

July 2025 Poetry Report

Once again we were given a warm welcome at Annie's house, this time to share and discuss poetry about journeys.

The poems ranged from Victorian 'nonsense' to profound twentieth century spiritual explorations. There was very little description of physical journeys. The poets we looked at were much more concerned with exploring emotional terrain.

We started with C P Cavafy who got us off to a classical start with 'Ithaca' in which, based on Odysseus' return from Troy, he explores what makes a fulfilling journey.

Next was 'Roads Go Ever On' by JRR Tolkien. Bilbo sings of his homecoming:

'Eyes that fire and sword have seen,
And horror in the halls of stone
Look at last on meadows green,
And trees and hills they long have known'.

Edward Lear's whimsical 'The Owl and the Pussy-Cat' entertained us before we got down to serious stuff with 'Pilgrimages' by R S Thomas.

Thomas searches for God in the footsteps of previous pilgrims on a visit to an island off the coast of Wales:

'Were they too late also, those
First pilgrims? He is such a fast
God, always before us and
leaving as we arrive'.

We then moved to the distinctly bleak with Wilhelm Muller's words set to music by Schubert in 'Winterreise' (Winter Journey) where the traveller sings 'Now the world is wretched, the path veiled in snow'. In 'For the Traveller' John O'Donohue is much more encouraging:

'Every time you leave home,
Another road takes you
Into a world you were never in'.

Finally we went on an intellectual and aesthetic journey of discovery with John Keats 'On First Looking into Chapman's Homer' where Keats is able to read the Greek poet in English for the first time:

'Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
That deep-browed Homer ruled as his demesne;
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold'.

Terry Whitfield