

Poetry Group February 2025

Report by Elizabeth Long

Our theme this month was 'Praise', which provided a wide range of poetry from the humorous to the elegiac and/or religious.

We began the session with our own local poet, Meg Peacocke's, 'In praise of Aunts'. A nostalgic poem, evoking memories of a bygone age when Aunts, very often not actual relatives but single, childless, friends of parent, could be a large part of a child's life.

"I conjure Aunts, sly laughers,
Aunts not of the blood
but of the spirit;"

A more reflective piece followed, 'Salvation' by Denise Levertov about a river, once underground being uncovered within a city. We discussed how many of our streams and waterways in cities were covered up, e.g. Fleet Street in London and how uncovering them brought a little piece of nature back to life.

A very interesting, part of a longer poem, by Christopher Smart (1722-1771) followed. '*Jubilate Agno*' is thought to have been written when the poet was in a lunatic asylum. The poem has a religious theme with every line starting with 'For' and refers to the poet's cat and his relationship with God.

'Juke Box Love Songs' by Langston Hughes, one of my personal favourites, painted an evocative picture of Harlem with lines such as 'Take the neon lights and make a crown,'.

The next choice was a poem by one of our group, 'To Herbert Von Karajan'. His politics in pre-war Germany may have been suspect but as a conductor of music, he can transport us with his skill.

'But when I hear your Brahms
The dark sound touches my spirit,
Foreshadowing bliss.'

A simple poem extolling the beauty of 'Snowdrops, by Teresa Hooley was followed by the famous Sonnet from the Portuguese by Elizabeth Barrett Browning. 'How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.'

'Praise of a Collie' by the Scottish poet, Norman McCaig listed the attributes of a small collie dog and its skill in rounding sheep. We then listened to, 'Ode to Dirt' by Sharon Old, asking dirt for forgiveness for overlooking such an important part of nature.

We finished with 'Everything is Going to be All Right' by Derek Mahon, reminding us that no matter what is happening in the world or around us, we can look at the sunrise and be impressed.

'I lie here in a riot of sunlight
watching the daybreak and the clouds flying
Everything is going to be all right.'

Our next meeting is on 9th April when the theme is 'Childhood'.