

Poems for Englings:

An Anthology

Introduction

and that will be heaven
at last the first unclouded
seeing

to stand like the sunflower
turned full face to the sun

- Evangeline Paterson

This collection of poems is the fruit of many conversations, dinners, and events held by The CICCU Englings between 2017 and 2020. The CICCU Englings are a group of English students at the University of Cambridge who gather under the auspices of the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union (CICCU). The group's name takes its reference from The Inklings, a literary discussion group at the University of Oxford in the 1930s and 1940s that counted such luminaries as J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis in its membership.

The Englings gather for meals, each time bringing along poems, excerpts of literature, and Scripture for discussion, prepared in response to particular pressures each of us face over the course of the academic term. The space this opens up is intimate, allowing each of us to discuss intellectual tensions and difficulties we face in supervisions, in the works we read, or in the argumentative positions we encounter.

As Christians, we were often a small group within the English Faculty. Being in The Englings gave us the opportunity to examine the generative, symbiotic relations between our faith and our academic work. Alongside fixtures such as R. S. Thomas, John Donne, Christian Wiman, Shūsaku Endō, Gerard Manley Hopkins, George Herbert, Mary Oliver, and Julian of Norwich, we looked to scholars and clergy such as Rowan Williams and Malcolm Guite for guidance.

These conversations often served as the starting point for various events, allowing us to home in on specific, recurring themes. It was questions of doubt, restlessness, and ambiguity that came up most often. This served as the departure point from which we envisioned spaces where people could be invited to think and ponder, to read and reflect, to have the opportunity to encounter Christ on their own terms.

In the years where I was a member of the group, we organised two such evangelistic events: *Resurrection Poetry* at The Round Church in Lent 2018, and *waiting // poetry, art, music* at Pembroke

College Chapel in Lent 2019. These events featured poetry printed on posters that were placed at eye level at different parts of the venues. Some poems had brief commentaries and question prompts, with pens and paper available for attendees to write down their thoughts and responses. This space to read was accompanied by poetry readings, Scripture readings, as well as musical performances.

As providence would have it, Malcolm Guite attended *waiting* in 2019 and revealed that he had accepted Christ as a Pembroke student in the 1970s, often praying in Pembroke Chapel itself. Later on, as an outgrowth of my interest in the poetry of R. S. Thomas, one nourished by my time with The Englings, Rowan Williams was assigned to me as my dissertation supervisor in 2020. Generous and attentive, I brought the wisdom he shared with me to subsequent Engling gatherings.

From 2017 to 2019, Madeleine Kelly and I served as the group's representatives and spearheaded these events, assisted and supported ably by our mentor Imogen Phillips and The Englings. In many respects, this has shaped this collection, with each section a reflection of some of the poems featured in events and discussions over the course of several years. Some poems and songs by Englings themselves are included in this collection, in particular contributions by Cecily Fasham, Matt Lewis, Jacob Henstridge, Maddy Constant, Leonard Yip, and me.

The vision for an event in Lent 2020 centered on the themes of despair and hope but did not come to fruition; what remains are some of the poems we shared, especially as the pandemic entrenched physical distance between all of us.

These poems are not all necessarily 'Christian' in their subject matter or audience, but each bore a particular resonance at the points in time at which we read them. We hope that you will read them in this spirit of openness and allow them to bring you into a place of introspection. They have proven nourishing, edifying, and bracing for us, and we hope they prove the same for you.

Jonathan Chan
Singapore, February 2021

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i.

Resurrection

i am a little church

e. e. cummings (1894 – 1962)

i am a little church (no great cathedral)
far from the splendor and squalor of hurrying cities.
i do not worry if briefer days grow briefest,
i am not sorry when sun and rain make April.

my life is the life of the reaper and the sower;
my prayers are prayers of earth's own clumsily striving
(finding and losing and laughing and crying) children
whose any sadness or joy is my grief or my gladness.

around me surges a miracle of unceasing
birth and glory and death and resurrection:
over my sleeping self float flaming symbols of hope,
and i wake to a perfect patience of mountains.

i am a little church (far from the frantic
world with its rapture and anguish) at peace with nature.
i do not worry if longer nights grow longest;
i am not sorry when silence becomes singing.

winter by spring, i lift my diminutive spire to
merciful Him Whose only now is forever:
standing erect in the deathless truth of His presence
(welcoming humbly His light and proudly His darkness).

(1957)

The Dead Woman

Pablo Neruda (1904 – 1973)

If suddenly you do not exist,
if suddenly you no longer live,
I shall live on.

I do not dare,
I do not dare to write it,
if you die.

I shall live on.

For where a man has no voice,
there, my voice.

