

**A SECOND YEAR IN POEMS  
NOVEMBER 2017 - OCTOBER 2018**

**AN ANTHOLOGY OF THE POEMS CHOSEN BY  
MEMBERS OF THE HACKNEY U3A  
POETRY READING GROUP**

**WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY HACKNEY U3A  
ARTISTS WHO ATTEND THE POETRY READING  
GROUP OR THE ART GROUP**

## **PLEASE NOTE**

All the poems in the anthology are readily available on the Internet.

However it would be a breach of copyrights to download and print out the anthology and it should remain a PDF document.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Poetry Reading Group meets on the third Wednesday of each month with the exception of August. Usually two members of the group each choose a poem for the group to read and discuss. Occasionally, the group focuses on a single long poem. Some members have chosen to share the reasons for their choice in the Anthology.

The Art Group meets on the second Friday of each month with the exception of August and, with some members of the Poetry Reading Group, have contributed the illustrations.

Details of both groups can be found in the Hackney U3A What's On leaflets.

## **THANK YOU**

Thank you to all the members of the Poetry Reading Group for their varied choices and their generosity in sharing poems that mean a great deal to them. Thanks too to the all the artists who provided the illustrations and added a richness to the Anthology.

## POEMS FOR NOVEMBER 2017

### THE ANGEL

I dreamt a dream! What can it mean?  
And that I was a maiden Queen  
Guarded by an Angel mild:  
Witless woe was ne'er beguiled!

And I wept both night and day,  
And he wiped my tears away;  
And I wept both day and night,  
And hid from him my heart's delight.

So he took his wings, and fled;  
Then the morn blushed rosy red.  
I dried my tears, and armed my fears  
With ten-thousand shields and spears.

Soon my Angel came again;  
I was armed, he came in vain;  
For the time of youth was fled,  
And grey hairs were on my head.

William Blake



**ARTIST**  
**JO POTTER**

## CALVINIST PARENTS

They put roofs over our heads.  
Ours was made of bent tiles,  
so the edge of the roof had a broken look,  
as if a lot of crockery  
had been thrown down, onto the home —  
a dump for heaven's cheap earthenware.  
Along the eaves, the arches were like  
entries to the Colosseum  
where a lion might appear, or an eight-foot armoured  
being with the painted face  
of a simpering lady. Bees would not roost  
in those concave combs, above our rooms,  
birds not swarm. How does a young'un  
pay for room and board — by belt,  
by hairbrush, by 2 x 4. They put a  
roof over our heads, against lightning,  
and droppings — no foreign genes, no outside  
gestures, no unfamiliar words;  
and under that roof, they laboured as they had been  
laboured over, they beat us into swords.

Sharon Olds

## POEM FOR DECEMBER 2017

### THE WELSH INCIDENT

'But that was nothing to what things came out  
From the sea-caves of Criccieth yonder.'  
'What were they? Mermaids? Dragons? Ghosts?'  
'Nothing at all of any things like that.'  
'What were they, then?' 'All sorts of queer things,  
Things never seen or heard or written about,  
Very strange, un-Welsh, utterly peculiar  
Things. Oh, solid enough they seemed to touch,  
Had anyone dared it. Marvellous creation,  
All various shapes and sizes, and no sizes,  
All new, each perfectly unlike his neighbour,  
Though all came moving slowly out together.'  
'Describe just one of them.'  
'I am unable.'  
'What were their colours?'  
'Mostly nameless colours,  
Colours you'd like to see; but one was puce  
Or perhaps more like crimson, but not purplish.  
Some had no colour.'  
'Tell me, had they legs?'  
'Not a leg or foot among them that I saw.'  
'But did these things come out in any order?'  
What o'clock was it? What was the day of the week?  
Who else was present? How was the weather?'  
'I was coming to that. It was half-past three  
On Easter Tuesday last. The sun was shining.  
The Harlech Silver Band played Marchog Jesu  
On thirty-seven shimmering instruments  
Collecting for Caernarvon's (Fever) Hospital Fund.  
The populations of Pwllheli, Criccieth,

Portmadoc, Borth, Tremadoc, Penrhyndeudraeth,  
Were all assembled. Criccieth's mayor addressed them  
First in good Welsh and then in fluent English,  
Twisting his fingers in his chain of office,  
Welcoming the things. They came out on the sand,  
Not keeping time to the band, moving seaward  
Silently at a snail's pace. But at last  
The most odd, indescribable thing of all  
Which hardly one man there could see for wonder  
Did something recognizably a something.'

'Well, what?'

'It made a noise.'

'A frightening noise?'

'No, no.'

