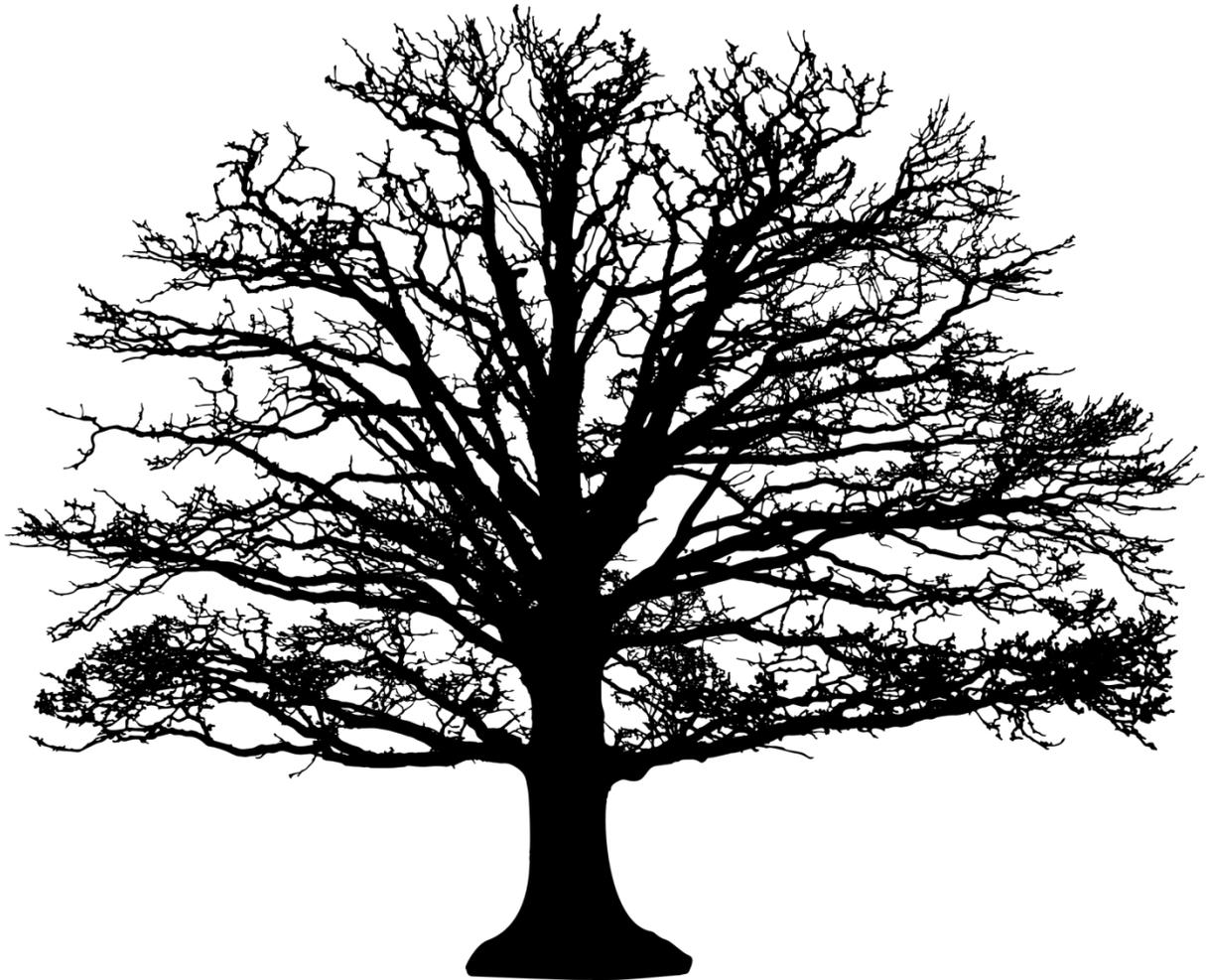


U3A POETRY READING GROUP

A FEAST OF POEMS FOR CHRISTMAS AND THE
HOLIDAYS
2019



Instead of focusing on a single poem as we usually do, we use the December session of the Poetry Reading Group to share surprise poems. Each member of the group chooses a poem which is put in an envelope and placed in The Magic Poetry Hat. After a vigorous shake the hat is passed around and we each pull out a poem. No one knows who chose their poem, and while sometimes someone chooses a particularly Christmassy poem, the only rule is to choose a poem that you really like and would like to give to someone else in the hope that they will really like it too. We then take turns to read our poetic gift so that everyone hears all the poems. We also always share a poem with Geraldine, the Administrator at Prideaux House as a "tithe" for the venue's excellent hospitality and support.

