

Poems in a Time of Coronavirus - Issue No. 11



This anthology contains poems and prose chosen by a group of friends from St Paul's Church Grove Park Chiswick on the theme of 'Dreams', shared with each other via Zoom on 11 June 2020.

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The Dream by John Donne

Dear love, for nothing less than thee
Would I have broke this happy dream;
It was a theme
For reason, much too strong for phantasy:
Therefore thou waked'st me wisely; yet
My dream thou brok'st not, but continued'st
it.
Thou art so truth that thoughts of thee
suffice
To make dreams truths, and fables histories.
Enter these arms, for since thou thought'st it
best
Not to dream all my dream, let's act the rest.

As lightning or a taper's light,
Thine eyes, and not thy noise, waked me;
Yet I thought thee
(For thou lov'st truth) an angel at first sight;
But when I saw thou saw'st my heart,
And knew'st my thoughts, beyond an angels
art,
When thou knew'st what I dreamt, when
thou knew'st when
Excess of joy would wake me, and cam'st
then,
I must confess it could not choose but be
Prophane to think thee anything but thee.

Chosen and read by Simon Surtees

Under Milk Wood – an excerpt by Dylan Thomas

Time passes. Listen. Time passes.

Come closer now.

Only you can hear the houses sleeping in the streets in the slow deep salt and silent black,
bandaged night. Only you can see, in the blinded bedrooms, the combs and petticoats over
the chairs, the jugs and basins, the glasses of teeth, Thou Shalt Not on the wall, and the
yellowing dickybird-watching pictures of the dead. Only you can hear and see, behind the
eyes of the sleepers, the movements and countries and mazes and colours and dismays and
rainbows and tunes and wishes and flight and fall and despairs and big seas of their dreams.

From where you are, you can hear their dreams.

Chosen and read by Sam Hearn

Comming and staying showed thee thee,
But rising makes me doubt, that now
Thou art not thou.
That Love is weak, where fear's as strong as he;
'Tis not all spirit pure and brave
If mixture it of Fear, Shame, Honour, have.
Perchance as torches, which must ready be,
Men light and put out, so thou deal'st with me,
Thou cam'st to kindle, go'st to come; Then I
Will dream that hope again, but else would die.

***Dream* by Kathleen Raine**

I am become a stranger to my dreams,
Their places unknown. A bridge there was
Over the lovely waters of the Tyne, my mother
Was with me, we were almost there,
It seemed, but in that almost opened up a valley
Extending and expanding, wind-sculptured sand;
Dry its paths, a beautiful waterless waste
Without one green leaf, sand-coloured behind closed eyes.
That film shifts, but the arid place remains
When day returns. Yet we were still going towards the Tyne,
That green river-side where childhood's flowers
Were growing still, my mother and I, she dead,
With me forever in that dream.

Chosen and read by Katharine Makower

***Soldier's Dream* by Wilfred Owen**

I dreamed kind Jesus fouled the big-gun gears;
And caused a permanent stoppage in all bolts;
And buckled with a smile Mausers and Colts;
And rusted every bayonet with His tears.

And there were no more bombs, of ours or Theirs,
Not even an old flint-lock, not even a pikel.
But God was vexed, and gave all power to Michael;
And when I woke he'd seen to our repairs.

Chosen and read by Angus MacLaren

***I Dream A World* by Langston Hughes**

I dream a world where man
No other man will scorn,
Where love will bless the earth
And peace its paths adorn
I dream a world where all
Will know sweet freedom's way,
Where greed no longer saps the soul
Nor avarice blights our day.
A world I dream where black or white,
Whatever race you be,
Will share the bounties of the earth
And every man is free,
Where wretchedness will hang its head
And joy, like a pearl,
Attends the needs of all mankind-
Of such I dream, my world!

Chosen and read by Sue Hearn

***Harlem* by Langston Hughes**

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore—
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over—
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

Chosen and read by Peter Capell

Hughes wrote "Harlem" in 1951, more than a decade before the Civil Rights Act of 1964. He was also writing in the aftermath of the 1935 and 1943 Harlem riots, both of which were triggered by segregation, pervasive unemployment, and police brutality in the black community.

