

November Poetry Group Report Annie Clouston

November's theme was People which enabled members to choose from a wide range of poems. My personal favourite was RSThomas' brilliantly evocative ***A Peasant***. Thomas, a man who was steeped in his Welsh heritage, with obvious affection describes

...your prototype, who, season by season
Against siege of rain and the wind's attrition,
Preserves his stock, an impregnable fortress
Not to be stormed, even in death's confusion.
Remember him, then, for he, too, is winner of wars,
Enduring like a tree under the curious stars.

In a somewhat similar way Patrick Kavanagh, in ***My father played the melodeon***, a poem from his collection ***A Christmas Childhood***, evokes his childhood memory of his family's peasant-like life in rural Ireland.

Outside in the cow-house my mother
Made the music of milking.
The light of the stable-lamp was a star
And the frost of Bethlehem made it twinkle.

Everyone sang by Siegfried Sassoon is a reminder of how singing particularly in concert with others can lift the gloomiest spirit (for such was Sassoon's, for whom the experience of WWI had a devastating impact)

Everyone's voice was suddenly lifted;
And beauty came like the setting sun
My heart was shaken with tears; and horror
Drifted away...

John Dryden writing during the reign of Charles II – a time of plotting and religious sectarianism – took poetic revenge on a man, George Villiers, whose lifestyle and character he deplored, was delivered in the satirical poem ***Absolom and Achitophel***. He was...

Stiff in his opinions, always in the wrong;
Was everything by starts, and nothing long:
But in the course of one revolving moon
Was chemist, fiddler, statesman and buffoon.

Some dissent in the group! Arising from Thomas Hardy's Poem ***Former Beauties***. It aroused the ire of the Sixties Feminists in its depiction of the more mature woman whom Hardy characterises as "...market-dames, mid-aged, with lips thin-drawn, And tissues sere..." We thought they had a lot to have lips thin-drawn about, particularly where Hardy was concerned!

WBYeats' poem ***An Irish Airman foresees his Death*** points out that war is between countries, tribes, empires and not people...

Those that I fight I do not hate,
Those that I guard I do not love.

Remembering dear Roger Stanyon we finished with a Wendy Cope favourite, ***Being Boring***. Clearly resentful of all those remarks that she should “get out more” she has...

Just one ambition in life: I aspire

To go on and on being boring.

Our next meeting on 10th December will be a joint meeting with the Room to Read Book Group when we will reflect on our favourite literature of the year.