

Poetry Group September Report by Elizabeth Long

Our theme was Scottish poets, an interesting mixture of Scottish themed poems and the more personal poetry by Scottish writers. We began with a poem, '*Poetry Forum*', by Helena Nelson looking at the place poetry occupies in our society:

'It's for weddings
and funerals
and reading on the train
and for taking a person out of herself
and bringing her back more sane'

just some of the lines which led to a discussion on what poetry does mean to us all. Further into our session we read '*Poetry*' by Don Paterson, a reflection on poetry and love.

A sonnet chosen to reflect the news of the Queen's death, '*Flowers of Sion*' by the 17th century poet, William Drummond, was poignant and timely:

' Look how the flower which ling'ringly doth fade.
The morning's darling late, the summer's queen,
.
Thy sun posts westward, passed is thy morn,
And twice it is not given thee to be born'

Two poems about Glasgow by Edwin Morgan, one written in 1972 and the other in 1968 portrayed very different aspects of Glasgow life. Morgan was appointed Makar (the Scottish poet laureate) in 2004. For some of us, the two poems evoked memories of Glasgow as it used to be and how parts of it became 'gentrified' in relatively recent times.

We also heard from Jackie Kay (another Makar) whose poem, '*Sound of Sleat*' reflected ideas of conflicting cultures and identity from her own personal experience as well as a Scotland that has seen people dispersed to different countries and having to adapt. Carrying on the theme of poems by Makars, Liz Lochhead's poem '*View of Scotland / Love Poem*' was both a homage to her mother and yet another view of Scotland, this time an account of Hogmanay.

Trying to understand '*To Porridge*' by WN Herbert did prove challenging, even to those Scots among us, but we got the gist of it. The first two lines set the tone:

'Captain of oats, braw brose, fine gruel,
you are thi Scotsman's constant fuel'

We finished the session with two beautiful poems by John Burnside, '*Of Gravity and Light (lighthouse)*' and '*The Gravity Chair (for Sarah)*'. The first about a father and son standing on a pier and the second reflecting on old age.

The variety of poems on offer gave us much to discuss and reflect on and proved to be an excellent choice of themes.