Hughes's poem responds to this context. The title, "Harlem," places the poem in this historically black and immigrant neighborhood in New York City, while the "dream" could be any dream that those in Harlem have had: a dream for a better life, for opportunity, for equality—most broadly, for access to the American Dream itself.



The Nightmare Song by W. H. Gilbert

When you're lying awake with a dismal headache
And repose is taboo'd by anxiety,
I conceive you may use any language you choose
To indulge in, without impropriety;

For your brain is on fire, the bed-clothes conspire
Of usual slumber to plunder you:
First your counter-pane goes, and uncovers your toes,
And your sheet slips demurely from under you;

Then the blanketing tickles, you feel like mixed pickles,
So terribly sharp is the pricking,
And you're hot and you're cross, and you tumble and toss,
'Til there's nothing twixt you and the ticking.

Then the bedclothes all creep to the ground in a heap,
And you pick 'em all up in a tangle;
Next your pillow resigns, and politely declines
To remain at its usual angle!

When you get some repose in the form of a doze,
With hot eyeballs and head ever aching,
Your slumbering teems with such horrible dreams
That you'd very much better be waking;

For you dream you are crossing the channel, and tossing
About in a steamer from Harwich,
Which is something between a large bathing machine
And a very small second class carriage,

And you're giving a treat (penny ice and cold meat)
To a party of friends and relations,
They're a ravenous horde, and they all come aboard
At Sloane Square and South Kensington stations.

And bound on that journey, you find your attorney
(who started this morning from Devon);
He's a bit undersized and you don't feel surprised
When he tells you he's only eleven.

Well, you're driving like mad with this singular lad
(By the by, the ship's now a four-wheeler),
And you're playing round games, and he calls you bad
names
When you tell him that ties pay the dealer;

But this you can't stand, so you throw up your hand,
And you find you're as cold as an icicle,
In your shirt and your socks (the black silk with gold clocks)
Crossing Salisbury Plain on a bicycle.

And he and the crew are on bicycles too,
Which they've somehow or other invested in,
And he's telling the tars all the particulars
Of a company he's interested in;

It's a scheme of devices, to get at low prices
All goods from cough mixtures to cables
(Which tickled the sailors) by treating retailers
As though they were all vegetables:

You get a good spademan to plant a small tradesman
(first take off his boots with a boot tree),
And his legs will take root, and his fingers will shoot,
And they'll blossom and bud like a fruit tree;

From the greengrocer tree you get grapes and green peas,
Cauliflower, pineapple and cranberries,
While the pastry-cook plant cherry brandy will grant,
Apple puffs, and three corners, and banburys;

The shares are a penny and ever so many
Are taken by Rothschild and Bering,
And just as a few are allotted to you, you awake
With a shudder, despairing...

You're a regular wreck
With a crick in your neck,
And no wonder you snore
for your head's on the floor
And you've needles and pins
From your soles to your shins,
And your flesh is acreep
For your left leg's asleep,
And you've cramp in your toes
And a fly on your nose,
And some fluff in your lung
And a feverish tongue,
And a thirst that's intense
And a general sense

That you haven't been sleeping in clover;
But the darkness has passed, and it's daylight at last!
The night has been long, ditto, ditto my song,
And thank goodness they're both of them over!

Chosen and read by Hillie MacLaren

The Tempest – an excerpt from Act 3 Scene 2 by William Shakespeare

Be not afeard; the isle is full of noises,
Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears, and sometime voices
That, if I then had waked after long sleep,
Will make me sleep again: and then, in dreaming,
The clouds methought would open and show riches
Ready to drop upon me that, when I waked,
I cried to dream again.

