

Poems in a Time of Coronavirus - Issue No. 6



This anthology contains prose and poems chosen by a group of friends from St Paul's Church Grove Park Chiswick on the theme of 'Weather', read to each other via Zoom on 7 May 2020.

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***I never thought in this poor world to find* by R S Thomas**

I never thought in this poor world to find
Another who had loved the things I love,
The wind, the trees, the cloud-swept sky above;
One who was beautiful and grave and kind,
Who struck no discord in my dreaming mind,
Content to live with silence as a cloak
About her every thought, or, if she spoke,
Her gentle voice was music on the wind.
And then about the ending of a day
In early Spring, when the soft western breezes
Had chased the melancholy clouds afar,
As up a little hill I took my way,
I found you all alone upon your knees,
Your face uplifted to the evening star.

***Weather* by Thomas Hardy**

This is the weather the cuckoo likes,
And so do I;
When showers betumble the chestnut spikes,
And nestlings fly;
And the little brown nightingale bills his best,
And they sit outside at 'The Traveller's Rest,'
And maids come forth sprig-muslin drest,
And citizens dream of the south and west,
And so do I.

This is the weather the shepherd shuns,
And so do I;
When beeches drip in browns and duns,
And thresh and ply;
And hill-hid tides throb, throe on throe,
And meadow rivulets overflow,
And drops on gate bars hang in a row,
And rooks in families homeward go,
And so do I.

Both poems chosen and read by Simon Surtees

***Sonnet 18: Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?* by William Shakespeare**

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,
And summer's lease hath all too short a date;
Sometime too hot the eye of heaven shines,
And often is his gold complexion dimm'd;
And every fair from fair sometime declines,
By chance or nature's changing course untrimm'd;
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,
Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st;
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,
When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st:
 So long as men can breathe or eyes can see,
 So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.

Chosen and read by Shelagh Allsop

***English Autumn, 1944* by Lilian Bowes Lyon**

Happy, unhappy October weather.
Out of the sky let nothing drop;
Only the rain or a rainbow feather,
Light in the air as hope.

Cool on the wind the curlews call you,
Weaving a wish, as Penelope wove
Her perpetual tapestry: nothing befall you,
Love, my love, my love.

Chosen and read by Carolyn Ashford-Russell

***Hurricane Hits England* by Grace Nichols**

It took a hurricane, to bring her closer
To the landscape.
Half the night she lay awake,
The howling ship of the wind,
Its gathering rage,
Like some dark ancestral spectre,
Fearful and reassuring:

Talk to me Huracan
Talk to me Oya
Talk to me Shango
And Hattie,
My sweeping, back-home cousin.

Tell me why you visit
An English coast?
What is the meaning
Of old tongues
Reaping havoc
In new places?

The blinding illumination,
Even as you short-
Circuit us
Into further darkness?

What is the meaning of trees
Falling heavy as whales
Their crusted roots
Their cratered graves?

O why is my heart unchained?
Tropical Oya of the Weather,
I am aligning myself to you,
I am following the movement of your winds,
I am riding the mystery of your storm.

Ah, sweet mystery,
Come to break the frozen lake in me,
Shaking the foundations of the very trees
within me,
Come to let me know
That the earth is the earth is the earth.
Chosen and read by Catherine Jessop

***Blow the wind southerly*, traditional English folk song from Northumberland**

Blow the wind southerly, southerly,
Southerly, Blow the wind south for the bonny blue sea.
Blow the wind southerly, southerly,
Southerly, Blow, bonny breeze, my lover to me.
They told me last night there were ships in the
Offing, And I hurried down to the deep rolling sea.
But my eye could not see it,
Wherever might be it, The barque that is bearing my lover to me.
Blow the wind southerly, southerly,
Southerly, Blow, bonny breeze, o'er the bonny blue sea.
Blow the wind southerly, southerly,
Southerly, Blow, bonny breeze, and bring him to me.
Is it not sweet to hear the breeze singing,
As lightly it calms o'er the deep rolling sea?
But sweeter and dearer by far when 'tis
Bringing The barque of my true love in safely to me!

