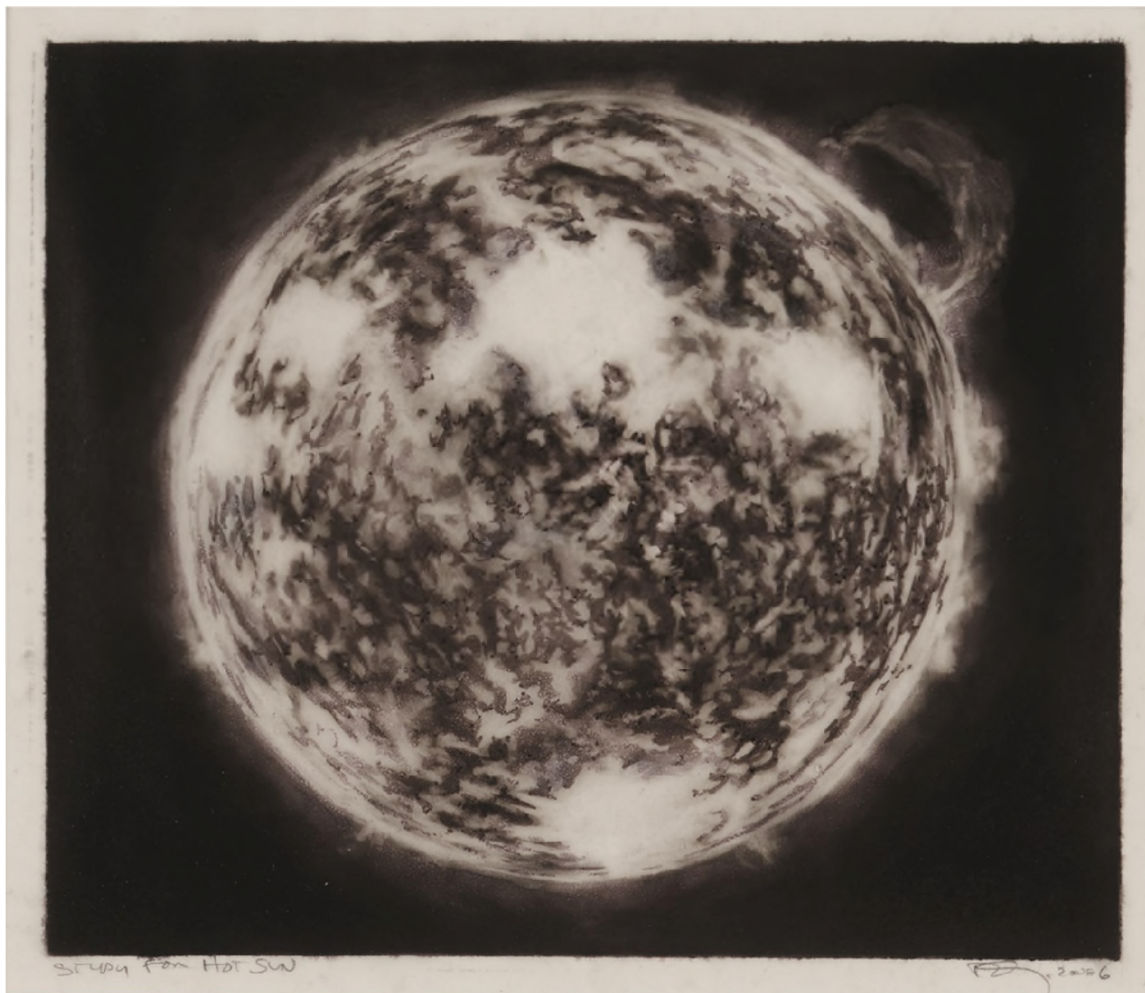
9

In the kingdom of Mexico, they believed the state of the world to be divided into five ages, as in the life of five succeeding suns, where four had already ended their course or time, and the same which now shined upon them was the fifth and last.

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Duck soup, you say. *This is duck soup*. And so it is. I imagine you, Pyrophilus, turning in that light, and turning, and turning, feeling it change on your changing hands, catching fire with childlike freedom and without scruple on starlight: on what has both already passed, and not yet come to pass.

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Making Light of Essays

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[20]

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diamond spearlets [34]; even the dragonfly, hanging like lapis lazuli in the sun [35]. Rays emerge most copiously in different angles, separated from one another each in their proper colours [36]. Bright particles of sand like jewels of light [37], translucent and with many angles. Each angle a lovely heaven [38].