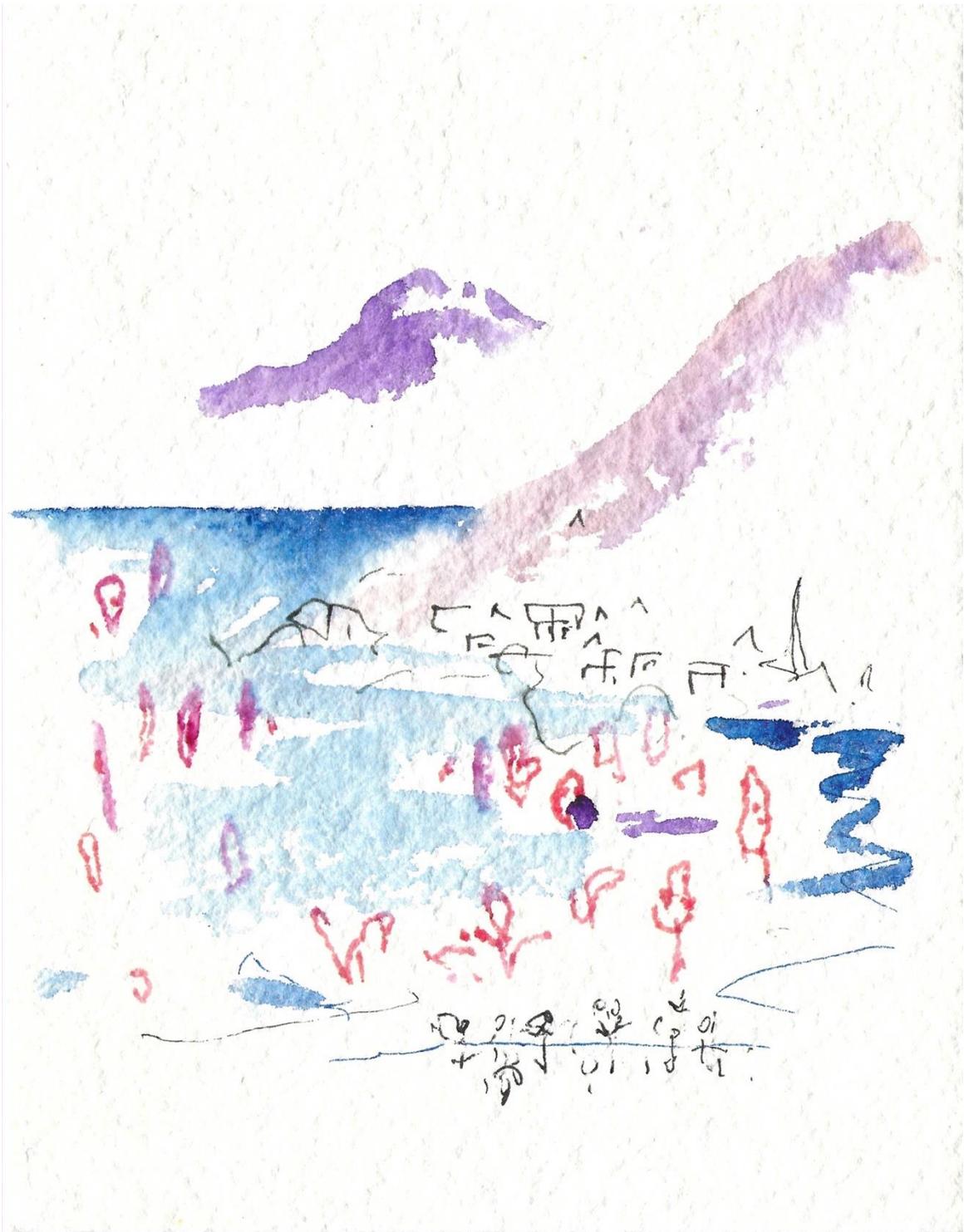
'A musical noise? A noise of scuffling?'

'No, but a very loud, respectable noise --  
Like groaning to oneself on Sunday morning  
In Chapel, close before the second psalm.'

'What did the mayor do?'

'I was coming to that.'

Robert Graves





**ARTIST OF BOTH PAINTINGS OF THE WELSH INCIDENT  
ROSEMARY MORE**

Only one poem was chosen in December as we took time to review the Group.

JANUARY 2018

THE WINDHOVER

*To Christ Our Lord*

I caught this morning morning's minion, king-  
dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn-drawn Falcon, in his  
riding

Of the rolling level underneath him steady air, and striding  
High there, how he rung upon the rein of a wimpling wing

In his ecstasy! then off, off forth on swing,  
As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend: the hurl and  
gliding

Rebuffed the big wind. My heart in hiding  
Stirred for a bird, - the achieve of, the mastery of the thing.

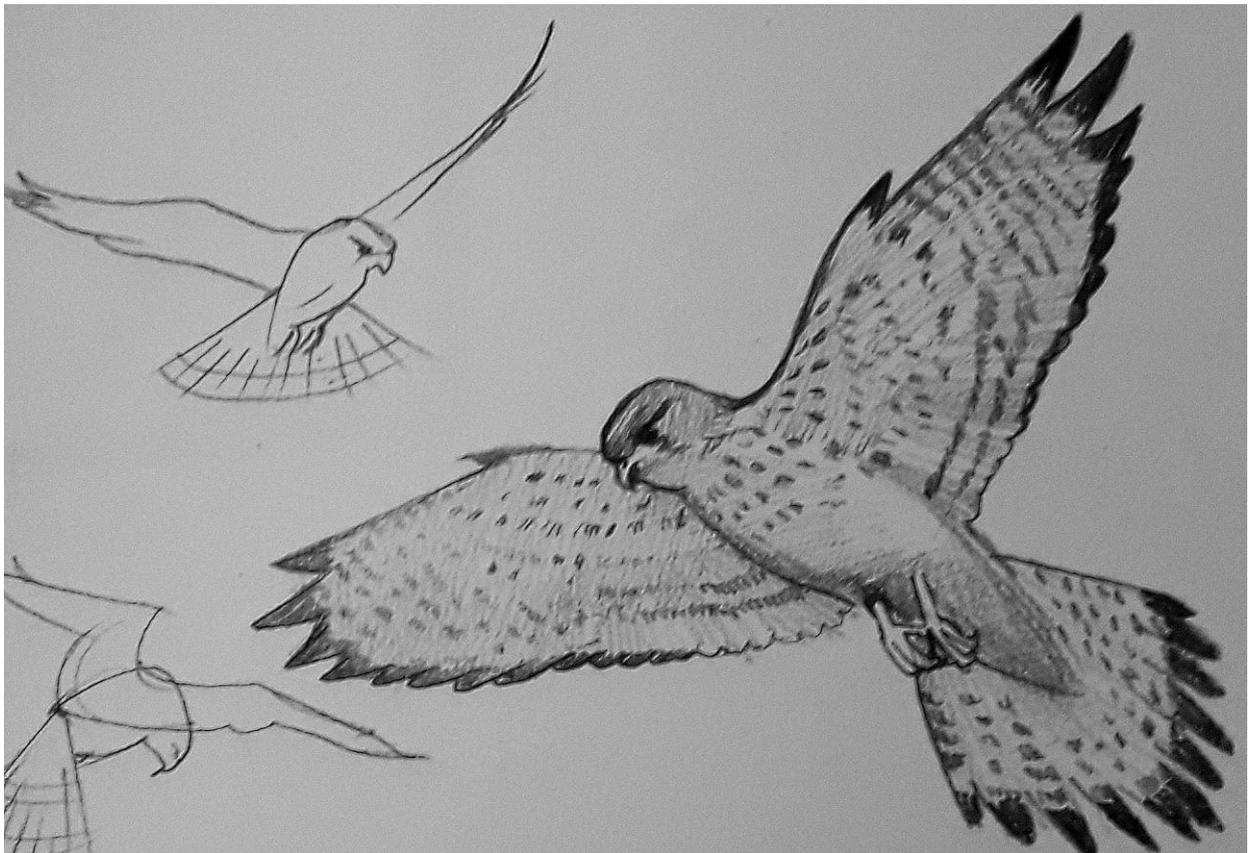
Brute beauty and valour and act, oh, air, pride, plume, here  
Buckle! AND the fire that breaks from thee then, a billion  
Times told lovelier, more dangerous, O my chevalier!