Where blacks are beaten,
I cannot be dead.
When my brothers go to prison
I shall go with them.

When victory,
not my victory,
but the great victory comes,
even though I am mute I must speak;
I shall see it come even
though I am blind.

No, forgive me.
If you no longer live,
if you, beloved, my love,
if you have died,
all the leaves will fall in my breast,
it will rain on my soul night and day,
the snow will burn my heart,
I shall walk with frost and fire and death and snow,
my feet will want to walk to where you are sleeping, but
I shall stay alive,
because above all things
you wanted me indomitable,
and, my love, because you know that I am not only a man
but all mankind.

(1971)

Good Friday, 1613. Riding Westward

John Donne (1572 – 1631)

Let mans Soule be a Spheare, and then, in this,
The intelligence that moves, devotion is,
And as the other Spheares, by being growne
Subject to forraigne motion, lose their owne,
And being by others hurried every day,
Scarce in a yeare their naturall forme obey:
Pleasure or businesse, so, our Soules admit
For their first mover, and are whirld by it.
Hence is't, that I am carryed towards the West
This day, when my Soules forme bends toward the East.
There I should see a Sunne, by rising set,
And by that setting endlesse day beget;
But that Christ on this Crosse, did rise and fall,
Sinne had eternally benighted all.
Yet dare I almost be glad, I do not see
That spectacle of too much weight for mee.
Who sees Gods face, that is selfe life, must dye;
What a death were it then to see God dye?
It made his owne Lieutenant Nature shrinke,
It made his footstoole crack, and the Sunne winke.
Could I behold those hands which span the Poles,
And tune all spheares at once peirc'd with those holes?
Could I behold that endlesse height which is
Zenith to us, and our Antipodes,
Humbled below us? or that blood which is
The seat of all our Soules, if not of his,
Made durt of dust, or that flesh which was worne
By God, for his apparell, rag'd, and torne?
If on these things I durst not looke, durst I
Upon his miserable mother cast mine eye,
Who was Gods partner here, and furnish'd thus
Halfe of that Sacrifice, which ransom'd us?
Though these things, as I ride, be from mine eye,
They're present yet unto my memory,
For that looks towards them; and thou look'st towards mee,
O Saviour, as thou hang'st upon the tree;
I turne my backe to thee, but to receive
Corrections, till thy mercies bid thee leave.
O thinke mee worth thine anger, punish mee,
Burne off my rusts, and my deformity,
Restore thine Image, so much, by thy grace,
That thou may'st know mee, and I'll turne my face.

(1613)

Anything Can Happen

Seamus Heaney (1939 – 2013)

Anything can happen. You know how Jupiter
Will mostly wait for clouds to gather head
Before he hurls the lightning? Well, just now
He galloped his thunder cart and his horses

Across a clear blue sky. It shook the earth
And the clogged underearth, the River Styx,
The winding streams, the Atlantic shore itself.
Anything can happen, the tallest towers

Be overturned, those in high places daunted,
Those overlooked regarded. Stropped-beak Fortune
Swoops, making the air gasp, tearing the crest off one,
Setting it down bleeding on the next.

Ground gives. The heaven's weight
Lifts up off Atlas like a kettle-lid.
Capstones shift, nothing resettles right.
Telluric ash and fire-spores boil away.

(2006)

Food for Risen Bodies

Michael Symmons Roberts (b. 1963)

On that final night, his meal was formal:
lamb with bitter leaves of endive, chervil,
bread with olive oil and jars of wine.

Now on 'Tiberias' shores he grills
a carp and catfish breakfast on a charcoal fire.
This is not hunger, this is resurrection:

he eats because he can, and wants to
taste the scales, the moist flakes of the sea,
to rub the salt into his wounds.

(2004)

Resurrection

R. S. Thomas (1913 – 2000)

Easter. The grave clothes of winter
are still here, but the sepulchre
is empty. A messenger
from the tomb tells us
how a stone has been rolled
from the mind, and a tree lightens
the darkness with its blossom.
There are travellers upon the road
who have heard music blown
from a bare bough, and a child
tells us how the accident
of last year, a machine stranded
beside the way for lack
of petrol, is crowned with flowers.

(1966)

Descending Theology: The Resurrection

Mary Karr (b. 1955)

From the far star points of his pinned extremities,
cold inched in—black ice and squid ink—
till the hung flesh was empty.
Lonely in that void even for pain,
he missed his splintered feet,
the human stare buried in his face.
He ached for two hands made of meat
he could reach to the end of.
In the corpse's core, the stone fist
of his heart began to bang
on the stiff chest's door, and breath spilled
back into that battered shape. Now
it's your limbs he comes to fill, as warm water
shatters at birth, rivering every way.