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It's as if a sequence of displaced but identical images of the same object were being produced by refraction through a prism, but with the element of time replacing the role of light [45]. Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass, stains the white radiance of eternity [46].

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Ethiopia: an injured miner is dragged to a clearing. He looks to be in agonising pain. Blood spews from a compound fracture which has forced a bone from his leg clear out his skin (a wound gives off its own light [47]). Miners congregate around the injured miner [48]. Fracture of poverty and blood. What does the essay know of fracture?

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II.

Shining | Of Silence

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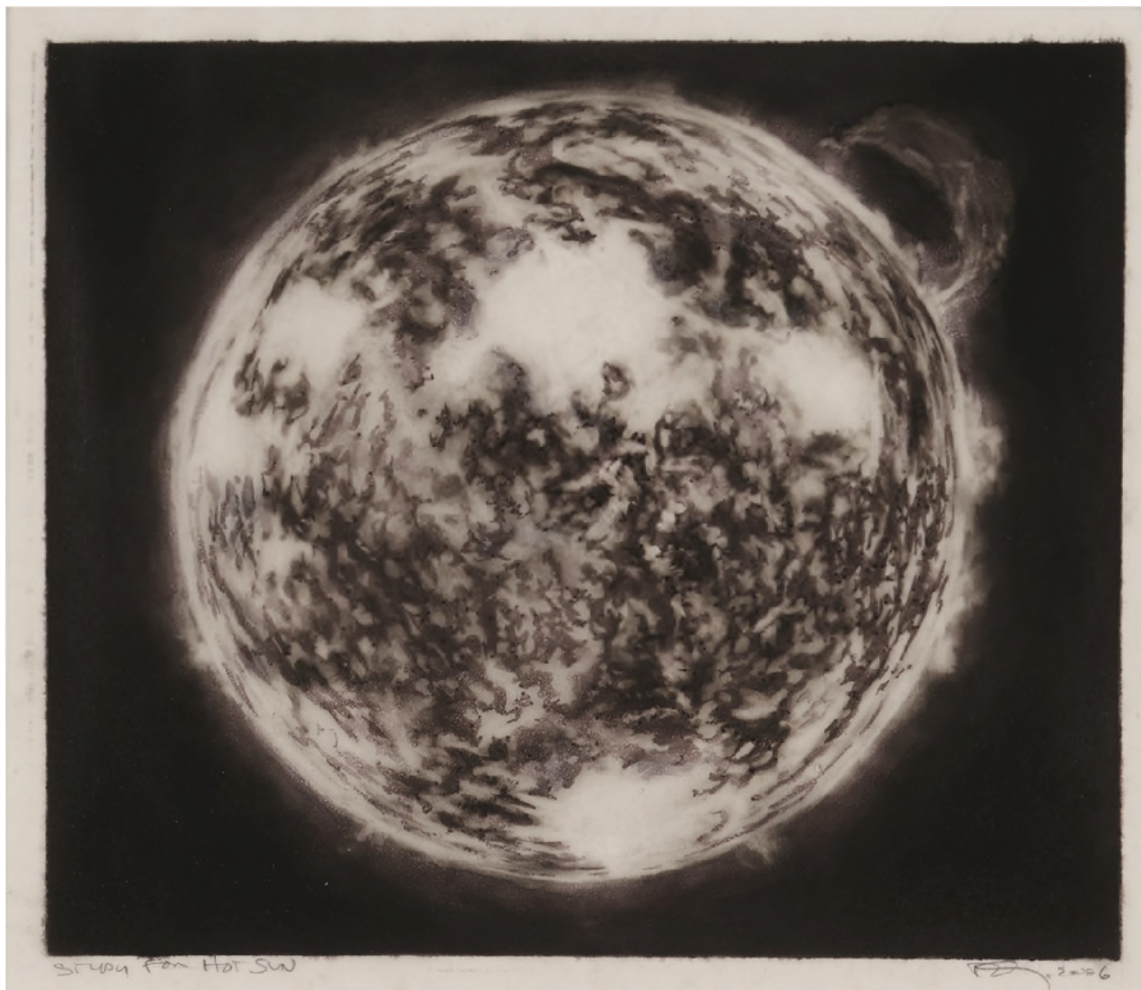
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*