No wonder of it: shéer plód makes plough down sillion  
Shine, and blue-bleak embers, ah my dear,  
Fall, gall themselves, and gash gold-vermilion.

Gerald Manley Hopkins

*I chose this poem because I feel that the language Hopkins uses to describe this bird is magical. For me he has captured the way the bird twists and turns in the sky very visually. The colours reflect a real Kestrel. I can imagine I am on a lonely shore or moor watching this beautiful bird hovering up in the sky.*

Sue Barry



**ARTIST**

**SUE BARRY**



**ARTIST**

**JANET SOLOMON**

A MAN'S A MAN FOR A' THAT

Is there for honest Poverty  
That hings his head, an' a' that;  
The coward-slave, we pass him by,  
We dare be poor for a' that!  
For a' that, an' a' that.  
Our toils obscure an' a' that,  
The rank is but the guinea's stamp,  
The Man's the gowd for a' that.

What though on hamely fare we dine,  
Wear hoddin grey, an' a' that;  
Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine;  
A Man's a Man for a' that:  
For a' that, and a' that,  
Their tinsel show, an' a' that;  
The honest man, tho' e'er sae poor,  
Is king o' men for a' that.

Ye see yon birkie ca'd a lord,  
Wha struts, an' stares, an' a' that,  
Tho' hundreds worship at his word,  
He's but a coof for a' that.  
For a' that, an' a' that,  
His ribband, star, an' a' that,  
The man o' independent mind,  
He looks an' laughs at a' that.

A Prince can mak a belted knight,  
A marquis, duke, an' a' that!  
But an honest man's aboon his might -  
Guid faith, he mauna fa' that!  
For a' that, an' a' that,  
Their dignities, an' a' that,

The pith o' Sense an' pride o' Worth  
Are higher rank than a' that.

Then let us pray that come it may,  
As come it will for a' that,  
That Sense and Worth, o'er a' the earth  
Shall bear the gree an' a' that.  
For a' that, an' a' that,  
It's comin yet for a' that,  
That Man to Man the world o'er  
Shall brithers be for a' that.

Robert Burns

(in the Scottish mither tongue as it was written)

## A MAN'S A MAN FOR ALL THAT

Is there for honest poverty  
That hangs his head, and all that?  
The coward slave, we pass him by -  
We dare be poor for all that!  
For all that, and all that,  
Our toils obscure, and all that,  
The rank is but the guinea's stamp,  
The man's the gold for all that.

What though on homely fare we dine,  
Wear rough grey tweed, and all that?  
Give fools their silks, and knaves their wine -  
A man is a man for all that.  
For all that, and all that,  
Their tinsel show, and all that,  
The honest man, though ever so poor,  
Is king of men for all that.

You see that fellow called 'a lord',  
Who struts, and stares, and all that?  
Though hundreds worship at his word,  
He is but a dolt for all that.  
For all that, and all that,  
His ribboned, star, and all that,  
The man of independent mind,  
He looks and laughs at all that.

A prince can make a belted knight,  
A marquis, duke, and all that!  
But an honest man is above his might -  
Good faith, he must not fault that  
For all that, and all that,

Their dignities, and all that,  
The pith of sense and pride of worth  
Are higher rank than all that.

Then let us pray that come it may  
(As come it will for a' that)  
That Sense and Worth over all the earth  
Shall take the prize and all that!  
For all that, and all that,  
It is coming yet for all that,  
That man to man the world over  
Shall brothers be for all that.

(in the English mother tongue translation)

## POEMS FOR FEBRUARY 2018

### KUBLA KHAN

*Or, a vision in a dream. A Fragment.*

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan  
A stately pleasure-dome decree:  
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran  
Through caverns measureless to man  
Down to a sunless sea.

So twice five miles of fertile ground  
With walls and towers were girdled round;  
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,  
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;  
And here were forests ancient as the hills,  
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But oh! that deep romantic chasm which slanted  
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!  
A savage place! as holy and enchanted  
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted  
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!  
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,  
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,  
A mighty fountain momently was forced:  
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst  
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,  
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail:  
And mid these dancing rocks at once and ever  
It flung up momently the sacred river.  
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion  
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,  
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,  
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean;  
And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far  
Ancestral voices prophesying war!

The shadow of the dome of pleasure  
    Floated midway on the waves;  
Where was heard the mingled measure  
    From the fountain and the caves.  
    It was a miracle of rare device,  
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

    A damsel with a dulcimer  
    In a vision once I saw:  
    It was an Abyssinian maid  
And on her dulcimer she played,  
    Singing of Mount Abora.  
    Could I revive within me  
    Her symphony and song,  
To such a deep delight 'twould win me,  
    That with music loud and long,  
    I would build that dome in air,  
    That sunny dome! those caves of ice!  
And all who heard should see them there,  
    And all should cry, Beware! Beware!  
    His flashing eyes, his floating hair!  
    Weave a circle round him thrice,  
And close your eyes with holy dread  
    For he on honey-dew hath fed,  
    And drunk the milk of Paradise.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

## COCKSPUR BUSH

I am lived. I am died.

I was two-leafed three times, and grazed,  
but then I was stemmed and multiplied,  
sharp-thorned and caned, nested and raised,  
earth-salt by sun-sugar. I was innerly sung  
by thrushes who need fear no eyed skin thing.  
Finched, ant-run, flowered, I am given the years  
in now fewer berries, now more of sling  
out over directions of luscious dung.

Of water crankshaft, of gases the gears  
my shape is cattle-pruned to a crown spread sprung  
above the starve-gut instinct to make prairies  
of everywhere. My thorns are stuck with caries  
of mice and rank lizards by the butcher bird.  
Inches in, baby seed-screamers get supplied.  
I am lived and died in, vine woven, multiplied.

Les Murray

## POEMS FOR MARCH 2018

### PHENOMENAL WOMAN

Pretty women wonder where my secret lies.  
I'm not cute or built to suit a fashion model's size  
But when I start to tell them,  
They think I'm telling lies.  
I say,  
It's in the reach of my arms  
The span of my hips,  
The stride of my step,  
The curl of my lips.  
I'm a woman  
Phenomenally.  
Phenomenal woman,  
That's me.