(2006)

The Black Christ

Arthur Shearly Cripps (1869 – 1952)

(At Easter in South Africa)

Pilate and Caiaphas
They have brought this thing to pass--
That a Christ the Father gave,
Should be guest within a grave.
Church and State have willed to last
This tyranny not over-past;
His dark southern Brows around
They a wreath of briars have bound,
In His dark despised Hands
Writ in sores their writing stands.
By strait starlit ways I creep,
Caring while the careless sleep,
Bearing balms, and flow'rs to crown
That poor Head the stone holds down,
Through some crack or crevice dim
I would reach my sweets to Him.
Easter suns they rise and set,
But that stone is steadfast yet:
Past my lifting 'tis but I
When 'tis lifted would be nigh.
I believe, whate'er they say,
The sun shall dance an Easter Day,
And I that through thick twilight grope
With balms of faith, and flow'rs of hope,
Shall lift mine eyes and see that stone
Stir and shake, if not be gone.

(1902)

Even Such Is Time (Verses Written The Night Before His Death)

Sir Walter Raleigh (1552 – 1618)

Even such is time, which takes in trust
Our youth, our joys, and all we have,
And pays us nought but age and dust;
Which in the dark and silent grave,
When we have wandered all our ways,
Shuts up the story of our days!
And from which grave, and earth, and dust,
The Lord shall raise me up, I trust.

(1618)

A Hymn to God the Father

John Donne (1572 – 1631)

Wilt thou forgive that sin where I begun,
Which was my sin, though it were done before?
Wilt thou forgive that sin, through which I run,
And do run still, though still I do deplore?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For I have more.

Wilt thou forgive that sin which I have won
Others to sin, and made my sin their door?
Wilt thou forgive that sin which I did shun
A year or two, but wallow'd in, a score?
When thou hast done, thou hast not done,
For I have more.

I have a sin of fear, that when I have spun
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore;
But swear by thyself, that at my death thy Son
Shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore;
And, having done that, thou hast done;
I fear no more.

(1623)

In a Green Night

Derek Walcott (1930 – 2017)

The orange tree, in varying light,
Proclaims her fable perfect now
That her last season's summer height
Bends from each overburdened bough.

She has her winters and her spring,
Her moult of leaves, which, in their fall
Reveal, as with each living thing,
Zones truer than the tropical.

For if at night each orange sun
Burns with a comfortable creed,
By noon harsh fires have begun
To quail those splendours which they feed;

Or mixtures of the dew and dust
That early shone her orbs of brass
Mottle her splendor with the rust
She seemed all summer to surpass.

By such strange, cyclic chemistry
Which dooms and glories her at once
As green yet ageing orange tree
The mind enspheres all circumstance.

No Florida, loud with citron leaves,
Nor crystal falls to heal an age
Shall calm our natural fear which grieves
The loss of visionary rage.

Yet neither shall despairing blight
The nature ripening into art,
Nor the fierce noon or lampless night
Wither the comprehending heart.

The orange tree, in varying light
Proclaims her fable perfect now
That her last season's summer height
Bends from each overburdened bough.

(1962)

Sympathy

Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872 – 1906)

I know what the caged bird feels, alas!
 When the sun is bright on the upland slopes;
When the wind stirs soft through the springing grass,
And the river flows like a stream of glass;
 When the first bird sings and the first bud opes,
And the faint perfume from its chalice steals—
I know what the caged bird feels!
I know why the caged bird beats his wing
 Till its blood is red on the cruel bars;
For he must fly back to his perch and cling
When he fain would be on the bough a-swing;
 And a pain still throbs in the old, old scars
And they pulse again with a keener sting—
I know why he beats his wing!
I know why the caged bird sings, ah me,
 When his wing is bruised and his bosom sore,—
When he beats his bars and he would be free;
It is not a carol of joy or glee,
 But a prayer that he sends from his heart's deep core,
But a plea, that upward to Heaven he flings—
I know why the caged bird sings!

(1899)

And that will be Heaven

Evangeline Paterson (b. 1928)

and that will be heaven
at last the first unclouded
seeing

to stand like the sunflower
turned full face to the sun drenched
with light in the centre
held while the circling planets
hum with utter joy

seeing and knowing
at last in every particle
seen and known and not turning
away

never turning away
again

(1994)

pembroke chapel

Jonathan Chan (b. 1996)

the body of christ is lithe.
its pallor folds over the arms
of the devout. a blue cross
bends rightward in
hushed affection. they are
adorned with the vocal rhythms
that rattle the walls.

the eyes of christ are shut.
he falls in to arms as if in a
swoon- songs of freedom
reverberate in the pews.
bodies ebb and sway to
soulful harmony; his flesh does
not go limp. it bursts skyward
in a joyful noise.

the palms of christ are open.
they catch the tremor in
every throat, the belted
cries of adulation, the
quiver of midweek anxiety.
they cradle the cries
that stir and rise. the
gospel is diffused
throughout- it percolates
with a hope that resounds.

the body of christ
sows and prays,
watches and waits.

