

Openings 23

The Poetry Society of the Open University



An anthology of poems by
Open University Poets

2006

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Annual Anthology of

OU Poets

2006

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Introduction

OU Poets is the Poetry Society of the Open University, it is open to any student or staff member, past or present. At the time of going to press there are about 120 members from all over the UK, with some in Ireland and in mainland Europe.

Members of the society submit poems to a magazine, which is produced 5 times a year, each one having a different voluntary editor. The magazine is not a publication per se and is strictly produced by the members for the members. There is a section for comment and criticism of members' work.

At the end of the year, members are asked to vote for the 20 poems they most appreciated from the 5 magazines produced that year. Those with the most votes, allowing for no more than one poem per poet, appear in the following year's issue of Openings. The anthology is as broad-based as the society itself and reflects the varied backgrounds, interests and tastes of the members.

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Stacey Lane

Seagulls

In the watch of middle night
Across my square of window
Gulls drift over the silk dark sky,
Or race on anxious wings
From plane to plane, their forms
Ignited, fluorescent, gold above the sea-front lights.

In the wheeling figures of their flight
Wings flick the air in fine control
As if a captain murmured "Steady - - Steady - -
Left down a bit."
Only the raucous summons
Shows purposeful intent
While beady eyes scan the decks below.

Later when the day has broken,
The boats beached and the men gone home,
Far-off gulls on spreading pinions hang on updraughts
And survey the wide wild sea,
Still hungry, still alert, now dark against
The dull white sky.

My thoughts, like them, wheel, drift and skim
Back and forth in dropping levels
To a place within.
I catch their comments on the gusty air,
Cherished in the silent hour.

Jim Lindop

Owls

hush down the bat-stippled dusk
and scar the hesitant night
with throated slashes of hard intent:

in days of soft rain, they judge
the symbolism of arranged
pellets, catalogued on the earth:

insomniacs, they sweep day
hours with eyes rippled by ghosts
of the woodlands and the fields:

starkly on the qui-vive, they
tap-dance their impatience
with summer days' unemployment:

and in the hard long winter
patrols, they pause to carol
their other-worldly litanies.

Evelyn Leite

Interlude

I came upon you as you walked
over the adagio notes
of the clarinet, lost sight
of you in the shadow lines
but heard each step you took
in the gently pounding rhythm
of the canon strings.

You stopped at the nocturne.

I watched the way your thoughts
slipped over the leaves, how
you drank in the soloist
like ivory, tinkling bubbles
emptying into the silent
space in my heart.

Judith Thomas

The Game Cook

Rear it, shoot it,
hang and pluck it,
let it get quite high.
Empty barley from its crop,
from its flesh pick out the shot,
almost ready for the pot,
lay the giblets by.

Singe it, stuff it,
baste and paste it,
marinade in wine.
Set the innards on to boil,
heat some virgin olive oil,
wrap the bird in silver foil,
then set the cooking time.

Peel and slice,
pare and dice
organic garden crops.
Find cranberries, make bacon rolls,
(remember the profiteroles),
adjust the oven's self-controls;
Then feast! This beats the shops.

Lem Ibbotson

L' apres-midi

When you get old you're supposed to get wise
It makes up for rheumatic pains in your thighs
But I suffer both ways, I reckon it's mean
'Cos my body is old but my mind is eighteen.

When I was young I was foolish and rash
Chasing the women and spending my cash
And now that I'm old I don't have to recall
'Cos I'm sorry to tell you I've not changed at all.

I haven't a notion what makes me this way
It must be my genes - that's what some people say
I'm sure that it's lovely to end your life tastefully
But I've got no choice but to grow old disgracefully

Alistair Scott

Repairing a roof

Up on the shed-roof, clearing off
a felted mass of needles,
twigs and cones dropped by an overhanging
Douglas pine, I find a wound-
four shattered tiles beneath the matted pelt.