I walk into a room  
Just as cool as you please,  
And to a man,  
The fellows stand or  
Fall down on their knees.  
Then they swarm around me,  
A hive of honey bees.  
I say,  
It's the fire in my eyes,  
And the flash of my teeth,  
The swing in my waist,  
And the joy in my feet.  
I'm a woman  
Phenomenally.

Phenomenal woman,  
That's me.

Men themselves have wondered  
What they see in me.  
They try so much  
But they can't touch  
My inner mystery.  
When I try to show them  
They say they still can't see.

I say,  
It's in the arch of my back,  
The sun of my smile,  
The ride of my breasts,  
The grace of my style.  
I'm a woman

Phenomenally.  
Phenomenal woman,  
That's me.

Now you understand  
Just why my head's not bowed.  
I don't shout or jump about  
Or have to talk real loud.  
When you see me passing  
It ought to make you proud.

I say,  
It's in the click of my heels,  
The bend of my hair,  
the palm of my hand,

The need of my care,  
'Cause I'm a woman  
Phenomenally.  
Phenomenal woman,  
That's me.

Maya Angelou

## A RITUAL TO BE READ TO EACH OTHER

If you don't know the kind of person I am,  
and I don't know the kind of person that you are,  
then a pattern that others have made, will prevail in this world,  
and following the wrong god home, we may each miss our star.

for there is many a small betrayal, in the mind,  
a shrug that lets the fragile sequence break  
sending with shouts, the horrible errors of childhood  
storming out to play through the broken dyke.

And just as elephants parade, each holding the other's tail,  
so that if one wanders, the whole circus won't find the park.

I call it cruel and maybe the root of all cruelty,  
to know what occurs but not recognize the fact.

And so I appeal to a voice, to something shadowy,  
a remote, important region in all who talk:  
though we could fool each other, we should consider—  
lest the parade of our mutual lives gets lost in the dark.

for it is important that awake people remain awake,  
or a breaking line may discourage us all back to sleep;  
the signals that we give—yes or no, or maybe—  
should be clear: for the darkness around us is deep.

William Stafford

## POEMS FOR APRIL 2018

### DIRGE FOR TWO VETERANS

The last sunbeam  
Lightly falls from the finished Sabbath,  
On the pavement here, and there beyond it is looking,  
Down a new-made double grave.

Lo, the moon ascending,  
Up from the east the silvery round moon,  
Beautiful over the house-tops, ghastly, phantom moon,  
Immense and silent moon.

I see a sad procession,  
And I hear the sound of coming full-keyed bugles,  
All the channels of the city streets they're flooding,  
As with voices and with tears.

I hear the great drums pounding,  
And the small drums steady whirring,  
And every blow of the great convulsive drums,  
Strikes me through and through.

For the son is brought with the father,  
(In the foremost ranks of the fierce assault they fell,  
Two veterans son and father dropped together,  
And the double grave awaits them.)

Now nearer blow the bugles,  
And the drums strike more convulsive,  
And the daylight o'er the pavement quite has faded,  
And the strong dead-march enwraps me.

In the eastern sky up-buoying,  
The sorrowful vast phantom moves illumined,  
( 'Tis some mother's large transparent face,  
In heaven brighter growing.)

O strong dead-march you please me!  
O moon immense with your silvery face you soothe me!  
O my soldiers twain! O my veterans passing to burial!  
What I have I also give you.

The moon gives you light,  
And the bugles and the drums give you music,  
And my heart, O my soldiers, my veterans,  
My heart gives you love.

Walt Whitman



**ARTIST  
DEIRDRE FRANCES**

## ENTIRELY

If we could get the hang of it entirely  
It would take too long;  
All we know is the splash of words in passing  
And falling twigs of song,  
And when we try to eavesdrop on the great  
Presences it is rarely  
That by a stroke of luck we can appropriate  
Even a phrase entirely.

If we could find our happiness entirely  
In somebody else's arms  
We should not fear the spears of the spring nor the city's  
Yammering fire alarms  
But, as it is, the spears each year go through  
Our flesh and almost hourly  
Bell or siren banishes the blue  
Eyes of Love entirely.

And if the world were black or white entirely  
And all the charts were plain  
Instead of a mad weir of tigerish waters,  
A prism of delight and pain,  
We might be surer where we wished to go  
Or again we might be merely  
Bored but in brute reality there is no  
Road that is right entirely.

Louis Mac Neice

*I have always liked the poetry of the 1930s and especially that of Louise McNeice. Whether it was the sense of him being an outsider- "An Irishman in England"- his poetry communicates the uncertainties of life and the choices we make. I choose this poem particularly as it indicates there is always hope.*

Rosemary Butler

## POEM FOR MAY 2018

### TAM LIN

Come all you pretty maids And a warning take from me  
Don't go down to the Chaser's wood  
If a maid you want to return and return  
If a maid you want to return.

Lady Margaret, Lady Margaret, she was sitting in her bower  
She was red as any rose  
But she longed to go the Chaser's woods  
To pull them flowers that grows and grows  
Oh, to pull the flowers that grows

And shes ta'en out her silver comb  
Made in haste to comb her hair  
Then she's away to the Chaser's wood  
As fast as she could tear and could tear  
ye, as fast as she could tear

And she hadn't pulled but the one red rose  
The rose that grows there in the green  
When a voice said, "Lady, how dare you pull a rose  
Without no leave of me, and of me,  
Aye, without no leave of me."

"This little wood," she says "it is me very own  
Me father he given it to me.  
I will pull, pluck, break, I'll bend the branch  
And I won't ask leave of thee, and of thee,  
no I won't ask leave of thee."

Then, he's taken her by the middle so small  
Down to where the grass it grows so green  
And what they've done, well I just couldn't say

Oh, the green grass grew between and between  
Aye, the green grass grew between

Aye, he's taken her by the lily-white hand  
Down to where the grass it grows so green  
And what they've done, well I just couldn't say  
But he never once asked her leave, her leave  
No he never once asked her leave.

It's four and twenty ladies, they're all sitting in the hall  
Playing at the chess  
All except for young Margaret  
She's green as any grass, any grass,  
And she's green as any grass.

Aye, there's four and twenty ladies, they're all sitting in the  
hall  
All as red as the rose  
All except for young Margaret  
And pale and wan she goes, and she goes  
Aye, pale and wan she goes.

