

Poetry

20+



FOLIO
1988

POETRY TWENTY PLUS.

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1988

an anthology of verse

by members of Poetry 20+

cover drawings by

Vincent Mulholland.

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PLIGHT OF THE OLD.

Sad fact of life,
When they most need a friend,
The old are spurned,
To face a lonely end.

None can spare time
To pass an hour away,
And so are left
To get through another day.

When no-one calls
To ask them how they fare,
Which makes them sad,
As none appear to care.

And so resort
To memories sad and gay,
Of those they knew
Now half a life away.

Dream on with ghosts
That in their lives amassed,
None here can hurt,
Draw comfort from the past.

World's stream flows on
 With all its care and strife
 Whilst abandoned they
 In backwater of life.

Left to stagnate,
 As few are ever kind,
 Inactive now,
 And so get left behind.

To accept their fate
 When life's warmth at last grows cold,
 And apathy rules
 The realm of very old.

Cast off: confined,
 With heartache's bitter pang,
 Till life's door's shut
 With a resounding BANG !

FREDA DAVEY.

TREASURES.

Unwrap the personal treasures
That make the spirit glad,
Yet there are too, a certain few
To recall a thought so sad.

Caress them with the fingers
And damp with tears that flow,
Re-live again what happened then
So many years ago.

It's said years colour life's events
That once were penny plain,
Yet nostalgia paints those bygone times
That never will come again.

So revel deep in memories
Before they're put away,
To keep enshrined within the heart
Until another day.

FREDA DAVEY.

WHERE ARE WE ?

Where there is need,
Where there is pain,
Where there is greed,
They call out in vain,
Can we not see,
Where are we.

Where there is strife,
Where there is anger,
Where plague is rife,
Where children hunger,
We who are free,
Where are we.

Where there is fear,
Where there is sorrow,
Where there's no cheer
Or hope for tomorrow,
Why should it be ?
Where are we.

When we were thus,
Who cared for us,
He from Above,
Showed us His Love.
He died on a tree,
There was he.

H.W.HART.

REAL CONTENT.

I may feel, when in despair,
Inclined to envy those
Who never seem to have a care,
But live in sweet repose,
With all the riches they desire,
In Hall or Castle great,
Dressed in the finest of attire,
And yet, I think I'd hate
In such great splendour to reside,
With all its lavish wealth,
What need have I for power and pride?
My riches are Good Health,
With body fit and right arm strong,
My living I can earn,
In idleness I'd not last long,
Such luxury must I spurn.

With all the hardships of this life
The poorest folk must bear,
An inner strength comes from the strife,
All things they learn to share.
They find the loveliest of things,
By God are given free,
The fair rose blooms, the skylark sings,
Alike for you and me,
Though they be poor, possessions crude,
And hunger close at hand,
They bear it all with fortitude,
As people they are grand.
For happiness, wealth can't impart
However much is spent,
It's only ever in the heart,
Man finds the real content.

H.W.HART.

CHRISTMAS MORNING.

The green, green glade lies pale in the winter sun,
It trees like pillars rise from the frozen earth
Supporting vaulted branches, a silent church
Expectant waits to celebrate a birth;
The birth of Christ the saviour long ago
In Bethlehem. The peace the shepherds found,
Persisting through the ages finds a home
In this green and silent glade. The frost sits light
On grass and bark of trees. The shimmering stream
Reflects the variance of the winter sky. December
Adds its chill, a warning shiver, foretaste
Of the destiny of the Child in Bethlehem.
The peace dispels the portent, contemplation
Recreates the stable scene, when Christ
Was born a child for us in Bethlehem.

EVELYN HENDERSON.

A LEAF BY A STONE.

A leaf beside a stone
 Arrests my attention
 And brings to me the memory
 Of Autumn days.
 Spring is almost here
 And yet this leaf
 Lingers on the path
 A stray from its companions
 Lying in the hedgerows
 Reminder of last year's profusion
 And time spent sweeping leaves
 On windy days.

EVELYN HENDERSON.

ROCK POOL.

Peaceful pools
 Impede my progress
 As I make my way
 Along the path.
 I listen to the lap
 Of water in the stone.
 Memory brings contentment
 To dwell once more
 In happy hours
 Of well-remembered
 Times.