I guess it happened long ago
in some forgotten storm when,
goaded by the wind, the tree lashed out
in fury, branches thrashing,
striking anything within its wooden reach.

The wound must be repaired to stop
the rot already showing in the beams below.
I climb out on a crawling board to clean the fracture,
pick out fragments, ease up tiles that,
over years, have bedded down together, tight.

I slide four new ones into place. They are the same
and yet, no matter how I fit them,
they will not lie flat. They grate against the older tiles
their nubs and imperfections fresh and raw.
My work stands out, a livid lump, a scar.

I work till I can do no more. The wound still shows. It's time
for rain and frost and snow to take their turn.
The tiles will chafe beneath their strokes, and gently groan
on star-lit nights, and bleach to ochre in the sun,
until, at last, they settle and the scar will disappear.

Helen Harvey

Changing Beds

Spring: warnings of change.
Weak sun awakes perennial blossom -
Until squally showers
Scatter their small offerings
On cold ground.
The sun, from habit, returns.

Jealous-scented summer.
Heat beats down, intense,
Spiked with thunder,
Battering rain;
Scarlet blooms gape
A brighter, sweeter honey.

Autumn cankered leaves.
Divorcing sun sucks in the night.
Sharp frosts bruise, blacken,
Lay bare the marriage bed.
Petals droop and drop.

Winter's chill.
Iron skies cry
Over barren branches, rotting roots.
And the sun gives its warmth
To a more exotic place.

EILEEN WARD

UNDER THE PIER

Dark waters under the pier
swirl around the pillars,
sucking, lapping as ever restless sea
advances, retreats.
Red and yellow fairy lights from above
are reflected in the oily blackness.
Where the current is strongest,
a piece of driftwood is tossed back and forth.
Holiday-makers and day-trippers,
long gone;
fairground rides silent, still;
hot dog stalls and ice-cream kiosks,
closed, shuttered.

All is quiet.
Even the ever hungry gulls,
heads under wings, sleep.
Save for my feet on shingle,
the only sound, the insistent hiss
of waves on stony shore.
The moon emerges from behind a cloud
revealing a lone figure above the shoreline,
the tip of his cigarette glowing.
As dark clouds shift,
more bodies appear, in vain attempting
to find shelter from cold night air,
under and around the pier.

A scuffle breaks out between
two bundles of rags,
their incoherent shouts
shattering the peace
but just as suddenly, the noise subsides.
I trip over what I take for a log.
It grunts and swears.
Someone cries out in their sleep;
A voice calls to me, "got a fag mate?"
I walk faster,
my nocturnal wanderings at an end
hurrying back towards the warmth
and comfort of my five star hotel.

Katherine Rawlings

Waterlogged

My words smell of rain,
Humid rain.
Syllables, diphthongs,
consonants, vowels,
spatter from the page up
and through the corniced
ceiling. Roof tiles shatter.
Words permeate, irradiate
the stone tiled floor.
Rugs sweat words.
They soak through my toes,
rise in my bones, my lungs,
my heart. My fingers clog.
My pen's bogged.
It swells and glows
the alphabet pulsating
through my optic nerve.
Words a tidal surf
pool and disperse;
fertilise the print milled forest.

David Gildner

Summer Solstice

At sunrise ghosts
of ancient holy men return
like early morning mist settling
in shallow hollows across the Plain,
swirling around the Stones
and seeping into the bones
of the curious who come to watch
fools dressed in white robes
playing games of some imagined mystic magic
without really believing without really knowing.

J. A. Bosworth

G. M. Hopkins.

(1844 -1889)

Ah!. Secret singer in your self-wrought cage
Of mystical constraints, who only sang
When nobody could hear your instressed song.
Your heart broke young to know of beauty moiled,
Soiled and despoiled by human frailties.
Were you afraid that God's created works
Could so beguile your hot, outridden faith
As to seduce you from His Self and Son,
So must be railed round by ascetic rules
And abstinence?. Yet, inwardly, you knew
Such scapes could not be hid, denied, dismissed
By conscious effort of an honest mind;
And so you sang your secret rhapsodies of praise
Behind brain-tempered bars which bound your drab, dull days

Barbara Cumbers

On reading "Counterpoint" by R S Thomas

Your god was silent and you heard him;
he was a shape of mist and you saw him
beckoning you over the precipice of reason.

