

Hard to find – Sinesipo Jojo

Words are everywhere

daily

we read them, and they fly out

like nobody's business when we are provoked . . .

but there's always something hard to understand . . .

they are hard to find

when they are needed by the heart;

when the heart feels,

words hide like they are not part of life.

While words are busy playing some twisted game

my heart looks sadly through the glass windows

as the raindrops slowly slide down, gently

on a cloudy lifetime,

hoping that one day,

words will realize what my heart wants to say.

On the grasshopper and cricket – John Keats

The poetry of earth is never dead:

When all the birds are faint with the hot sun,
And hide in cooling trees, a voice will run
From hedge to hedge about the new-mown mead;
That is the Grasshopper's—he takes the lead
In summer luxury,—he has never done
With his delights; for when tired out with fun
He rests at ease beneath some pleasant weed.

The poetry of earth is ceasing never:

On a lone winter evening, when the frost
Has wrought a silence, from the stove there shrills
The Cricket's song, in warmth increasing ever,
And seems to one in drowsiness half lost,
The Grasshopper's among some grassy hills.

Sonnet 73 – William Shakespeare

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou seest the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
In me thou seest the glowing of such fire
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the deathbed whereon it must expire,
Consumed with that which it was nourished by.
This thou perceiv'st, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

Reciprocities – Cathal Lagan

for my mother

She gave me skeins of wool
To hold out (like a priest at Mass),
With stern rubrics not to fidget, while she
Wound it into a ball, unwinding me,
Unravelling my hands and arms, checking
My lapses with a gentle tug
When I wandered off through images
Her chat had made, for though
She kept the line between us as taut
She kept my heart at ease with all her talk.

And when her ball compacted grew,
And my few strands fell limp away,
I knew there was no loss, for she
Would knit it back again to fit me perfectly.

But richer still,
I see today these lines are drawn out from me
To knit through this faltering verse
A thread of memory
Time has pulled away from consciousness.

What life is really like – Beverly Rycroft

You need to toughen up
my father would complain
when I was small
I ought to take you to see
chickens having their heads
chopped off.
That'd teach you
*what life is **really** like.*

He'd seek me out
when one of his pigeons
– crazed for home or
mad with terror from a
roaming hawk –
would tumble into
the loft
mutilated by
wire or beak.

I was the one made to
clench my palms round
its pumping chest,
to keep it still while
my father's hairy fingers stitched
its garrotted throat
angrily to rights again.

You see life is a fight for survival
he'd shout, forgetting
he was not lecturing his students
or giving his inaugural address

You gotta roll with the punches.

i waited and waited for that bitter
roughness to spy me and circle
in to land
 years and years
of flinching anticipation until
the day i came home from hospital

and my father dressed my wound.

Easing with practiced hands
the drip from my bulldozed chest
he renewed the plaster in breathing silence
never speaking never
once saying

Life's a bastard

Toughen Up.

You laughed and laughed and laughed – Gabriel Okara

In your ears my song
is motor car misfiring
stopping with a choking cough;
and you laughed and laughed and laughed.

In your eyes my ante
natal walk was inhuman, passing
your 'omnivorous understanding'
and you laughed and laughed and laughed.

You laughed at my song,
you laughed at my walk.

Then I danced my magic dance
to the rhythm of talking drums pleading,
but you shut your eyes
and you laughed and laughed and laughed.

And then I opened my mystic
inside wide like
the sky, instead you entered your
car and laughed and laughed and laughed.

You laughed at my dance,
you laughed at my inside.

You laughed and laughed and laughed,
But your laughter was ice-block
laughter and it froze your inside froze
your voice froze your ears
froze your eyes and froze your tongue.

And now it's my turn to laugh;
but my laughter is not
ice-block laughter. For I
know not cars, know not ice-blocks.

My laughter is the fire
of the eye of the sky, the fire
of the earth, the fire of the air,
the fire of the seas and the
rivers fishes animals trees
and it thawed your voice, thawed your
ears, thawed your eyes and
thawed your tongue.

So a meek wonder held
your shadow and you whispered:
'Why so?'
And I answered:
'Because my fathers and I
are owned by the living
warmth of the earth
through our naked feet.'

The lake isle of Innisfree – William Butler Yeats

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

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

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

The slave dealer – Thomas Pringle

From ocean's wave a Wanderer came,
 With visage tanned and dun:
His Mother, when he told his name,
 Scarce knew her long-lost son;
So altered was his face and frame
 By the ill course he had run.

There was hot fever in his blood,
 And dark thoughts in his brain;
And oh! to turn his heart to good
 That Mother strove in vain,
For fierce and fearful was his mood,
Racked by remorse and pain.

And if, at times, a gleam more mild
 Would o'er his features stray,
When knelt the Widow near her Child,
 And he tried with her to pray,
It lasted not – for visions wild
 Still scared good thoughts away.

'There's blood upon my hands!' he said,
 'Which water cannot wash;
It was not shed where warriors bled –
 It dropped from the gory lash,
As I whirled it o'er and o'er my head,
 And with each stroke left a gash.

'With every stroke I left a gash,
 While Negro blood sprang high;
And now all ocean cannot wash

My soul from murder's dye;
Nor e'en thy prayer, dear Mother, quash
That Woman's wild death cry!

'Her cry is ever in my ear,
And it will not let me pray;
Her look I see – her voice I hear –
As when in death she lay,
And said, "With me thou must appear
On God's great Judgement-day!"'

'Now, Christ from frenzy keep my son!
The woeful Widow cried;
'Such murder foul thou ne'er hast done –
Some fiend thy soul belied!' –
'– Nay, Mother! the Avenging One
Was witness when she died!

'The writhing wretch with furious heel
I crushed – no mortal nigh;
But that same hour her dread appeal
Was registered on high;
And now with God I have to deal,
And dare not meet His eye!'

Inversnaid – 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.

The night-jar and Inkosazana Yasezulwini – Chris Mann

The Princess of the Heavens – Zulu

The speckled bird as brown as dust
which roosts inside a bush by day,
hiding its head against the glare,
at midnight pecked against the pane,
and gently pecked, until I saw
the starlight glitter through its beak.

On calm and tender summer nights,
when fishes bite the wobbling moon,
and moths rise to silvery fruit
sprinkling the space among the boughs,
it wakes and glides from sill to sill
across the worn-out, curtained town.

It shook the sandman from my sight,
and when the tar-bound slope had turned
to bush and rocky hill it said,
'There is a grass-house in the hills,
above the coast where sugar spumes,
and lilies sprout, and no storms fly.

'There, the Princess of the Heavens,
beside her dark as honey feet,
gathers up the dreams which reach her
and stooping to her woven pots
rinses them in the rainbow water,
or stores them with the morning mist.

'Go, waking sleeper, call to her,
and wading through the icy stream
in which the golden pebbles shine,
ask her if her power is love,
for she is old as she is young,
and without her, no one dreams.'

She leaned against a leafless tree
on which a crown of crimson burned,
and then the hill began to dim,
and standing in the greying rocks,
I heard the nightjar fade, from sill
to sill, across the windowed town.