EVELYN HENDERSON.

FAMILY TREE.

We never supposed it could be so old.
 Four hundred years
 And nineteen generations ?
 Even older if we could establish
 The final link to its tap-root
 Buried deep in the foothills of Exmoor.
 Here, where the seed first fell
 There is still a farmstead
 Bearing the family name.
 We stare at the tree's etched skeleton,
 Marvelling at the fecundity
 Of some of its weightier branches.
 Others are frail and twig-like, single shoots
 Which never completely break.
 We wonder about those fore-fathers
 With familiar family names -
 George and Thomas,
 William and John,
 Simple folk who scarcely stirred
 From their own particular narrow patch
 Of rural Devon.
 Later, of course, the tree spread out
 Its branches wider -
 Over the country -
 Across the world.
 But its Anglo-saxon roots hold fast
 And its sap still rises in our blood.

PEGGY LOOSEMORE JONES.

NOTE: The name Loosemore derives from the
 Anglo-Saxon HLOS MOR or HLOS MER, roughly
 translated as 'pigsty on the moor' or 'by the pond'.
 East Loosemore is two miles north of Oakford
 in N.E.Devon.

WHEN THE AVON LADY CALLS.

When the Avon Lady calls, she brings
More than her glossy catalogues
Of beauty enhancing, sweetly perfumed
Mostly frivolous things.
There is something in her smile and voice
Her talk of hair and skin, and how
To preserve my looks (as if she thinks
Then really worth preserving) that is
Almost gentle flattery.
This is not why I buy.
I buy because her eyes are sad,
Because her ailing husband was
Ungrateful enough to die,
Because she's bought a dog for walks
And I had a dog just like him once,
Because I know she'll praise my plants
And beg a cutting, most of all
Because in her I seem to read
A mutual recognition.
This is why I often buy
Things that I do not need.

PEGGY LOOSEMORE JONES.

CATHAY.

While it was white in winter time
 My father knew that I must go
 He said, 'If you must emigrate
 Go south until you find the sun
 Go south, you'll find it warmer there
 Than ever it is here.
 Go south until you find Cathay
 The streets are paved with jewels there
 In molten gold the streets are laid
 And ladies are most beautiful
 Most lovable, they say.'

So I set off with some delay
 A few farewells a sturdy stick
 Aware of hardships I would meet
 By land and sea, but always south,
 Another hill to navigate
 Another road, another night
 And always an elusive hope,
 No map to tell me where I was
 As sickened by a camel ride
 And no one speaking in my tongue
 No one else to go my way
 To old Cathay.

I journeyed on and on and on
 The endless trail that leads me to
 The far south, hope of old Cathay.

It seemed an endless journey then
 And I had crossed a continent
 A sea, a desert, on my way
 In search of that elusive place
 Where men could live in endless peace,
 Where fruit was plentiful and good
 Where women are unmatched and were
 Most lovable and I could stay
 To settle with one such and live
 In old Cathay.

I'll build a house and settle down
 And we would live in hope and peace
 A paradise like Eden there
 Of rich ripe fruit and well brewed wine
 And we would spend our waking day
 In leisured work and peaceful ease
 In thoughtful mind for those at home
 And all the while we'll never stray
 From old Cathay.

VINCENT MULHOLLAND.

PERFECT SPARROW.

Brown and black ribbed feathers
 Down his back
 Agile body, hopping in and out
 Beneath the rose bush
 Pecking at the soil
 Beady eyes alert and never still
 Grey breasted, balanced by a modest tail
 Small head and a small effective beak
 Quick to spot intrusion and to fly.

VINCENT MULHOLLAND.

CORNISH LEGEND.

Tristram of Lyonesse,
 Your voice is in the wind
 That whistles round the rocks and shakes the foam
 Into the stinging air
 Where Cornish rocks lie bare,
 And ever in the wind a voice says 'Come !'

The foam flies
 Till the wind dies
 And into the silence a voice cries
 'Iseult of Cornwall, my beloved one !'