Making Light of Essays | Making Essays of Light

Reference Sheet

I.
Glinting | Of Accident

1. Any mortal takes pleasure in the uncertain sparkle of a tiny jewel or precious stone when he can look at a star or even the sun itself.
— Thomas More, *Utopia* (1518), ed. Edward Surtz, quoted in J. H. Prynne, *Apophthegms* (2017)
2. Destined to see the illuminated, not the light.
— Goethe, *Pandora* (1807-1808), epigraph to Theodor Adorno, 'The Essay as Form' [1958], trans. Shierry Weber Nicholson, *Notes to Literature, Volume 1*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (1991)
3. For beauty's sake, assault and drive and burn
the devil from the simply perfect sun.
— Heather McHugh, 'In Praise of Pain', *Dangers* (1977)
4. False eloquence, like the prismatic glass,
Its gaudy colours spreads on ev'ry place; [...]
But true expression, like th' unchanging sun,
Clears, and improves whate'er it shines upon,
It gilds all objects, but it alters none.
— Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism* II (1711)
5. A brilliance takes up residence in flaws—
a brilliance all the unchipped faces of design
refuse. The wine collects its starlets
at a lip's fault, sunlight where the nicked
glass angles, and affection where the eye
is least correctable [...]
— Heather McHugh, 'In Praise of Pain', *Dangers* (1977)
6. Siegfried, in the Nibelungen, is not quite immortal, for a leaf fell on his back whilst he was
bathing in the Dragon's blood, and that spot which it covered is mortal. And so it always
is. There is a crack in everything God has made.
— Ralph Waldo Emerson, 'Compensation', *Essays: First Series* (1841)
7. Forget your perfect offering.
There is a crack, a crack, in everything.
That's how the light gets in.
— Leonard Cohen, 'Anthem', *The Future* (1992)
8. My wife is like a flame of many colours of precious jewels whenever she hears it [one of
his visions] named.
— William Blake, letter to William Hayley (16th September 1800)
9. If for a moment she were clearly
visible to me, I think

I'd fall forever, out of love.

— Heather McHugh, 'Untitled', *Hinge and Sign* (1994)

10. To burn always with this hard, gemlike flame, to maintain this ecstasy, is success in life.

— Walter Pater, *Studies of the History of the Renaissance* (1873)

11. The Feet, mechanical, go round—

A Wooden way

Of Ground, or Air, or Ought—

Regardless grown,

A Quartz contentment, like a stone—

— Emily Dickinson, 'After Great Pain, a Formal Feeling Comes—' [1862], quoted in George Rushton, *These Quicker Elements* (2021)

12. One Sun by Day, by Night Ten thousand shine [...]

— Edward Young, *Night Thoughts* IX (1745), also the epigraph to Anna Laetitia Barbauld, 'A Summer Evening's Meditation' (1773)

13. It is said that the Sunnes-light is not of one continued piece, but that it so uncessantly and without intermission doth cast so thicke new raies, one in the necke of another, upon us, that wee cannot perceiue the space betweene them.

— Montaigne, 'How We Weepe and Laugh at One Self-Same Thing', *Essays* I, trans. John Florio (1603)

14. The earth, the sunne, the moone, the sea and all

In number numberlesse [...]

— Montaigne, 'An Apologie of Raymond Sebond', *Essays* II, trans. John Florio (1603), translating Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura* II

15. Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths,

Enwrought with golden and silver light,

The blue and the dim and the dark cloths

Of night and light and the half-light [...]

— W. B. Yeats, 'Aedh Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven' (1899)

16. & over the forks of the Cliff behind [...] the Sun sent cutting it his thousand silky Hairs of amber & green Light — —

— Samuel Taylor Coleridge, entry 17th November 1799, *Coleridge's Notebooks: A Selection*, ed. Seamus Perry (2003)

17. who, from that Clue of Sun-beams

Could ever steale one thread?

— Henry Vaughan, 'To Amoret Weeping', *Poems, With the Tenth Satyre of Iuvenal Englished* (1646)

18. The day shines down in waves

and particles. The Sunday patrons
of the open-air café are shimmering—
their eyelids, earlobes, orbits all
isosceles-bespangled.

— Heather McHugh, 'Shades', *Shades* (1988)

19. Anne Wroe calls her 2016 book *Six Facets of Light*.

20. Edvard Munch, *Solen* (1911)

21. Life, though—standing on a street corner, channel surfing, trying to navigate the web or a declining relationship, hearing that a close friend died last night—flies at us in bright splinters.