Up there spake one of them little girls  
And on her face there was a smile  
She says, "I think my lady's loved a little long  
And now she goes with child, and with child  
Aye, and now she goes with child."

Up there spake another of them girls  
A pretty little girl was she  
She says, "I know a herb growing in the Chaser's woods  
As'll twine the babe from thee, and from thee  
As'll twine the babe from thee."

Lady Margaret, she picked up her silver comb  
Made in haste to comb her hair  
Then she's away to the Chaser's wood

As fast as she could tear, and could tear  
Aye, as fast as she could tear.

And she hadn't pulled but the one bit of herb  
The herb that grows there in the loam  
When up there spake young Tam Lin  
Saying, "Margaret, leave it alone  
Oh, sweetheart, Margaret, leave it alone."

"Why do you want that bitter, bitter herb  
The herb that grows so grey  
Except for to twine away the pretty little baby  
We got in our play, our play,  
That we got in our play."

"Oh tell me this, young Tam Lin," she says  
"If a mortal man you be."  
"Well, I'll tell you truth without a word of a lie  
I got christened as good as thee, as thee  
I got christened as good as thee."

"But as I rode out on a bitter, bitter day  
'Twas from me horse I fell  
And the Queen of the Elvens did take me  
In yonder green wood for to dwell, and to dwell  
Aye, in yonder green wood for to dwell."

"And it's every seventh seventh year  
We pay a toll to hell  
And the last one here is the first to go.  
And I fear the toll, it's meself, it's meself  
Aye, I fear the toll's meself."

"Oh, tonight it is the Halloween  
When the Elven Court shall ride  
If you would your true lover save

By the old mill-bridge you must hide, you must hide  
By the old mill bridge you must hide."

"And it's first there'll come this black horse  
And it's then there'll come the brown  
And they're both race by the white  
You must throw your arms up around my neck  
And I will not you afright, and afright  
No, I will not you afright."

"And they'll change me then, and it's all in your arms  
Into many's the beast sae wild  
You must hold me tight, you must fear me not  
I'm the father of your child,  
Oh you know that I'm the father of your child."

And the woods grew dark, and the woods grew dim  
And young Tam Lin was gone.  
She picked up her lily-white feet  
And to the mill-bridge run now, she ran  
Aye, and to the mill-bridge ran.

She looked high, and she looked low  
She compassed all around  
But she nothing saw, she nothing heard  
She heard no mortal sound, no sound  
No, she heard no mortal sound.

'Till about the dead hour of the night  
She heard the bridles ring  
It chilled her heart, it's given her a start  
More than any mortal thing, any thing  
More than any mortal thing.

Then it's first there come this black horse,  
and it's then there come the brown  
They both race by the white

And she's thrown her arms up 'round his neck  
And he didn't her afright, and afright  
No, he didn't her afright.

And the thunder roared across the sky  
And the stars they burned as bright as day  
And the Queen of the Elvens give a stunning cry,  
Saying, "Young Tam Lin is away, is away  
Aye, Young Tam Lin is away."

And they changed him then - it were all in her arms  
To a lion roaring so wild  
But she held him tight and she feared him not  
He was the father of her child, oh she knew he was  
The father of her child.

Soon they changes him again - it were all in her arms  
To a big black hissing snake  
But she held him and she feared him not  
He was one of God's own make, oh she knew that he  
Was one of God's own make.

And they changed him again - it were all in her arms  
To a big black dog to bite  
But she held him tight and she feared him not  
He didn't her afright, and afright  
No, he didn't her afright.

So they changed him again - it were all in her arms  
To a white-hot bar of iron  
But she held him tight and she feared him not  
He'd done to her no harm, no harm  
No, he'd done to her no harm.

Then they changed him again - it were all in her arms  
To a mother-naked man  
And she threwed her cloak up around his shoulders,

Saying, "Tam Lin, we've won, oh, we've won,"  
Saying, "Tam Lin, we've won."

Then the Queen of the Elvens, now she cursed yon Tam Lin  
Oh, well she cursed him good  
She said, "I should have torn out your eyes young Tam Lin  
I should have put in two eyes of wood, of wood  
I should have put in two eyes of wood."

"And it's curses on you, Tam Lin," she says  
"You once was my very own.  
And when you was, I should have torn out your heart  
And put in a heart of stone, cold stone  
I should have put in a heart of stone."

Anonymous Scottish Ballad in a 1970s English mother tongue  
translation

## POEMS FOR JUNE 2018

### THE LISTENERS

Is there anybody there?' said the Traveller,  
Knocking on the moonlit door;  
And his horse in the silence champed the grasses  
Of the forest's ferny floor:  
And a bird flew up out of the turret,  
Above the Traveller's head:  
And he smote upon the door again a second time;  
'Is there anybody there?' he said.  
But no one descended to the Traveller;  
No head from the leaf-fringed sill  
Leaned over and looked into his grey eyes,  
Where he stood perplexed and still.  
But only a host of phantom listeners  
That dwelt in the lone house then  
Stood listening in the quiet of the moonlight  
To that voice from the world of men:  
Stood thronging the faint moonbeams on the dark stair,  
That goes down to the empty hall,  
Harkening in an air stirred and shaken  
By the lonely Traveller's call.  
And he felt in his heart their strangeness,  
Their stillness answering his cry,  
While his horse moved, cropping the dark turf,  
'Neath the starred and leafy sky;  
For he suddenly smote on the door, even  
Louder, and lifted his head:—  
'Tell them I came, and no one answered,  
That I kept my word,' he said.  
Never the least stir made the listeners,  
Though every word he spake  
Fell echoing through the shadowiness of the still house  
From the one man left awake:

Ay, they heard his foot upon the stirrup,  
And the sound of iron on stone,  
And how the silence surged softly backward,  
When the plunging hoofs were gone.