Around the granite cave in whirls
 The sea in dizzy eddies curls
 Clear green just as it did of old;
 And underneath in the ebb of the tide
 The smooth round pebbles roll and glide,
 Round and smooth and cold.
 The wind moans,
 And the cave groans
 With the sob of an ancient tale,
 And the cliffs on high
 Hear the wind's sigh,
 A desolate, wind-born hail.

'Iseult, Iseult, lift your dark eyes to me,
 Full of the magic of the changing sea.
 You only, know the torrent in my blood,
 The wild desire, the wanderer's craving mood.
 Iseult, Iseult of Cornwall, my sweet Queen,
 The tempest reared us both and linked our souls
 In like experience, and ever tolls
 Mark's hatred, like a warning bell unseen.

But the quiet maid of Brittany,
 Iseult of the white hands,
 I left to dwell by the southern sea,
 Mourning on southern strands.
 For I loved thee and only thee
 And in madness I let those bands
 Of mocking marriage betwixt us be,
 For Iseult of Cornwall I still loved thee,
 Iseult of the Cornish sands.

Long ago I sought your love
 For Mark; we sailed to your Cornish home
 Where the wind blows through the pale thrift flowers
 Pale pink and dried in the salt sea foam,
 And the thin harsh grass blows toward the towers
 Of the castle you used to roam.
 How blue and clear the sky that day !
 How blue and smooth the sea !
 The laughing sunlight drenched the bay
 Where the seagull hovered free.
 Yet often the mists were cold and grey
 In a twilight of sorrows to come,
 But we lived with the sea's wild spirits and they
 Have moulded us into one.'

Away on the skyline gathering clouds
 Like thick smoke reel from the verge of the sea.

'Iseult, there must ever be utter love
 And forgiveness between you and me.'

Tristram of Lyonesse,
 Your voice is in the wind
 That moans round the rocks and dies away
 Into the vast sky,
 And the billows rolling high
 Churn up the pebbly beach with dancing spray.

EILEEN RATTENBURY.

WHAT THE TOAD SAW.

One morning a robin hopped onto a rail;
He winked his black eye and he cocked his wee tail.
He ruffled his feathers and patiently sat
As silent as death and as sly as a cat.

Out came a spider and soon he began
To work with a will, the old railing to span
With a delicate, gossamer, silvery thread.....
Then he sat and he waited as still as the dead.

A little fly came and he settled to rest:
He saw not the hairy one deep in his nest;
The great spider darted and gobbled him up
And a green toad chuckled 'A-glup, a-glup'.

And he closed one bright eye in a fat knowing wink;
He'd seen many die in the flick of a blink.
But the best little joke was yet to come,
So he sat down to wait with a knowing 'Ah Hum'.

Then almost at once, as the toad well knew,
Crafty little robin to the top rail flew;
He winked at the toad and he cocked his wee tail
Then he pounced on the spider and returned to the rail.

A tough bit of shell and a few bits of wings
Trembled in the web as the bold robin sings
But the old toad sits, with a nod and a croak
And lets the world go by neath the old gnarled oak.

ETHEL ROBINSON.

JIG SAW. INDEXED - 8881 - TAM

When I was a child, my greatest delight
 Was in doing a jig saw night after night,
 I'd sit on a rug and spread it around,
 All bright coloured bits and make not a sound.

No errant bit fled me neath lamp-light aglow,
 Through deep-pleasured hours the silence would flow;
 The quiet cosy corner to me was like heaven
 But children are satisfied easily at seven.

The years hurried by and my passion persisted
 By children and grandchildren ably (?) assisted
 And now I suspect second childhood draws near ...
 The pieces before me escape me, I fear.

My eye sight is failing, the colours are blurred
 And happy solutions by naps are deferred
 For often I fall into deep reverie
 This world is God's jig saw, the last piece is me.

And sad, I remember how careless, I tossed
 Each precious wee piece until it was lost,
 While life in like fashion is slipping away
 As careless of others we face each new day.

How clearly I see now God's jig saw unfold
 Mankind are His pieces, more precious than gold.
 Our job is to help to set all things in place
 And slip into ours, before His Bright Face.

ETHEL ROBINSON.

MAY - 1988 - ORKNEY.

On this ancient apple tree,
Every branch is contorted,
Encrusted with lichen.
Westerly gales have given it
A permanent list.
Knobbed knuckles of twigs
Bear small tufts of polished leaves.
The tree sports a few brave blossoms
Each year, - soon shrivelled
By the bruising wind.