— David Shields, *Reality Hunger* (2010), reworking Lance Olson, *10:01* (2005)

22. The summer sun
will drive its splinters straight
into your brain.

— Heather McHugh, 'Message at Sunset for Bishop Berkeley', *A World of Difference* (1981)

23. Besides the incommodity of heat, which is lesse to bee remedied than the inconvenience of cold, and besides the force of the Sunnes beames, which strike into the head [...]

— Montaigne, 'Of Experience', *Essays* III, trans. John Florio (1603)

24. And break the bottle of the eye to see
what lights are spun of accident and glass.

— Heather McHugh, 'In Praise of Pain', *Dangers* (1977)

25. Fortune is glasse-like, brittle as 'tis bright:
Light-gon, light-broken, when it lends best light.

— Montaigne, 'That the Taste of Goods or Evils Doth Greatly Depend on the Opinion We Have of Them', *Essays* I, trans. John Florio (1603), proverbial

26. And lastly aphorisms, representing a knowledge broken, do invite men to enquire further; whereas methods, carrying the show of a total, do secure men; as if they were at furthest.

— Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning* II (1605)

27. As to the nature of God, no knowledge, but wonder; which is nothing else but contemplation broken off; or losing itself.

— Francis Bacon, 'Of the Limits and Ends of Knowledge', *Valerius Terminus* (1603)

28. Aristotle says that metaphor causes the mind to experience itself

in the act of making a mistake.
He pictures the mind moving along a plane surface
of ordinary language

when suddenly
that surface breaks or complicates.
Unexpectedness emerges.

— Anne Carson, 'Essay on What I Think About Most', *Men in the Off Hours* (2000)

29. I'm talking about bottles, and ruin,

And what we flash at the darkness, and what for . . .

— Charles Wright, 'Morandi', *China Trace* (1977)

30. Their [the shepherds'] bodies were flecked, as the heavens and the fields were, with an infinitude of points of light.

— Anne Wroe's description of Samuel Palmer's etching *The Lonely Tower* (1879) inspired by Milton's 'Il Penseroso' (1645-1646), *Six Facets of Light* (2016).

31. And the sunlight sidled, like dewdrops, like dandled diamonds

Through the sieve of the straw of the plait.

— Gerard Manley Hopkins, 'The Furl of Fresh-Leaved Dogrose Down' (c. 1878-1879)

32. The entire length of the opposite shore glittered with this blurred kaleidoscope [...]

— J. G. Ballard, *The Crystal World* (1966)

33. At last the storm subsided, and a pale light filtered through the stained-glass canopy. Again, the forest was a place of rainbows, a deep, iridescent light glowing from within.

— J. G. Ballard, *The Crystal World* (1966)

34. I distinctly & repeatedly saw the wind raise up from the mountain a true genuine cloud of snow that [...] sailed along, a true genuine large white cloud with all the form & varied outline of a Cloud / – & this in several Instances dropped again, snow at second Hand, & often in the Sun resembled a shower of diamond Spearlets.

— Samuel Taylor Coleridge, entry 5th January 1805, *Coleridge's Notebooks: A Selection*, ed. Seamus Perry (2003)

35. Even the dragonfly, hanging like lapis lazuli in the sun . . .

— Charles Wright, 'The Southern Cross', *The Southern Cross* (1981)

36. And father it is to be observed, that the Rays which differ in Refrangibility will have different Limits of their Angles of Emergence, and by consequence according to their different Degrees of Refrangibility emerge most copiously in different Angles, separated from one another each in their proper Colours.

— Isaac Newton, *Opticks* (1704)

37. In particles bright,
The jewels of light
Distinct shone and clear.
Amaz'd and in fear
I each particle gazèd,
Astonish'd, amazèd;

For each was a Man
Human-form'd.

— William Blake, letter to Thomas Butts (1800)

38. There is a Grain of Sand in Lambeth that Satan cannot find
Nor can his Watch Fiends find it: tis translucent & has many Angles
But he who finds it will find Oothoons palace, for within
Opening into Beulah every angle is a lovely heaven
But should the Watch Fiends find it, they would call it Sin [...]

— William Blake, *Jerusalem* (1804-1820)

39. the cohort bright
Of watchful Cherubim: four faces each
Had, like a double Janus; all their shape
Spangled with eyes more numerous than those
Of Argus [...]