Walter De La Mare

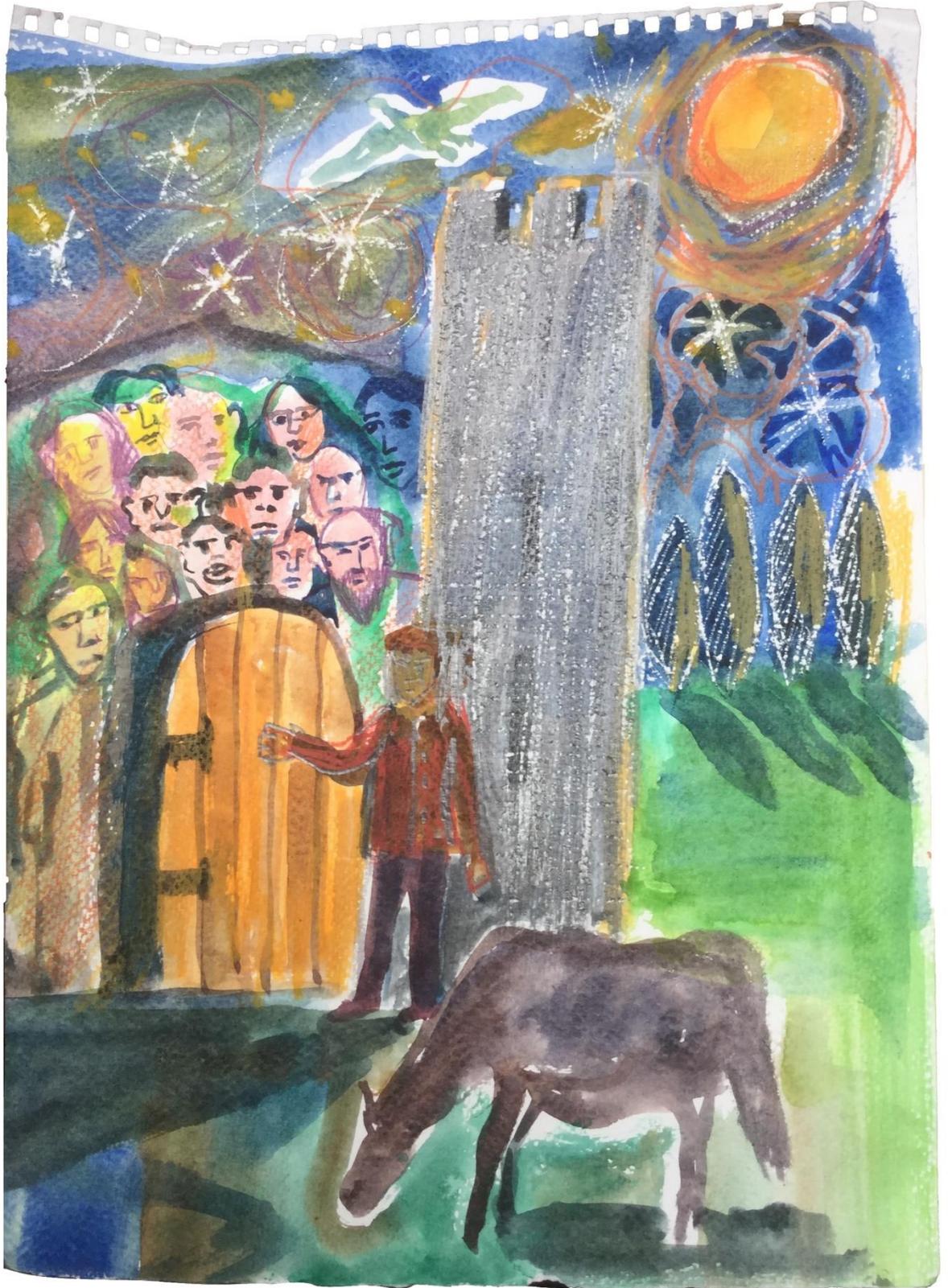
*I have always enjoyed a good mystery story and that is what this poem is for me. I always wonder, and visualise, who are the Listeners, and why do they not respond to the knocking? Who are the 'them' who sent the rider, and who is going to report back. The use of language makes it a great poem to read aloud.*

Sue Barry



**ARTIST**

**JANET SOLOMON**



**ARTIST**

**BRIAN INNES**

## THE ROLLING ENGLISH ROAD

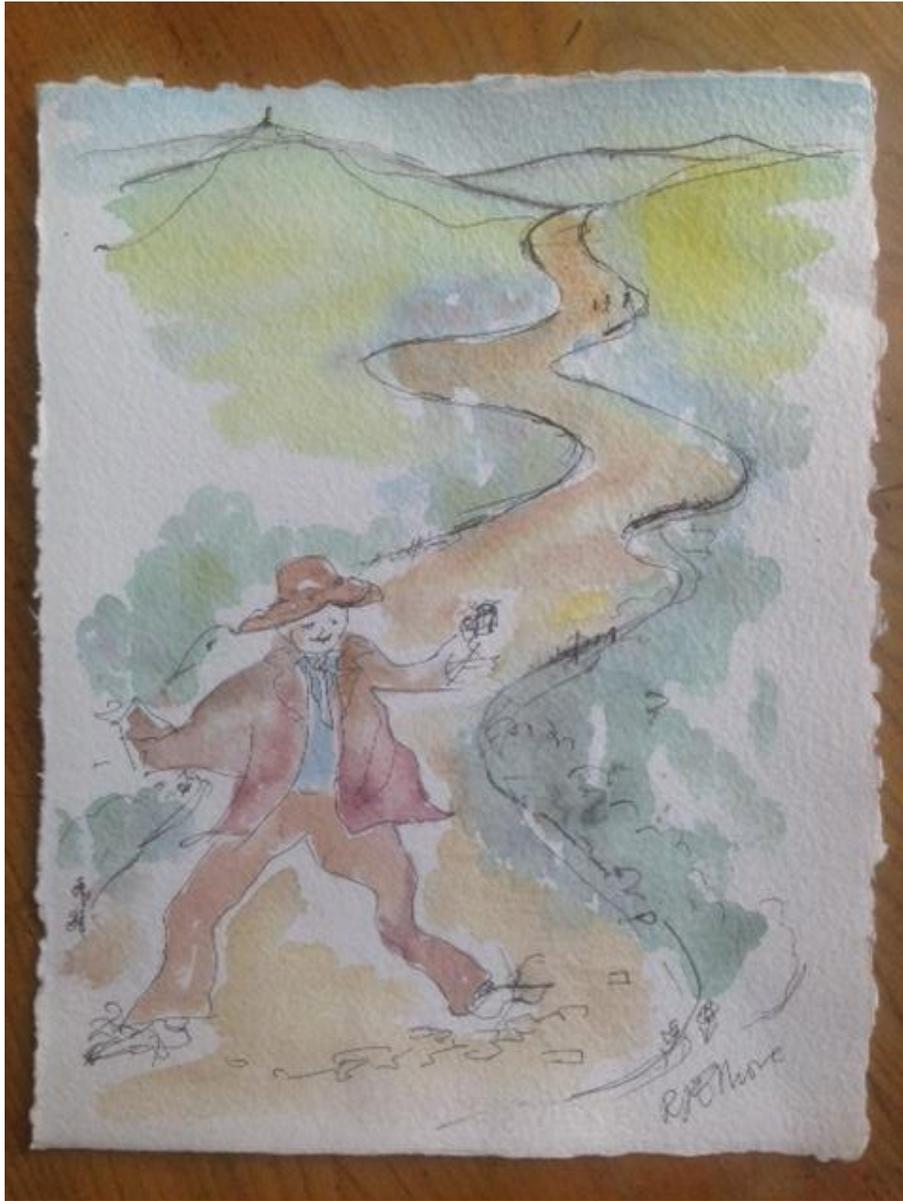
Before the Roman came to Rye or out to Severn strode,  
The rolling English drunkard made the rolling English road.  
A reeling road, a rolling road, that rambles round the shire,  
And after him the parson ran, the sexton and the squire;  
A merry road, a mazy road, and such as we did tread  
The night we went to Birmingham by way of Beachy Head.