Last year Eric Holmes very kindly collected them into a little anthology for our group.

We thought special as it was it would be even more special if members of the Hackney U3A Art Group or the Poetry Reading Group illustrated some of the poems and the anthology could be shared with Hackney U3A members.

All the poems in the anthology are readily available on the Internet. However it may be a breach of copyrights to download and print out the anthology and it should remain an online word document.

Elizabeth Cameron Hay

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The Lake Isle of Innisfree

by W B Yeats

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

Short Ode to the Cuckoo

by W.H.Auden

No one now imagines you answer idle questions
— *How long shall I live? How long remain single?*
Will butter be cheaper? — nor does your shout make
husbands uneasy.

Compared with arias by the great performers
such as the merle, your two-note act is kid-stuff:
our most hardened crooks are sincerely shocked by
your nesting habits.

Science, Aesthetics, Ethics, may huff and puff but they
cannot extinguish your magic: you marvel
the commuter as you wondered the savage.

Hence, in my diary,
where I normally enter nothing but social
engagements and, lately, the death of friends, I
scribble year after year when I first hear you,
of a holy moment.

Something Told the Wild Geese

by Rachel Field

Something told the wild geese
It was time to go.
Though the fields lay golden
Something whispered, - 'Snow.'

Leaves were green and stirring,
Berries, luster-glossed,
But beneath warm feathers
Something cautioned, - 'Frost.'

All the sagging orchards
Steamed with amber spice,
But each wild breast stiffened
At remembered ice.

Something told the wild geese
It was time to fly, -
Summer sun was on their wings,
Winter in their cry.

A 14- year old convalescent cat

by Gavin Ewart

I want him to have another living summer
to lie in the sun and enjoy the *douceur de vivre* -
because the sun, like golden rum in a rummer,
is what makes an idle cat *un tout petit peu ivre* -

I want him to lie stretched out, contented,
revelling in the heat, his fur all dry and warm,
an Old Age Pensioner, retired, resented
by no one, and happinesses in a beelike swarm

to settle on him, postponed for another season
that last fated hateful journey to the vet
from which there is no return (and age the reason),
which must soon come - as I cannot forget.

Joy
By William Blake

Joy and woe are woven fine,
A clothing for the soul divine,
Under every grief and pine,
Runs a joy with silken twine.
It is right it should be so,
We were made for joy and woe,
And when this we rightly know,
Through the world we safely go.

Sometimes

By Sheena Pugh

Sometimes things don't go, after all,
from bad to worse. Some years, muscadel
faces down frost; green thrives; the crops don't fail.
Sometimes a man aims high, and all goes well.

A people sometimes will step back from war,
elect an honest man, decide they care
enough, that they can't leave some stranger poor.
Some men become what they were born for.

Sometimes our best intentions do not go
amiss; sometimes we do as we meant to.
The sun will sometimes melt a field of sorrow
that seemed hard frozen; may it happen for you.

Excerpt from How the Grinch stole Christmas

By Dr Seuss

They're just waking up! I know just what they'll do!
Their mouths will hang open a minute or two
Then the Whos down in Whoville will all cry boo-hoo!

That's a noise," grinned the Grinch, "that I simply must hear!"
He paused, and the Grinch put a hand to his ear.

And he did hear a sound rising over the snow.
It started in low, then it started to grow.

But this sound wasn't sad!
Why, this sound sounded glad!
He hadn't stopped Christmas from coming! It came!
Somehow or other, it came just the same!

And the Grinch, with his grinch feet ice-cold in the snow,
Stood puzzling and puzzling. "How could it be so?

