

Poetry Group Report October 2023 by Annie Clouston

The theme for this month was **Loss**. A great stimulant for poets and a great refuge for the sorrowing and down-hearted. Indeed, we began our meeting with a recording of the magnificent Roy Bailey singing **The Joy of Living** – find it here:

<https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=roy+bailey+the+joy+of+living+you+tube&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:dec165bd,vid:0jwuqoF6QX0,st:0>

I defy you to keep a dry eye. We were all very moved, the words reminding us of those we have loved and lost. **Nothing is lost** by Anne Barbara Ridler continued that comfort can be found in memories:

Nothing dies.
The cells pass on their secrets, we betray them
Unknowingly: in a freckle, in the way
We walk, recall some ancestor,
And Adam in the colour of our eyes.

Schubert's song cycle **Winterreise** (Winter Journey) with words by Wilhelm Muller found us again listening to haunting music – find it here:

<https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=Good+night+Winterreise&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8#fpstate=ive&vld=cid:68b64fcf,vid:-poo-hBtI2E,st:0>

Not all was gloom – an injection of ironic humour from Elizabeth Bishop in **One Art** brought some light relief, and not a little recognition of the human capacity (mine) to waste vast amounts of time looking for lost things (I must be St Anthony's greatest disciple):

The art of losing isn't hard to master;
so many things seemed filled with the intent
to be lost that their loss is no disaster

Lose something every day. Accept the fluster
Of lost door keys, the hour badly spent.
The art of losing isn't hard to master.

We also considered Simon Armitage's poetry emerging from his recent visit to the Arctic, in particular, **The Summit**, in which he confronts the environmental catastrophe unfolding. It ends:

When I met the glacier face to face
there was no close encounter
of ancient snow and body heat
just weepy clouds and a washy sky
hanging upside down
in a zinc-coloured lake, and the eyes
staring out of the water were mine.

Simon Armitage's **Poet Laureate in the Arctic** is available on BBC Sounds.

To counteract this predominately melancholic session – and the lessening light and the onslaught of winter - we unanimously agreed that we would be searching for **Joy** in our next month's meeting.