Like churches drowned in reservoirs
whose bells still sound for those
with ears to hear, the voice of your god rang

in the slow patience of the hills, in the murmurs
of grass and bog and the solipsism of sheep,
the song of a plough in the valley.

You looked at yourself and called god
into your reflection, warming truth's frost
with the strength of your faith.

What have you found on the other side
of darkness, if not the nothing that I expect?
It can only be more mysteries.

Your questioning remains, reaching out
to me with the certainty that
knowing all the arguments, you still believed.

Jenny Hamlett

Hands

My hands are my history -
this chart of invisible wrecks
beneath an oil coloured sea.

Fingers that won't lie flat on tabletop or floor.
Why can't you cartwheel? Other children asked,
doing handstands against gym walls.

Harangued by the doctor
for dropping me, Mum said,
She was born with bent fingers,

Simple hands, a small red knob
where I sucked my thumb.
Don't! You'll get stuck like it! Mum moaned.

Growing up fast when my pony was hooked
on a barbed wire fence
in a field of uncaring buttercups.

Now my wrinkled skin is like
well polished leather boots
or cleaning tack on Sunday afternoons.

My nails are brittle and short.
The one, shut in a car door
when Mum was dying, won't heal at all.

I grow older. Splits and cracks come.
I worry for my son's dear finger's that shake
as he pours coffee or butters bread.

I am thankful only for this. The lines on my hands
are criss-crossed and complex. I have no gift.
If the future lies in my palm, I cannot read it.

Anthony Stainer

STONES

Are not dead.

They rattle and groan,
When attacked, by water
Mostly.

They crack and moan,
When excited by
Frost or snow -
Mostly.

And they run before
Gales on the shore.
No. They are not dead.
Stones.

Rattling, groaning,
Snapping like turtles,
Some look like turtles,
But they reshape themselves

Forever - into dust. While cracking
And moaning Stones adapt
Themselves, have colour
They move and shimmer.

Stones aren't dead.
Just hard. And they
Live. So, Edgar Allan Poe
What did he know?

Daphne Phillips

Mondrian

A fraction of the cosmic map;
Inanimate fraction, presumably.
But if it were animate,
A man, say,
What kind of man might it be?

So much red.
An ambushed adulterer
A preacher with fire in his belly
A bloodied soldier, perhaps?

The paucity of yellow is re-assuring.
Little cowardice
Little jaundice.

And that engaging square of blue;
A window into his mind?
I like the conceit
That some-one calm and collected
Might be plotting his escape
From between the black straight-and-narrows.

But I lament
The total absence of green.
Never trust a man
With no green thoughts;
He lacks soul.

Steve Horsfall

I've Been to a Party with Noel Coward

I've been to a *marvellous* party!
The Archbishop was there, dressed as Edith Piaff.
The Bishop of Wrekin - who calls his Archdeacon
"The crook at the head of my staff" -
Donned leather and manacles instead of canonicals
Which gave everyone, save his wife, a good laugh.
A large lady rector commandeered the projector
And showed slides of herself and her large lady friend:
The slides were quite daring, for what they'd been wearing
Had disappeared long before they reached an end.
What they did with the salad was risky, if clever,
Though frankly they put me off courgettes for ever -
But we cheered to the echo their madcap endeavour
(Apart from a grim fundamentalist bore):
I *couldn't* have liked it more!

Jan Green

THE SEVEN AGES OF BUCKET

Raw minerals smelted
down, poured from
furnace, flattened by
rollers, cut by jigsaw
and welded into shape.
I am a bucket.

Milk hisses my
depths, emptied into
churns. My surface
scoured, rinsed and
dried. Shining clean
awaiting the next time.