I knew no harm of Bonaparte and plenty of the Squire,  
And for to fight the Frenchman I did not much desire;  
But I did bash their baggonets because they came arrayed  
To straighten out the crooked road an English drunkard made,  
Where you and I went down the lane with ale-mugs in our hands,  
The night we went to Glastonbury by way of Goodwin Sands.

His sins they were forgiven him; or why do flowers run  
Behind him; and the hedges all strengthening in the sun?  
The wild thing went from left to right and knew not which was which,  
But the wild rose was above him when they found him in the ditch.  
God pardon us, nor harden us; we did not see so clear  
The night we went to Bannockburn by way of Brighton Pier.

My friends, we will not go again or ape an ancient rage,  
Or stretch the folly of our youth to be the shame of age,  
But walk with clearer eyes and ears this path that wandereth,  
And see undrugged in evening light the decent inn of death;  
For there is good news yet to hear and fine things to be seen,  
Before we go to Paradise by way of Kensal Green.

G.K.Chesterton



**ARTIST  
ROSEMARY MORE**

## POEMS FOR JULY 2018

### A NOCTURNAL UPON ST LUCY'S DAY

Tis the year's midnight, and it is the day's,  
Lucy's, who scarce seven hours herself unmasks;  
The sun is spent, and now his flasks  
Send forth light squibs, no constant rays;  
The world's whole sap is sunk;  
The general balm th' hydroptic earth hath drunk,  
Whither, as to the bed's feet, life is shrunk,  
Dead and interr'd; yet all these seem to laugh,  
Compar'd with me, who am their epitaph.

Study me then, you who shall lovers be  
At the next world, that is, at the next spring;  
For I am every dead thing,  
In whom Love wrought new alchemy.  
For his art did express  
A quintessence even from nothingness,  
From dull privations, and lean emptiness;  
He ruin'd me, and I am re-begot  
Of absence, darkness, death: things which are not.

All others, from all things, draw all that's good,  
Life, soul, form, spirit, whence they being have;  
I, by Love's limbec, am the grave  
Of all that's nothing. Oft a flood  
Have we two wept, and so  
Drown'd the whole world, us two; oft did we grow  
To be two chaoses, when we did show  
Care to aught else; and often absences  
Withdrew our souls, and made us carcasses.

But I am by her death (which word wrongs her)

Of the first nothing the elixir grown;  
Were I a man, that I were one  
I needs must know; I should prefer,  
If I were any beast,  
Some ends, some means; yea plants, yea stones detest,  
And love; all, all some properties invest;  
If I an ordinary nothing were,  
As shadow, a light and body must be here.

But I am none; nor will my sun renew.  
You lovers, for whose sake the lesser sun  
At this time to the Goat is run  
To fetch new lust, and give it you,  
Enjoy your summer all;

Since she enjoys her long night's festival,  
Let me prepare towards her, and let me call  
This hour her vigil, and her eve, since this  
Both the year's, and the day's deep midnight is.

John Donne

## HIGH FLIGHT

Oh! I have slipped the surly bonds of Earth  
And danced the skies on laughter-silvered wings;  
Sunward I've climbed, and joined the tumbling mirth  
Of sun-split clouds, — and done a hundred things  
You have not dreamed of — wheeled and soared and swung  
High in the sunlit silence. Hov'ring there,  
I've chased the shouting wind along, and flung  
My eager craft through footless halls of air . . .

Up, up the long, delirious burning blue  
I've topped the wind-swept heights with easy grace  
Where never lark, or ever eagle flew —  
And, while with silent, lifting mind I've trod  
The high untrespassed sanctity of space,  
Put out my hand, and touched the face of God.

John Gillespie Magee Junior

*I first heard this poem when a young American visitor recited it one evening at a ceilidh in Ireland. She told me that the writer John Gillespie Magee was a 19 year old Spitfire pilot during the War, and he wrote the poem shortly before he crashed his Spitfire and was killed. His grief stricken father published the poem in a local church bulletin but it quickly travelled beyond the church and across the USA. The poem has been adopted by the United States Air Force as their official poem.*

Damien O'Neil



**ARTIST**

**DEIRDRE FRANCES**

## POEMS FOR SEPTEMBER 2018

### AN ARUNDEL TOMB

Side by side their faces blurred,  
The earl and countess lie in stone,  
Their proper habits vaguely shown  
As jointed armour, stiffened pleat,  
And that faint hint of the absurd—  
The little dogs under their feet.

They would not guess how early in  
Their supine stationary voyage  
The air would change to soundless damage,  
Turn the old tenantry away;  
How soon succeeding eyes begin  
To look, not read.

Rigidly they  
Persisted, linked, through lengths and breadths  
Of time. Snow fell, undated. Light  
Each summer thronged the glass. A bright  
Litter of birdcalls strewed the same  
Bone-riddled ground. And up the paths  
Such plainness of the pre baroque  
Hardly involves the eye, until  
It meets his left-hand gauntlet still  
Clasped empty in the other; and  
One sees, with a sharp tender shock,  
His hand withdrawn, holding her hand.

