

John Clare
(1793-1864)

An Idle Hour

Sauntering at ease I often love to lean
O'er old bridge-walls and mark the flood below
Whose ripples through the weeds of oily green
Like happy travellers mutter as they go
And mark the sunshine dancing on the arch
Time keeping to the merry waves beneath
And on the banks see drooping blossoms parch
Thirsting for water in the day's hot breath
Right glad of mud-drops plashed upon their leaves
By cattle plunging from the steepy brink
While water-flowers more than their share receive
And revel to their very cups in drink.
Just like the world some strive and fare but ill
While others riot and have plenty still

(from John Clare, *Selected Poems*,
edited by Geoffrey Summerfield,
London: Penguin, 1990.)