Dented by a flying hoof.
frothy suds now soak and
clean the nappies under
my shining lid.

Rust is seeping through
the dent, I now hold scraps
to feed the squawking hens.

Winter's here - I carry
fuel. The shocked father's,
startled when the midwife
says, "There's two", and coal
arcs over the bed.

My base is loose, sunk
to my rim deep in the soil.
I stop the roots of voracious
mint swamping other plants.

My structure's rotting,
ashes to ashes,
rust to rust,
returning to iron and
carbon - my time is done.

Joy Sarah Buchanan

Another road not taken

I don't think he ever said my name
He didn't come to stay
He came to see if flowers
Were growing down this way.
He came because he wondered
What he might have to do
To live beneath a willow tree
In beams of changing hue.

Perhaps I don't remember well
But I think he turned away
He felt the blooms were not for him
That blossomed here that day.
He wondered should he look elsewhere
Look in another glade
Breathe a fresher, lighter air
Or seek a different shade.

Perhaps I never said his name
Nor called him back to stay
Perhaps I didn't give him
Enough flowers to pave his way.
I guess that I just wondered
What I might have to do
To cultivate a garden
With room enough for two.

Roy Rowe

DUO

He attacked with passion below the stubble
on his chin. Then more languorous strokes
somewhat closer to the bridge.

He'd always practiced early in the day.
Sometimes drove his mother to despair.
His dad explained he had to do his roadwork
to keep himself in trim.
An analogy quite lost on her.

First spikey Bartok to shake himself awake.
Then sweet Mozart to prepare him for the day.
He'd known a cellist once who could not start
his day without a dose of Bach.
But counterpoint had never been his strength.

Now in despair he threw his bow upon the floor.
Stopped; thought; then placed his fiddle
most carefully in its case.
She'd left. The split complete.
Perhaps better so. Though something tugged.

The partnership had promised much at first.
He said her fingering was most precise. Though
she thought his bow owed more to head than heart.
Perhaps both were mere readers of the text.
That said; it was her rigid adherence to the score
that lay at odds with his less stiff approach.
As soloists they'd had a certain force.
But together their tempi all along was wrong.

Merryn Williams

SURFING

Some people drop into a sly black hole.
I surf the net, see young good-looking men
I knew years back, now bald and gross, and some
others there were, I can't track down at all.

Some names are quite unusual; though I spell
them right, there's no response; they're either dead,
or stunned by beer and pills, or lost abroad;
and some I've quite forgotten. Just as well.

I count them out, those who were young with me.
There's the night sky, now slowly turning grey,
some few bright stars still burn at break of day;
behind them, multitudes which you can't see.

I type my own name in the flattened square;
eleven thousand references appear.

G. J. Pledger

The family's decided

The family's decided to take me in hand.
No more hoarding or storing and slipshod ways.
Receipts must be numbered and invoices filed
And monies, if any! Put in the bank.
Anything surplus to charities wend
Books must be sorted and similarly dispersed.
But there my obedience falters and stops.
No book goes anywhere, here they all stay.
I know I've read them again and again -
But they're Friends!
They never shout or stomp or dictate
But stand patiently peacefully waiting
To be devoured and entered again.
I've suddenly gone deaf and solid as stone
Completely immovable to Evil Intent.
Get rid of the furniture, the china, the house
But do not - I emphatically say
Get rid of my Books.