— John Milton, *Paradise Lost* XI (1674)

40. What diamonds are equal to my eyes; what labyrinths to my ears; what gates of ivory, or
ruby leaves to the double portal of my lips and teeth? Is not sight a jewel?

— Thomas Traherne, 'The First Century', *Centuries of Meditations* [c. 1674] (publ. 1908)

41. Light has called forth one organ to become its like, and thus the eye is formed by light and
for light, so that the inner light may emerge to meet the outer light.

— Goethe, introduction, *Theory of Colours* (1810)

42. I am all at once what Christ is, | since he was what I am, and
This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, | patch, matchwood, immortal diamond,
Is immortal diamond.

— Gerard Manley Hopkins, 'That Nature is a Heraclitean Fire' (1888)

43. Religion was
Ray'd into thee, like beams into a glasse,
Where, as thou grewst, it multipli'd and shin'd
The sacred Constellation of thy mind.

— Henry Vaughan, 'Isaac's Marriage', *Silex Scintillans* I (1650)

44. Lord, how can man preach thy eternal word?

He is a brittle crazy glass;
Yet in thy temple thou dost him afford
This glorious and transcendent place,
To be a window, through thy grace.

— George Herbert, 'The Windows', *The Temple* (1633)

45. It's as if a sequence of displaced but identical images of the same object were being produced by refraction through a prism, but with the element of time replacing the role of light.

— J. G. Ballard, *The Crystal World* (1966)

46. Life, like a dome of many-coloured glass,
Stains the white radiance of Eternity [...]

— Percy Bysshe Shelley, *Adonais: An Elegy on the Death of John Keats* (1821)

47. A wound gives off its own light
surgeons say.
If all the lamps in the house were turned out
you could dress this wound
by what shines from it.

— Anne Carson, *The Beauty of the Husband* (2001)

48. An injured minor is dragged to a clearing. He looks to be in agonizing pain. Blood spews from a compound fracture which has forced a bone from his leg clear out his skin.

Miners congregate around the injured miner [...]

— Ronald Bronstein, Josh Safdie & Benny Safdie, 'Welo Mines, Ethiopia, Fall 2010', *Uncut Gems Script* (2018)

49. The camera moves into the gem. Light and color engulf the frame in a shifting melange of abstract shapes and patterns as we dive deeper into the opal. In a tunnel filled with stalactites and shafts of fluorescent colored lights, the title emerges:

UNCUT GEMS

— Ronald Bronstein, Josh Safdie & Benny Safdie, 'Welo Mines, Ethiopia, Fall 2010', *Uncut Gems Script* (2018)

50. HOWARD centers a congested jewelry exchange. An UNKEMPT JEWELER hands HOWARD an envelope and apologizes for the delay. HOWARD continues on, cutting diagonally across the space.

— Ronald Bronstein, Josh Safdie & Benny Safdie, 'Int. 46-47th Street Jewellery Arcade – Continuous', *Uncut Gems Script* (2018)

51. Who are you in love with?
me?

Straight against the light I cross.

— Frank O'Hara, 'Walking to Work' (1952)

52. the snow falls and no one comes back

Ever again,

all of them gone through the star filter of memory [...]

— Charles Wright, 'Bar Giamaica, 1959-60', *The Southern Cross* (1981)

53. glass shards

Eased one by one from the flesh [...]

— Charles Wright, 'Tattoos', *Bloodlines* (1975)

54. The camera dives into the OPAL. HOWARD's voice fades to the background as we journey through a melange of color, light and swirling abstract shapes [akin to the opening credit sequence except much faster, with hairpin turns, and broken up by flashes of single-frame images from Kevin's past].

CRAAAASH! KG's elbows break through the glass showcase beneath him. Chaos erupts. The entire entourage rallies around KG with great concern. KG is dazed from being knocked out of his reverie.

HOWARD

I told him not to lean! You all heard me!

DEMANNY

Get him a fucking towel or something!

KG

(to himself)

That's a sign.

— Ronald Bronstein, Josh Safdie & Benny Safdie 'Int. Inside the Gemstone – Continuous', 'Int. KMH Gems and Jewelry Office – Showroom – Continuous', *Uncut Gems Script* (2018)

55. The night's yawn
absorbs you as you lie down at the wrong angle

to the sun ready already to let go of your hand.

