

CHRISTMAS POETRY AND BOOK GROUP

Report by Annie Clouston

In December we met as a combined group for our annual books and poems of the year. Favourite books were: *A month in the country* by J L Carr, *Mothering Sunday* by Graham Swift, *Small Things Like These* by Claire Keegan (all these have been made into excellent films), *Still Life* by Sarah Winman, *The Summer Book*, by Tove Jannsen, *Half of a Yellow Sun* by Chimamanda Ngozi Adiche (catch her excellent TED talk *We should all be feminists* on YouTube), *A Gentleman in Moscow* by Amor Towles, *Taking the Lead* by John Crace, *Silk Roads* by Peter Frankopan, *Black and British* by David Olusoga – these last two books are non-fiction.

Fewer poems were declared favourites of the year: *Refugees* by Brian Bilston an amazing poem to be read forwards then backwards to represent alternative ways of seeing https://www.up.edu/garaventa/files/fildg_files/refugees.pdf, *What Goes Unsaid* by Denise Leverton, and the magnificent seasonal poem *The Darkling Thrush* by Thomas Hardy, written at the turn of a new century (1900)...

An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small/
In blast-beruffled plume/Had chosen thus to
fling his soul / Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carolings/ Of such ecstatic sound/ Was written on terrestrial things/
Afar or nigh around,/ That I could think there trembled through/ His happy good-night
air/ Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew/ And I was unaware.

Very topical, let's hope the thrushes keep carolling.