Pippa Deacon

A Valentine

I send my love a Valentine
to English oak from Finnish pine

Bare oak must wait for waking kiss
of sun which brings the Summer bliss

Green pine stands proud in Winter's snow
her Spring is coming slow, so slow

Mid-Winter is her glory time
when sleigh-bells jingle, church bells chime

While oak will sail the seven seas
and gales and storms will challenge his

strength and hardness, as it may
yet oak will win and reach his bay

When Equinox the stars will move
then oak and pine in dreamtime love

In dreamtime spells of Oberon
the holy Oak and Pine are one

Brian Turnbull

HURRICANE KATRINA

Katrina is coming like many a hurricane before it
Though unexpected is the fateful flooding
Mississippi and Pontchartrain pour into the
jasmined French Quarter of jazz city.
Levelled levees make a canal of Canal Street
New Orleans has become new Atlantis
Roof clingers scan for Chinooks
Dumped humanity endure the Superdome swamp
Hundreds die and the dead are left in the
American tsunami
Black babies cry out but nobody hears

The sweltering southerners are stateless
in the US of A
Cops walk out as Feds move in
to target looters not victims
This mad Mardi Gras catches dolphins,
pelicans, alligators and mosquitos in
its train
Crescent City on the fault line traps
Fats Domino - 'Ain't that a Shame'
Citizens below sea level have made disaster
The Big Easy
Oh for Tennessee William's streetcar as
the buses arrive days late
A flotilla of warships navigate floating bodies
In Louis Armstrong land they are left
with Blues Biloxi Bush who is a Johnny-come-lately
As usual the cavalry show up late
this time to cries of 'Thank you Jesus!'

Ann Alexander

When I saw his shoes

(grey, stained, bunion-bulgy,
wrinkled, shrinking, baggy, scraggy,
worn and wanting, once a must-have,
now a dusty kind),

I should have walked away.
But you always think you can polish a man.

Derek Blackburn

THE WHITE CART

I have stood on the Falls of Niagara
I have watched the Zambezi crash down
Yet the sweetest little river on this dear Earth
Is the White Cart in my hometown.

She tumbles through rapids at the White Bridge
Then over the falls at the Linn
Where her white water transforms,
Into liquid gold
Holding my history within.

Meandering along through parklands
To Snuff Mill Bridge and Cathcart
This little river is an artery
That feeds its love to my heart.

Under the old Snuff Mill Bridge
Where eons of time have passed by
Since I left her side decades ago
Now I stand here alone and I cry.

My childhood passes beneath me
Voices of schoolmates and fun
This little river is precious to me
The most beautiful under the sun.

I have stood at the falls of Niagara
I have watched the Zambezi crash down
But the sweetest little river on Gods good Earth
Is the White Cart in my, home town.

Rosa Thomas

Orfordville, Wisconsin

Yes, I remember Orfordville;
We stopped there,
Driving in from the bare
Flat, dun-coloured landscape.

Population, one thousand and nineteen.'
We read the sign;
The April afternoon was fine,
We looked for refreshment; a drink, an ice.

A handful of shops,
Their doors shut tight,
No shoppers in sight.
A glimpse of unexpectant keepers, sitting.

A railway ran through
The centre of town,
Wooden houses, dusty and brown
Lined the wide street.

A solitary woman hurried by,
Four children; a girl, three boys
Played without noise,
And no birds sang.

Hilary Mellon

JULY 7TH 2005

This morning
a hazy sun
birds on the roof
and an almost focused silence
broken suddenly by words
exploding from the radio ...

... and later
those same places
will resonate into history
their familiar names
repeated like a mantra
repeated like a litany

*Kings Cross -
Edgware Road -
Liverpool Street -
Tavistock Square -*

Colin Blundell

HERO

Our eyes collide and she posts me a smile,
a moonbeam so bright it dazzles the crowd.
I'm stood out majestic amongst rank and file
in my marvellous medalled state so proud.
A diamond glints in a sea of pebbles
slices the throng and draws her relentless
towards my magnet but instead it repels
and the smile arrives at mistaken address.
Pills and injections have stolen from me
but just for a second a hero again.
This hero's having delusional dreams
so please accept this as my mitigation
for the ferocity of the attack
and the fifty-five stab wounds in her back.