— Claudia Rankine, VII, *Citizen: An American Lyric* (2014)

56. The black balloon of promise tied to your wrist,
One inch of pain and an inch of light.

— Charles Wright, 'Delta Traveller', *Bloodlines* (1975)

57. N.b. Something metallic, silver playfully & imperfectly gilt, & highly polished; or rather something mother of pearl-ish, in the Sun gleams upon Ice, thin Ice.

— Samuel Taylor Coleridge, entry 6th December 1803, *Coleridge's Notebooks: A Selection*, ed. Seamus Perry (2003)

58. Pressed to his cold skin, the hard faces of the jewels seemed to warm [sic.] him, and within a few seconds he felt into an exhausted sleep.

— J. G. Ballard, *The Crystal World* (1966)

59. I, who have felt the horror of mirrors
Not only in front of the impenetrable crystal
Where there ends and begins, uninhabitable,
An impossible space of reflections,

But of gazing even on water that mimics
The other blue in its depth of sky [...]
— Jorge Luis Borges, 'Mirrors', *Dreamtigers*, trans. Mildred Boyer and Harold Morland (1960)
60. Rotate the husband and expose a hidden side.
— Anne Carson, *The Beauty of the Husband* (2001)
61. What can you know about a person? They shift
in the light. You can't light up all sides at once. Add
a second light and you get a second darkness, it's only
fair.
— Richard Siken, 'Portrait of Fryderyk in Shifting Light', *Crush* (2005)

II. Shining | Of Silence

1. The full moon is saying, *O!* But the sun is silent.
— Sarah Manguso, *300 Arguments* (2017)
2. Speak to me, sun. Where must I stand to hear your voice?
— Pier Paolo Pasolini (dir.), *Medea* (1969)
3. All true feeling is in reality untranslatable. To express it is to betray it. But to translate it is to dissimulate it. True expression hides what it makes manifest. It sets the mind in opposition to the real void of nature by creating in reaction a kind of fullness in thought. Or, in other terms, in relation to the manifestation-illusion of nature it creates a void in thought. All powerful feeling produces in us the idea of the void. And the lucid language which obstructs the appearance of this void also obstructs the appearance of poetry in thought. That is why an image, an allegory, a figure that masks what it would reveal have more significance for the spirit than the lucidities of speech and its analytics.

This is why true beauty never strikes us directly. The setting sun is beautiful because of all it makes us lose.

— Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double* [1938]. trans. Mary Caroline Richards (1994)

4. The weightless, unclarified light from the setting sun
Lies like despair on the ginger root.
— Charles Wright, 'Depression Before the Solstice', *China Trace* (1977)
5. Dark with excess of Light.
— Samuel Taylor Coleridge, entry 11th December 1803, *Coleridge's Notebooks: A Selection*, ed. Seamus Perry (2003), drawing on the hymn to God in *Paradise Lost* III ('dark with excessive bright')
6. Extreme light, by overcoming the organs of sight, obliterates all objects, so as in its effect exactly to resemble darkness. After looking for some time at the sun, two black spots, the impression which it leaves, seem to dance before our eyes.
— Edmund Burke, 'Light', *On the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757)
7. Eudoxus wished, and praid to the Gods, that he might once view the Sunne neere at hand, to comprehend his forme, his greatnesse and his beautie: on condition he might immediatly be burnt and consumed by it. Thus with the price of his owne life would he attaine a Science, whereof both use and possession shall therewith bee taken from him; and for so sudden and fleeting knowledge lose and forgoe all the knowledges he either now hath, or ever hereafter may have.
— Montaigne, 'An Apologie of Raymond Sebond', *Essays* II, trans. John Florio (1603)

8. A man should be satisfied with the light which it pleaseth the Sunne to communicate unto us by vertue of his beames; and he that shall lift up his eies to take a greater within his body, let him not thinke it strange if for a reward of his over-weening and arrogancie he loseth his sight.
 - Montaigne, 'That a Man Ought Soberly to Meddle With Judging of Divine Laws', *Essays* I, trans. John Florio (1603)
9. Where am I? – Where is Earth? – Nay, where art Thou, O Sun?
 - Edward Young, *Night Thoughts* IX (1745)
10.

And shall the Sun
be seen at Midnight, rising in my Song?

 - Edward Young, *Night Thoughts* IX (1745)
11. Medea is a direct descendant of the sun god Helios (son of the Titan Hyperion) through her father Aeëtes of Colchis.
 - 'Medea', Wikipedia (last edited 21 January 2022)
12. Your sensitivity to noise can affect relationships, school or work and your general wellbeing.