I'm concealed in a bluebell patch,
A sheltered, sweet-scented nook,
Leaning on an old stone wall.
An arctic tern skates above me,
As silver and slender
As the fingernail crescent moon,
In a clear evening sky.
Tern and moon, and gnarled apple tree,
Keep tryst together.
I'm simply an observer,
An outsider,
Witnessing a timeless ritual of spring.

MAVIS E. STRUDWICK.

THE BIRD TABLE.

In ecstasy the blue-crowned midgets dance,
somersault, stab, in acrobatic stance,
gorge and take their fill from nut-bound store,
(their crops are full, but still they fight
for more !)

The field is theirs until with sudden fright
the nut-bag rocks and swings as, ending flight
with quick attack - this from a larger bird -
two chaffinch land, and then, a sudden third !
And now the air is full of beating wings,
of bickering, bullying, buffetings,
until some signal or portent of harm
precipitates flight in sudden alarm;

Harmless, timid - frightened - small !
Alertly suspicious lest mischief befall.

FRANK TALLING.

THE TASK.

I've made a vow !
 My purpose now -
 With form and sense convening -
 With rhyme endow
 In verse allow
 Some lightly hidden meaning !
 With furrowed brow
 The field I plough
 Assiduously gleaning,
 No matter how
 I curse or row -
 I finish up by dreaming.

FRANK TALLING.

RELUCTANT PILGRIM.

We all travellers are, though we move not far,
 As we journey through life to the grave.
 Always - hope for the morrow, mirth before
 sorrow,
 Are the maxims by which we behave.
 Though we stir not at all, neither stumble nor
 fall
 As we cling to the sphere that is earth,
 As quite without sound, it hurtles around
 And gives us a ride and a berth.

Both in time and in space, as we travel apace
 We have time to reflect on the notion
 How little we share, except to be there,
 In this curious cosmic commotion.

FRANK TALLING.

DIET DOTTY.

In this country nowadays
 You're liable to meet
 A lot of folk with new ideas
 On what we ought to eat.

The butter we all longed for
 In those frugal war-time days
 They say is very bad for us
 In new-discovered ways.

Low-fat margarine is best -
 Spread that upon your bread -
 To me, the stuff is tasteless,
 I'll try some jam instead.

But jam is very bad for us
 In new-discovered ways,
 We're eating too much sugar
 To be healthy in these days.

But with the humble cabbage
 Dieticians find no fault !
 Hurrah ! - but, half a minute
 We must NOT add any salt.

Alas that's what they're saying
 In these diet-dotty days,
 Salt is very bad for you
 In new-discovered ways.

To think that I have lived to see
 The salt-box out of favour !
 If you don't add a pinch of salt
 What happens to the flavour ?

Stop nagging, diet-dotty folk -
 Your warning's come too late,
 Great-grandad buttered well his bread,
 And died - aged eighty eight !

MARY WILLIAMS.

ADVICE TO WORD-SPINNERS.

Amongst word-spinning poets, there are some
 Into whose heads a spate of words will come
 Like horses galloping, their verses flow
 Hooves thudding rhythmic as a beating drum.

How fortunate they are, you say ? Oh, no !
 When they have reached their goal, their horses go
 On galloping, will not obey the rein,
 Those words keep pouring out. Such poets know

Merely to stop will go against the grain,
 They cannot call a halt because their brain
 Will not obey them. All they had to say
 Those wilful words are saying once again.

Oh, hapless wordaholics ... I've a ray
 Of hope try dressage on your mounts, it may
 Control them. Cut. Aim for a minimum,
 Wrestle with rhyme patterns - it's the only way.

MARY WILLIAMS.

through word-spinning poets, there are some
into whose heads a spray of words will come
like horses galloping, their voices flow
horses leading rhythms as a leading drum.

POETRY TWENTY PLUS meets at Acklam Branch
Library, Acklam Road, Middlesbrough
on the 2nd Wednesday in the month.
Meetings are held in September, October,
March, April, May, June and July.
Meetings begin at 7.30pm

All poetry lovers and poetry writers
are welcome, whether they can come
regularly or not.

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