Peter Godfrey

The Art Festival

*Mrs Macawber uses her auger
Holding the wood of dead
Sycamore trees.
Holding the wood, as a good
Carpenter should,
Firmly between her knees.
Mrs Macawber making, to order,
Beautiful artefacts nobody uses:
Love-spoons and cat flaps,
Bookends and mousetraps.
White shavings and sawdust,
Ringlets of timber
Festoon her peroxide hair.
Mrs Macawber in woody disorder
Sawed up her husband.
But nobody knows.
The glows from the potter,
His kiln growing hotter,
From Mr Macawber's
Bones and his clothes,
Shows at the next
Table the glaze ware
He's able to fashion and throw.
Row after row.
Pauncefotte's Ceramics
Are made with a manic
Exuberance for clay.
There is grey dust in his whiskers
And even his blisters are*

*Hidden with slip, as his
Capable fingers deftly dip
His dishes and objects into the glaze
To amaze, every day, each afternoon
After the launch of the hot air balloon,
The visitors' cluster
Pauncefotte the Potter
Will show to the muster
The venerable art of throwing his clay.
Where's there's a wheel
There's always a way
To splatter the lady -
Fiona O'Grady - weaving her wool.
On a loom with every attachment.
She works with gracious detachment.
Rugs and bonnets, gentlemen's ties -
Even the thick cloth that covers her thighs
She wove that on Tuesday
And dyed it next night-
Almost a witch's spell binding rite.
Onions and beetroot, parsnip and swedes
Boiled in her bedroom with numerous weeds.
Fiona O'Grady wefting her wool
Wool she has plucked out of hedges
And fences, sheepishly garnered in case
She was seen.
Her dark hair a bobbing,
Her little sighs sobbing
For Nigel Norman Teazle
Erect behind his easel,
Daubing all the colours
Illustrating lovers
Throbbing in the undergrowth under a tree.
Part of the scene Nigel Norman's offering*

*His public and supporters
All their sons and daughters
Of country life in Leicestershire.
Old country men with stoops of beer,
Gossips at the village store
And pigs and cows and so much more.
Each framed in aluminium
At the bijou flat or condominium
Of Ms Tracey Bennington
Whose work is sold in Evington!
She presses flowers she garnered in the fields
Between thin sheets of glass
She cuts so skilfully herself
And stains the pieces too
With mustards, greens and blue
And ultra violet and infra red
Which of course you cannot see
Unless you are a bee or have six legs
And wings
Ms. Tracey Bennington also makes terrariums.
Small palaces of glass
She fills with moss and grass
And bark and small geraniums
And plants with spotty leaves
Which clients might believe
Are poisonous. So Tracey Bennington
Draws pretty little notices on cards
Saying they are not but water regularly
And keep away from children
Mums-to-be and persons
With weak hearts*

*Outside melody fills the village.
Sounds falling like pretty petals*

*Upon the Festival of Art and Craft.
While marvelling the visitors buy - perhaps
Then must depart towards the white marquee
To queue for cakes and scones and luke warm tea.
And as the evening cool
Blows round the tents
The artists hurry to the ladies
And the gents, then fill their cars
With pots and jars
And little bowls of wood,
Homespun beds for cats
Acrylic non-existent countrysides
And tiny gardens multiplied
Where fairies most certainly might hide.
The Festival is done.
The day is run
And all retire to dreams
Of next year's lovely schemes.
And play their humble part
To show the public Craft
And Art.*

Bronwen Vizard

THE SEVENTH DAY

No Holy Water stoup inside the door,
no painted frescoes decorate the walls.
The aisles are wide, processional for those
whose keen eyes scan the close packed laden shelves

No waft of incense but the subtle bloom
of leavened bread. New baked and crisp, it tempts
the appetite of those who also choose
red wine tight corked from Chile, Spain or France.

The trolleys fill with universal goods,
the food piled high and, for demanding kids
add coke and crisps and sugar snacks
to light each youthful face with heavenly bliss.

With three for two and promised golden points
falling through fingers like bright numbered beads,
tills echo bell-like as a club card's blest -
cash-flow unceasing - this god needs no rest.