Hyperacusis can affect 1 or both ears. It can come on suddenly or develop over time.

 - Noise Sensitivity (Hyperacusis), *NHS Website* (last reviewed 2 April 2019)
13. A light in sound, a sound-like power in light [...]
 - Samuel Taylor Coleridge, 'The Eolian Harp', *Poems* (1797)
14. The life span of a fact is shrinking; similitude often seems more revealing than verisimilitude.
 - John d'Agata and Deborah Tall, 'New Terrain: The Lyric Essay', *Seneca Review* 72.1 (1997)
15. Have we seene anything comparable to the sunne?
 - Montaigne, 'An Apologie of Raymond Sebond', *Essays* II, trans. John Florio (1603)
16. Remedios Varo, *Solar Music* (1955)
17. I like a view but I like to sit with my back turned to it.
 - Gertrude Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933), quoted in J. H. Prynne, *Apophthegms* (2017)
18. I see the sun, and if I don't see the sun, I know it's there. And there's a whole life in that, in knowing that the sun is there.
 - Fyodor Dostoevsky, *The Brothers Karamazov* [1879-1880], trans. Constance Garnett (1912)
19. England! with all thy faults I love thee still!

I said at Calais, and have not forgot it;
I like to speak and lucubrate my fill;
I like the Government (but that is not it);
I like the freedom of the press and quill;
I like the Habeas Corpus (when we've got it);
I like a parliamentary debate,
Particularly when 'tis not too late;

I like the taxes, when they're not too many;
I like a sea-coal fire, when not too dear;
I like a beef-steak too, as well as any;
Have no objection to a pot of beer;
I like the weather—when it is not rainy—
That is, I like two months of every Year;
And so God save the Regent, Church, and King!
Which means that I like all and every thing.

— Lord Byron, *Beppo* (1817)

20. Splinters along the skin, eyes

Flicked by the sealash, spun, pricked;
Terrible vowels from the sun.

— Charles Wright, 'Tattoos', *Bloodlines* (1975)

21. duplicity, the tongues of love,
the glossolalia of fire.

— Heather McHugh, 'Fable', *Dangers* (1977)

22. The willow lets down her hooks.

On the holly leaves, the smears of light
Retrench and repeat their alphabet,
That slow code.

— Charles Wright, 'Rural Route', *Bloodlines* (1975)

23. The drenched wings of sunclusters rise

Like thousands of tiny cathedrals into their new language . . .

— Charles Wright, 'Skins', *Bloodlines* (1975)

24. Bow-wow and arf, the Great Light;

O, and the Great Yes, and the Great No;
Redemption, the cold kiss of release,
&c.; sentences, sentences.

— Charles Wright, 'Northanger Ridge', *Hard Freight* (1973)

25. For the sky my eye sees and the one that it cannot find

For the raising up and the setting down
For the light for the light for the light

— Charles Wright, 'Bays Mountain Covenant', *Bloodlines* (1975)

26. A little pinkish flame is snuffed in my mouth.

— Charles Wright, 'California Twilight', *China Trace* (1977)

27. Es ist ein Licht, das in meinem Mund erlöscht.

[There is a light that fails in my mouth.]

— Georg Trakl, 'De Profundis', *Gedichte* (1913)

28. Sister of Mercies, a body is laid out, look,
Under the ghost light of the stars. 11:15.

— Charles Wright, 'Thinking of George Trakl', *China Trace* (1977)

29. Between us again there is nothing. And since

The darkness is only light

That has not yet reached us,

You slip it on like a glove.

— Charles Wright, 'Tattoos', *Bloodlines* (1975)

30. tis often that persons of much Wit are too talkative; for Wit is a Fire that will discover it
self [...]

— Grace Gethin, 'Of Speech', *Reliquiae Gethinianae* (1699)

31. Then why, like ill-condition'd children,
Start we at transient hardships in the way
That leads to purer air and softer skies,
And a ne'er-setting sun? Fools that we are!

— Robert Blair, *The Grave* (1753)

32. There are birds that are parts of speech, bones
That are suns in the quick earth.

— Charles Wright, 'Hardin Country', *Bloodlines* (1975)

33. The souls of the day's dead fly up like birds, big sister,
The sky shutters and casts loose.
And faster than stars the body goes to the earth.