Chosen and read by Mary Barnard

To Sleep by William Wordsworth

A flock of sheep that leisurely pass by,
One after one; the sound of rain, and bees
Murmuring; the fall of rivers, winds and seas,
Smooth fields, white sheets of water, and pure sky;
I've thought of all by turns; and still I lie
Sleepless; and soon the small birds' melodies
Must hear, first uttered from my orchard trees;
And the first Cuckoo's melancholy cry.
Even thus last night, and two nights more, I lay,
And could not win thee, Sleep! by any stealth:
So do not let me wear to-night away:
Without Thee what is all the morning's wealth?
Come, blessed barrier betwixt day and day,
Dear mother of fresh thoughts and joyous health!

Chosen and read by Sheila White

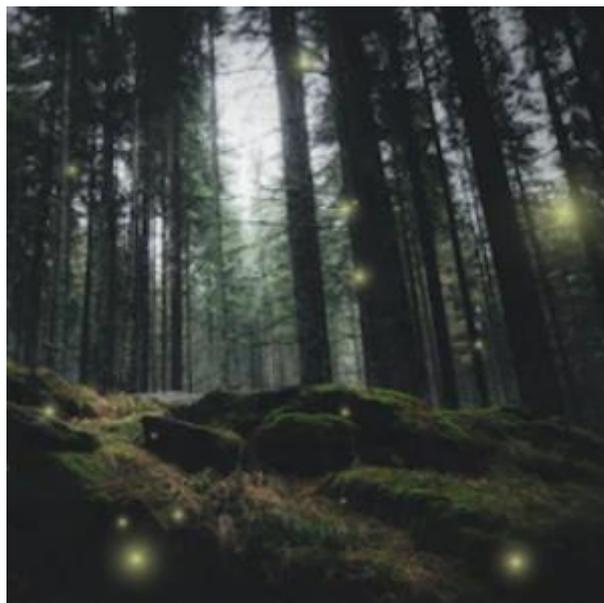
Cloths of Heaven by W.B.Yeats

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,
I would spread the cloths under your feet:
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
I have spread my dreams under your feet;
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

Song of a Dream – and excerpt by Sarojini Naidu

Once in the dream of a night I stood
Lone in the light of a magical wood,
Soul-deep in visions that poppy-like sprang;
And spirits of Truth were the birds that sang,
And spirits of Love were the stars that glowed,
And spirits of Peace were the streams that flowed
In that magical wood in the land of sleep.

Both chosen and read by Jackie Rayer



***Cat's Dream* by Pablo Neruda**

How neatly a cat sleeps,
Sleeps with its paws and its posture,
Sleeps with its wicked claws,
And with its unfeeling blood,
Sleeps with ALL the rings a series
Of burnt circles which have formed
The odd geology of its sand-colored tail.

I should like to sleep like a cat,
With all the fur of time,
With a tongue rough as flint,
With the dry sex of fire and
After speaking to no one,
Stretch myself over the world,
Over roofs and landscapes,
With a passionate desire
To hunt the rats in my dreams.

I have seen how the cat asleep
Would undulate, how the night flowed

Through it like dark water and at times,
It was going to fall or possibly
Plunge into the bare deserted snowdrifts.

Sometimes it grew so much in sleep
Like a tiger's great-grandfather,
And would leap in the darkness over
Rooftops, clouds and volcanoes.

Sleep, sleep cat of the night with
Episcopal ceremony and your stone-carved
moustache.

Take care of all our dreams
Control the obscurity
Of our slumbering prowess
With your relentless HEART
And the great ruff of your tail.

***I dream of you, to wake* by Christina Rossetti**

I dream of you, to wake: would that I might
Dream of you and not wake but slumber on;
Nor find with dreams the dear companion gone,
As, Summer ended, Summer birds take flight.

In happy dreams I hold you full in night.
I blush again who waking look so wan;
Brighter than sunniest day that ever shone,
In happy dreams your smile makes day of night.

Thus only in a dream we are at one,
Thus only in a dream we give and take
The faith that maketh rich who take or give;
If thus to sleep is sweeter than to wake,
To die were surely sweeter than to live,
Though there be nothing new beneath the sun.