Dennis Leckey

Moon sequel

Soft, then sudden firm sounds, the orchestra
tuned to the night. A rustling note. Moonbright chord. Hush.

The lights of peak and moor dimmed. Heather shivered.
Creatures stirred, watched our noisy shapes. Frozen in nosiness.

The sighs of moonbewildered life mingled with crescendos
of sorts felt in the swift stream, always swiftstrong.

A wilder chorus, a second falling of stream concentrated
in a moment's movement, grooving the moonlisten.

The voice of the moon's longlight sang a phrase,
grasping, peaking, operatic emotion cascading silence

mimed alone. Nature in awe, for a second, moontails, moonends,
then life returned to nightfinales, darksilent.

The moon peaks wilder, we left, forever. The light
to be never tasted. Hushed calm scenery. No curtain calls.

Beryl Myers

The Lizzie Lee

She loves the times when the tide runs high,
when the blood runs hot
under lead-heavy skies
as a threatening storm
slaps down with a whack
on the sea-smoothed rocks.

But best she loves the lows
on the slack of the tide
when the stench of the wrack overwhelms
and the sea lays bare
clustered mussels,
basalt black with barnacle warts.

Dave Etchell

The Seventh of August

Dark greys guard the eastward door of night
And pinks surround the sun in late repose
The wheat is cut and summer now at height
Confers its bounty where the warm wind blows.
My mood is satisfaction, all's fulfilled
The promise of the spring sees harvest home
The season's cycle, by great nature willed
In wooded temples where wild sprites still roam
For who would seek the fairy band with me
Know where wantons sometime of the night
Would dance down moonbeams innocent and free
See Puck bring mischief till the world grew light
 Alas midsummer's dreaming all is gone
 Yet midnight magic conjures Oberon.

Anne Allinson

PSALM

In the quietness of early morning
and in the peace of solitude,
let Thy presence overshadow me.

Thou, O Lord, hast given me the gift of poetry,
let me choose with care
the words in which I praise Thee
and the beauties of Thy creation.

May Thy love ever be my inspiration,
Thy greatness my strength and my hope.

When my footsteps falter,
help me to raise my standards
with the spur of self-criticism.

Let me be eager to learn from others
and always humbly to do Thy will.

In the night time watch over me
and bless my sleeping
that I may awake to new ideas
in the confidence of Thy love.

Stewart Earl Emmott

MINNOWS IN A LEAFY STREAM

Again and again
The minnows cruise the leafy stream
Intermingling like translucent dreams
Beneath the branching trees.

The scented meadowsweet
that grows in drifts upon the banks
Attracts the hoverflies -
whilst darting swallows, glossy bright
Catch insects in the light.

Sally James

My World.

When I was young, I could stride over bridges,
paddle in rivers. I was a giantess. My world
was so small, the universe pulsed in my palm.

I plucked stars from the night, played ball
with the moon, let the sun slip through my fingers,
scorch the earth where bluebells whisper.

Now I am old, I can dance with angels on a pin's head,
squeeze through the eye of a needle. My world
is so large I have become insignificant.

I have disappeared, evaporated into the night.
I am as silent as the mist that creeps across the moors.
My breath is in the wind, my heart in the earth.

Carol Baxter

The Fisherman

He used to bring fish to the office
To sell, Fleetwood-fresh
Fell off the back of a trawler
Probably

He'd take my hand and sing
'Salmon chanted evening'
Try to kiss me
Fat tentacles groping

He was fresh, like his cod
But no great catch
Gave a whole new meaning
To fish fingers

Miriam Patrick

Bolted Doors

You left me with an image
I have never lost;

an old man, on the threshold, gazing up
into the dreaming, star-specked arc of sky,
speaking for no one in this world to hear,
"Forgive me that I shut you out tonight, my dear."
And going in, he shuts and bolts the door,
leaving the stars to watch above her grave.

You left me with this image that I keep,
an icon and a memory of loss.
Words I have used to keep me whole
when it has been my turn to draw the bolt across.

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