

**Poetry Group Report June 2022 by Annie Clouston
Female 20th Century Poets**

This month our members chose from a number of well-known and lesser known poets. From the bold *Life Doesn't Frighten Me* by Maya Angelou, the brazen celebration of disinhibition in mature years of *Warning* by Jenny Joseph (you know the one that begins "When I am an old woman I shall wear purple...") to the very poignant; *Names* by Wendy Cope, chosen by two members, and *Not Waving but Drowning* by Stevie Smith. There were also some very funny ones: *Please Can I have a Man* by Selima Hill and *Kindness to Animals and Loss* –

The day he moved out was terrible – that evening she went through hell
His absence wasn't a problem, but the corkscrew had gone as well.

by Wendy Cope.

Two very memorable and beautiful poems by little known (to the group at any rate) poets were *The Stone Skimmer* and *The Tigress* by Ruth Pitter, who was the first woman to win the Queen's Prize for Poetry. There were also two poems by the ever enigmatic and tragic Sylvia Plath, *Cinderella* and *Morning Song*, and an unsettling offering by Carol Ann Duffy, *Warming Her Pearls*.

Next month our theme is 21st Century Poems, and following that Scottish Poetry.

Please Can I Have a Man by Selima Hill

Please can I have a man who wears corduroy.
Please can I have a man
who knows the names of 100 different roses;
who doesn't mind my absent-minded rabbits
wandering in and out
as if they own the place,
who makes me creamy curries from fresh lemon-grass,
who walks like Belmondo in *A Bout de Souffle*;
who sticks all my carefully-selected postcards –
sent from exotic cities
he doesn't expect to come with me to,
but would if I asked, which I will do –
with nobody else's, up on his bedroom wall,
starting with Ivy, the Famous Diving Pig,
whose picture, in action, I bought ten copies of;
who talks like Belmondo too, with lips as smooth
and tightly-packed as chocolate-coated
(melting chocolate) peony buds;
who knows that piling himself stubbornly on top of me

like a duvet stuffed with library books and shopping-bags

is all too easy: please can I have a man

who is not prepared to do that.

Who is not prepared to say I'm 'pretty' either.

Who, when I come trotting in from the bathroom

like a squealing freshly-scrubbed piglet

that likes nothing better than a binge

of being affectionate and undisciplined and uncomplicated,

opens his arms like a trough for me to dive into.