They would not think to lie so long.  
Such faithfulness in effigy  
Was just a detail friends would see:  
A sculptor's sweet commissioned grace  
Thrown off in helping to prolong  
The Latin names around the base.

The endless altered people came  
Washing at their identity.  
Now, helpless in the hollow of  
An unarmorial age, a trough  
Of smoke in slow suspended skeins  
Above their scrap of history,  
Only an attitude remains:

Time has transfigured them into  
Untruth. The stone fidelity  
They hardly meant has come to be  
Their final blazon, and to prove  
Our almost-instinct almost true:  
What will survive of us is love.

Philip Larkin



**ARTIST**  
**MARY JULIAN**

## EAST ANGLIAN BATHE

Oh when the early morning at the seaside  
Took us with hurrying steps from Horsey Mere  
To see the whistling bent-grass on the leaside  
And then the tumbled breaker-line appear,  
On high, the clouds with mighty adumbration  
Sailed over us to seaward fast and clear  
And jellyfish in quivering isolation  
Lay silted in the dry sand of the breeze  
And we, along the table-land of beach blown  
Went gooseflesh from our shoulders to our knees  
And ran to catch the football, each to each thrown,  
In the soft and swirling music of the seas.

There splashed about our ankles as we waded  
Those intersecting wavelets morning-cold,  
And sudden dark a patch of sky was shaded,  
And sudden light, another patch would hold  
The warmth of whirling atoms in a sun-shot  
And underwater sandstorm green and gold.  
So in we dived and louder than a gunshot  
Sea-water broke in fountains down the ear.  
How cold the bathe, how chattering cold the drying,  
How welcoming the inland reeds appear,  
The wood-smoke and the breakfast and the frying,  
And your warm freshwater ripples, Horsey Mere.

John Betjeman

*I love this poem. It evokes strong memories of my privileged East Anglian upbringing and swimming off the Norfolk coast. It was always windy and mostly cold but my memories are of the warmth of the sand sheltered by the dunes, of the glorious smell of bacon frying on our return to breakfast and the fun we had as teenagers in a group, now sadly depleted by illness and death but which still meets up once a year.*

Mary Julian



**ARTIST**

**MARY JULIAN**

## POEMS FOR OCTOBER 2018

### THE ART OF HEALING

(In Memoriam David Protetch, M. D.)

Most patients believe  
dying is something they do,  
not their physician,  
that white-coated sage,  
never to be imagined  
naked or married.

Begotten by one,  
I should know better.

'Healing,'

Papa would tell me,

'is not a science,

but the intuitive art  
of wooing Nature.

Plants, beasts, may react  
according to the common  
whim of their species,  
but all humans have  
prejudices of their own  
which can't be foreseen.

To some, ill-health is  
a way to be important, others are stoics,  
a few fanatics,  
who won't feel happy until  
they are cut open.'

Warned by him to shun  
the sadist, the nod-crafty,  
and the fee-conscious,  
I knew when we met,

I had found a consultant  
who thought as he did,  
yourself a victim of medical engineers  
and their arrogance,  
when they atom-bombed  
your sick pituitary  
and over-killed it.

'Every sickness  
is a musical problem,'  
so said Novalis, 'and every cure  
a musical solution':  
You knew that also.  
Not that in my case  
you heard any shattering  
discords to resolve:  
to date my organs  
still seem pretty sure of their  
self-identity.  
For my small ailments  
you, who were mortally sick,  
prescribed with success:  
my major vices,  
my mad addictions, you left  
to my own conscience.  
Was it your very predicament that made me  
sure I could trust you,  
if I were dying,  
to say so, not insult me  
with soothing fictions?

Must diabetics  
all contend with a nirus  
to self-destruction? One day you told me:

'It is only bad temper  
that keeps me going.'

But neither anger  
nor lust are omnipotent,  
nor should we even  
want our friends to be  
superhuman. Dear David,  
dead one, rest in peace,  
having been what all  
doctors should be, but few  
are, and, even when most  
difficult, condign  
of our biased affection  
and objective praise.

W.H. Auden

## DUCKS

(To E.M. Who drew them in Holzminden Prison)

### I

From troubles of the world I turn to ducks,  
Beautiful comical things  
Sleeping or curled  
Their heads beneath white wings  
By water cool,  
Or finding curious things  
To eat in various mucks  
Beneath the pool,  
Tails uppermost, or waddling  
Sailor-like on the shores  
Of ponds, or paddling  
- Left! Right! - with fanlike feet  
Which are for steady oars  
When they (white galleys) float  
Each bird a boat  
Rippling at will the sweet  
Wide waterway ...  
When night is fallen you creep  
Upstairs, but drakes and dillies  
Nest with pale water-stars.  
Moonbeams and shadow bars,  
And water-lilies:  
Fearful too much to sleep  
Since they've no locks  
To click against the teeth  
Of weasel and fox.  
And warm beneath  
Are eggs of cloudy green

Whence hungry rats and lean  
Would stealthily suck  
New life, but for the mien  
The hold ferocious mien  
Of the mother-duck.

## II

Yes, ducks are valiant things  
On nests of twigs and straws,  
And ducks are soothy things  
And lovely on the lake  
When that the sunlight draws  
Thereon their pictures dim  
In colours cool.  
And when beneath the pool  
They dabble, and when they swim  
And make their rippling rings,  
O ducks are beautiful things!  
But ducks are comical things:-  
As comical as you.  
Quack!  
They waddle round, they do.  
They eat all sorts of things,  
And then they quack.  
By barn and stable and stack  
They wander at their will,  
But if you go too near  
They look at you through black  
Small topaz-tinted eyes  
And wish you ill.  
Triangular and clear  
They leave their curious track  
In mud at the water's edge,  
And there amid the sedge

And slime they gobble and peer  
Saying 'Quack! quack!'

### III

When God had finished the stars and whirl of coloured suns  
He turned His mind from big things to fashion little ones;  
Beautiful tiny things (like daisies) He made, and then  
He made the comical ones in case the minds of men  
Should stiffen and become  
Dull, humourless and glum,  
And so forgetful of their Maker be  
As to take even themselves - quite seriously.  
Caterpillars and cats are lively and excellent puns:  
All God's jokes are good - even the practical ones!  
And as for the duck, I think God must have smiled a bit  
Seeing those bright eyes blink on the day He fashioned it.  
And he's probably laughing still at the sound that came out of its  
bill!

Frederick William (FW) Harvey

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