Chosen and read by Peter Capell

[Youtube clip sung by Kathleen Ferrier](#)

***Postscript* by Seamus Heaney**

And some time make the time to drive out west
Into County Clare, along the Flaggy Shore,
In September or October, when the wind
And the light are working off each other
So that the ocean on one side is wild
With foam and glitter, and inland among stones
The surface of a slate-grey lake is lit
By the earthed lightning of a flock of swans,
Their feathers roughed and ruffling, white on white,
Their fully grown headstrong-looking heads
Tucked or cresting or busy underwater.
Useless to think you'll park and capture it
More thoroughly. You are neither here nor there,
A hurry through which known and strange things pass
As big soft buffetings come at the car sideways
And catch the heart off guard and blow it open.

Chosen and read by Katharine Makower

***There are holes in the sky* by Spike Milligan**

There are holes in the sky
Where the rain gets in
But they're ever so small
That's why the rain is thin.

***The Weather* by Flanders and Swann**

January brings the snow,
Makes your feet and fingers glow.

February's ice and sleet,
Freeze the toes right off your feet.

Welcome, March, with wint'ry wind,
Would thou weren't not so unkind.

April brings the sweet spring showers,
On and on for hours and hours.

Farmers fear unkindly May,
Frost by night and hail by day.

June just rains and never stops,
Thirty days and spoils the crops.

In July the sun is hot,
Is it shining?
No it's not!

August, cold and dank and wet,
Brings more rain than any yet.

Bleak September's mist and mud,
Is enough to chill the blood.

Then October adds a gale,
Wind and slush and rain and hail.

Dark November brings the fog,
Should not do it to a dog.

Freezing wet December, then...
b***** January again!

Both poems chosen and read by Jackie Rayer

***Inversnaid* by Gerard Manley Hopkins**

This darksome burn, horseback brown,
His rollrock highroad roaring down,
In coop and in comb the fleece of his foam
Flutes and low to the lake falls home.

A windpuff-bonnet of fáwn-fróth
Turns and twindles over the broth
Of a pool so pitchblack, féll-frówning,
It rounds and rounds Despair to drowning.

Degged with dew, dappled with dew
Are the groins of the braes that the brook treads through,
Wiry heathpacks, flitches of fern,
And the beadbonny ash that sits over the burn.

What would the world be, once bereft
Of wet and of wildness? Let them be left,
O let them be left, wildness and wet;
Long live the weeds and the wilderness yet.

Chosen and read by Sheila White

***A Midsummer Night's Dream – Act 2 Scene 1: Titania to Oberon* by William Shakespeare**

But with thy brawls thou hast disturb'd our sport.
Therefore the winds, piping to us in vain,
As in revenge, have suck'd up from the sea
Contagious fog: which falling in the land,
Hath every petty river made so proud,
That they have over-born their continents.
The ox hath therefore stretch'd his yoke in vain,
The ploughman lost his sweat, and the green corn
Hath rotted, ere his youth attain'd a beard:
The fold stands empty in the drowned field,
And crows are fatted with the murrion flock,
The nine mens morris is filled up with mud,
And the quaint mazes in the wanton green,
For lack of tread are undistinguishable.
The human mortals want their winter here,
No night is now with hymn or carol blest;

Therefore the moon (the governess of floods)
Pale in her anger, washes all the air;
That rheumatic diseases do abound.
And through this distemperature, we see
The seasons alter; hoar headed frosts
Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,
And on old Hiem's thin and icy crown,
An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
Is as in mockery set. The spring, the summer,
The childing autumn, angry winter change
Their wonted liveries, and the mazed world,
By their increase, now know not which is which;
And this same progeny of evils,
Comes from our debate, from our dissension,
We are their parents and original.

***Cherry Blossom* by Skyla, Year 9, Chiswick School (winner of the Blossom Day Poetry Competition - Secondary School Category, Haiku)**

First buds spring to life
Opening to the bright sun
A pink explosion

Both pieces chosen and read by Sam Hearn

Poem for friends by Sue Hearn

I'm writing a poem for friends
I'm really not sure how it ends
They said "Let's choose weather"
I tried to be clever
But...

Read by Sue Hearn