— Charles Wright, 'Composition in Grey and Pink', *The Southern Cross* (1981)

34. Only make-believe people can endure for long; and some, like Hamlet, are permanent—
at least until the sun burns out.

— Cynthia Ozick, 'Imaginary People', *Quarrel and Quandary* (2001)

35. Sun, and sky, and breeze, and solitary walks, and summer holidays, and the greenness of
fields, and the delicious juices of meats and fishes, and society, and the cheerful glass, and
candle-light, and fire-side conversations, and innocent vanities, and jests, and *irony itself*—
do these things go out with life?

— Charles Lamb, 'New Year's Eve' (1820)

36. And if you have lived one day, you have seene all: one day is equal to all other daies. There is no other light, there is no other night. This Sunne, this Moone, these Starres, and this disposition, is the very same which your forefathers enjoyed, and which shall also entertaine your posteritie.

— Montaigne, 'That to Philosophise is to Learn How to Die', *Essays* I, trans. John Florio (1603)

37. First follow nature and your judgment frame

By her just standard, which is still the same.

Unerring nature still divinely bright,

One clear, unchanged and universal light [...]

— Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism* I (1711)

38. O the new worlds new, quickning Sun!

Ever the same, and never done!

The seers of whose sacred light

Shall all be drest in shining white [...]

— Henry Vaughan, 'L'Envoy', *Silex Scintillans* II (1655)

39. If to write obscurely be perplexedly offensive, as Augustus well judged: for our owne not to write in our owne but unintelligible, is haply to fewer and more criticall, but surely without honor, without profit, if he goe not, or send not an interpreter; who else what is he but a Translator? Obscure be he that loves obscuritie. And therefore willingly I take his worde, though wittingly I doe mistake it, *Translata proficit*. Why but who ever did well in it? Nay, who ever did well without it? If nothing can be now sayd, but hath beene saide before (as hee sayde well) if there be no new thing under the Sunne. What is that that hath beene? That that shall be: (as he sayde that was wisest) What doe the best then, but gleane after others harvest? borrow their colors, inherite their possessions? What doe they but translate? perhaps, usurpe? at least, collect?

— John Florio, 'To the Courteous Reader', *Montaigne's Essays* I, trans. John Florio (1603)

40. Those of the kingdome of Mexico [...] so judged they, that this Universe was neare his end [...] they beleaved the state of the world to bee divided into five ages, as in the life of five succeeding Sunnes, whereof foure had already ended their course or time; and the same which now shined upon them was the fifth and last. The first perished together with all other creatures, by an universall inundation of waters. The second by the fall of the heavens upon us, which stifled and overwhelmed every living thing: in which age they affirme the Giants to have beene [...] The third was consumed by a violent fire, which burned and destroyed all. The fourth by a whirling emotion of the ayre and windes, which with the violent fury of it selfe remooved and overthrew divers high mountaines: saying that men dyed not of it, but were transformed into Munkeis [...] After the consummation of this fourth Sunne, the world continued five and twenty yeares in perpetuall darkenesse, in the fifteenth of which one man and one woman were created, who renewed the race of man-kinde. Ten yeares after, upon a certaine day, the Sunne appeared as newly created,

from which day beginneth ever since the calculation of their years [...] In what manner this last Sunne shall perish, my aucthor could not learne of them.

— Montaigne, 'Of Coaches', *Essays* III, trans. John Florio (1603)

41. Robert Boyle addresses his hypothetical student as 'Pyrophilus' (also the nickname of his nephew, Richard Jones) in 'A Proemial Essay . . . with considerations touching Experimental Essays in General', *Certain Physiological Essays* (1661)

42. And since
The darkness is only light
That has not yet reached us,
You slip it on like a glove.
Duck soup, you say. This is duck soup.

And so it is.

 Along the far bank
Of Blood Creek, I watch you turn
In that light, and turn, and turn,
Feeling it change on your changing hands,
Feeling it take. Feeling it.

— Charles Wright, 'Tattoos', *Bloodlines* (1975)

43. Instead of achieving something scientifically, or creating something artistically, the effort of the essay reflects a childlike freedom that catches fire, without scruple, on what others have already done.

— Theodor Adorno, 'The Essay as Form' [1958], trans. Shierry Weber Nicholson, *Notes to Literature, Volume 1*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann (1991)

44. Robert Longo, *Study for Hot Sun* (2006)

There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in.