Both chosen and read by Carolyn Ashford-Russell

The Spot Welder's Dream by Pam Ayres

I wish I was a pop star
Colourful and brash
With me ear'oles full of crotchets
And me wallet full of cash.

To 'ide me bit of acne
I'll stick sequins on me face
Then I can do the vocals
And you can do the base – *yeah*.

I can do the vocals
But to whip 'em to a frenzy
Sea'ed at the organ
We'll have rockin' Burt Mackenzie.

Now Burt's a lovely mover
But 'e tends to be a dunce
W'en 'es winkin at the boppers
'e shuts both eyes at once!

I'll get a Cossack shirt - split to the waist
In peacock red
So me face will get 'em goin'
And me chest will knock 'em dead.

I'll wave me great, long legs abowt
An wrap 'em round the mike
I 'ad a practice Sa'erday
But I fell off me bike.

I'll get meself an agent
An' a manager an all
A bloke to drive the minibus
An' one to book the 'all.

A musical arranger
An' a private record plugger
So when we're in the charts
Well we shall all feel that much smugger.

An' when we're doin' a stand
I'll come up quiet to the mike
I'll stick me pelvis out
An' say "Right Owwn" - Suggestive like!

I'll drive the women crazy
They'll be in such a state
And they'll scratch each other's eyes out
Once I've 'ad me teeth put straight!

Farewell Cradley 'eath
We're owt upon the road to fame
Farewell factory gates
We're gonna be a 'ouse'old name.

Good riddance weldin' shop
And factory 'ooter ev'ry morn
For it's me and Burt Mackenzie
A superstar is born!

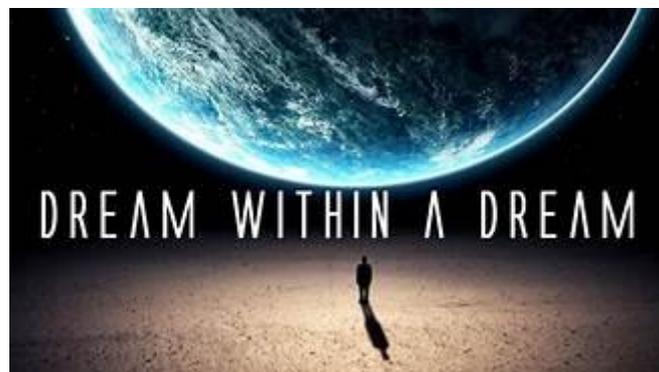
Chosen and read by Sue Hearn

***A Dream Within a Dream* by Edgar Allan Poe**

Take this kiss upon the brow!
And, in parting from you now,
Thus much let me avow —
You are not wrong, who deem
That my days have been a dream;
Yet if hope has flown away
In a night, or in a day,
In a vision, or in none,
Is it therefore the less gone?
All that we see or seem
Is but a dream within a dream.

I stand amid the roar
Of a surf-tormented shore,
And I hold within my hand
Grains of the golden sand —
How few! yet how they creep
Through my fingers to the deep,
While I weep — while I weep!
O God! Can I not grasp
Them with a tighter clasp?
O God! can I not save
One from the pitiless wave?
Is all that we see or seem
But a dream within a dream?

Chosen and read by Simon Surtees



What by Owen O'Neill

I felt it go

Struggle through a dream and drift away. Awake now, not quite knowing what had gone, what I'd lost. Empty all day.

Empty and sad without a death to blame. Wanting something back, I kept repeating my name, over and over. Maybe I'm insane.

The next night

I could feel it coming back, it hung around in the darkness like an argument waiting to be settled. I waited.

Then it spoke

'I was willing' it said in a familiar voice. 'I was tired of being willing in weak flesh'. What do you want me to do? I asked.

'I'm willing to give you another chance' it said. I wasn't sure what it was that I didn't want to lose

So I said thanks. And whatever it was...came back.

Chosen and read by Shelagh Allsop