It came without ribbons! It came without tags!
It came without packages, boxes, or bags!"

He puzzled and puzzled till his puzzler was sore.
Then the Grinch thought of something he hadn't before.

Maybe Christmas, he thought, doesn't come from a store.
Maybe Christmas, perhaps, means a little bit more!

The Peace of Wild Things

By Wendell Berry

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world and am free.

The night is darkening round me

By Emily Bronte

The night is darkening round me,
The wild winds coldly blow;
But a tyrant spell has bound me,
And I cannot, cannot go.
The giant trees are bending
Their bare boughs weighed with snow;
The storm is fast descending,
And yet I cannot go.

Clouds beyond clouds above me,
Wastes beyond wastes below;
But nothing drear can move me;
I will not, cannot go.

Everything Changes

By Cicely Herbert (1939 ...) after Brecht

Everything changes. We plant
trees for those born later
but what's happened has happened
and poisons poured into the seas
cannot be drained out again.
What's happened has happened
poisons poured into the seas
cannot be drained out again. But
everything changes. We plant
trees for those born later

Everything is Going to be All Right

By Derek Mahon

How should I not be glad to contemplate
the clouds clearing beyond the dormer window
and a high tide reflected on the ceiling?
There will be dying, there will be dying,
but there is no need to go into that.
The poems flow from the hand unbidden
and the hidden source is the watchful heart.
The sun rises in spite of everything
and the far cities are beautiful and bright.
I lie here in a riot of sunlight
watching the day break and the clouds flying.
Everything is going to be all right.

The Magpies

By Denis Glover

When Tom and Elizabeth took the farm
The bracken made their bed
and Quardle oodle ardle wardle doodle
The magpies said

Tom's hand was strong to the plough
and Elizabeth's lips were red
and Quardle oodle ardle wardle doodle
The magpies said

Year in year out they worked
while the pines grew overhead
and Quardle oodle ardle wardle doodle
The magpies said

But all the beautiful crops soon went
to the mortgage man instead
and Quardle oodle ardle wardle doodle
The magpies said

Elizabeth is dead now (it's long ago)
Old Tom's gone light in the head
and Quardle oodle ardle wardle doodle
The magpies said

The farm's still there. Mortgage corporations
couldn't give it away
and Quardle oodle ardle wardle doodle
The magpies say.

Woman Enough

by Erica Jong

Because my grandmother's hours
were apple cakes baking,
& dust motes gathering,
& linens yellowing
& seams and hems
inevitably unravelling-
I almost never keep house
though really I like houses
& wish I had a clean one.

Because my mother's minutes
were sucked into the roar
of the vacuum cleaner,
because she waltzed with the washer-dryer
& tore her hair waiting for repairmen
I send out my laundry,
& live in a dusty house,
though really I like clean houses
as well as anyone.

I am woman enough
to love the kneading of bread
as much as the feel
of typewriter keys
under my fingers
springy, springy,
& smell of clean laundry
& simmering soup
are almost as dear to me
as the smell of paper and ink.

I wish there were not a choice;

I wish I could be two women.
I wish the days could be longer.
But they are short.
So I write while
the dust piles up.

I sit at my typewriter
remembering my grandmother's & all my mothers,
& minutes they lost
loving houses better than themselves
& the man I love cleans up the kitchen
grumbling only a little
because he knows
that after all these centuries
it is easier for him
than for me.

Atlas

By U. A. Fanthorpe

There is a kind of love called maintenance,
Which stores the WD40 and knows when to use it;

Which checks the insurance, and doesn't forget
The milkman; which remembers to plant bulbs;

Which answers letters; which knows the way
The money goes, which deals with dentists

And Road Fund Tax and meeting trains,
And postcards to the lonely; which upholds

The permanently rickety elaborate
Structures of living; which is Atlas.

And maintenance is the sensible side of love,
Which knows what time and weather are doing
To my brickwork; insulates my faulty wiring;
Laughs at my dryrotten jokes; remembers
My need for gloss and grouting; which keeps
My suspect edifice upright in air,
As Atlas did the sky.