(2018)

Blandeure

Kay Ryan (b. 1945)

If it please God,
let less happen.
Even out Earth's
rondure, flatten
Eiger, blanden
the Grand Canyon.
Make valleys
slightly higher,
widen fissures
to arable land,
remand your
terrible glaciers
and silence
their calving,
halving or doubling
all geographical features
toward the mean.
Unlean against our hearts.
Withdraw your grandeur
from these parts.

(2000)

Design

Robert Frost (1874 – 1963)

I found a dimpled spider, fat and white,
On a white heal-all, holding up a moth
Like a white piece of rigid satin cloth—
Assorted characters of death and blight
Mixed ready to begin the morning right,
Like the ingredients of a witches' broth—
A snow-drop spider, a flower like a froth,
And dead wings carried like a paper kite.
What had that flower to do with being white,
The wayside blue and innocent heal-all?
What brought the kindred spider to that height,
Then steered the white moth thither in the night?
What but design of darkness to appall?—
If design govern in a thing so small.

(1912)

Wild Geese

Mary Oliver (1935 – 2019)

You do not have to be good.
You do not have to walk on your knees
For a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves.
Tell me about your despair, yours, and I will tell you mine.
Meanwhile the world goes on.
Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain
are moving across the landscapes,
over the prairies and the deep trees,
the mountains and the rivers.
Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air,
are heading home again.
Whoever you are, no matter how lonely,
the world offers itself to your imagination,
calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting —
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.

(2004)

The Bright Field

R. S. Thomas (1913 – 2000)

I have seen the sun break through
to illuminate a small field
for a while, and gone my way
and forgotten it. But that was the
pearl of great price, the one field that had
treasure in it. I realise now
that I must give all that I have
to possess it. Life is not hurrying

on to a receding future, nor hankering after
an imagined past. It is the turning
aside like Moses to the miracle
of the lit bush, to a brightness
that seemed as transitory as your youth
once, but is the eternity that awaits you.

(1975)

ii.

Waiting

My Bright Abyss

Christian Wiman (b. 1966)

‘My God my bright abyss
Into which all my longing will not go
Once more I come to the edge of all I know
And believing nothing believe in this:’

And there the poem ends. Or fails, rather, for in the three years since I first wrote that stanza I have been trying to feel my way—to will my way—into its ending...I have wanted some image to open for me, to both solidify my wavering faith and ramify beyond it, to say more than I can say.

(2013)

Waiting

R. S. Thomas (1913 – 2000)

Yeats said that. Young
I delighted in it:
there was time enough.

Fingers burned, heart
seared, a bad taste
in the mouth, I read him

again, but without trust
any more. What counsel
has the pen's rhetoric

to impart? Break mirrors, stare
ghosts in the face, try
walking without crutches

at the grave's edge? Now
in the small hours
of belief the one eloquence

to master is that
of the bowed head, the bent
knee, waiting, as at the end

of a hard winter
for one flower to open
on the mind's tree of thorns.

(1981)

Postscript

Seamus Heaney (1939 – 2013)

And some time make the time to drive out west
Into County Clare, along the Flaggy Shore,
In September or October, when the wind
And the light are working off each other
So that the ocean on one side is wild
With foam and glitter, and inland among stones
The surface of a slate-grey lake is lit
By the earthed lightning of a flock of swans,
Their feathers roughed and ruffling, white on white,
Their fully grown headstrong-looking heads
Tucked or cresting or busy underwater.
Useless to think you'll park and capture it
More thoroughly. You care neither here nor there,
A hurry through which known and strange things pass
As big soft buffetings come at the car sideways
And catch the heart off guard and blow it open.

(1996)

Homecoming

Gwyneth Lewis (b. 1959)

Two rivers deepening into one;
less said, more meant; a field of corn
adjusting to harvest; a battle won
by yielding; days emptied to their brim;
an autumn; a wedding; a logarithm;
self-evidence earned, a coming home
to something brand new but always known;
not doing, but being – a single noun;
now in infinity; a fortune found
in all that's disposable; not out there, but in,
the ceremonials of light in the rain;
the power of being nothing, but sane.

(1995)

Late Ripeness

Czesław Miłosz (1911 – 2004)

Not soon, as late as the approach of my ninetieth year,
I felt a door opening in me and I entered
the clarity of early morning.

One after another my former lives were departing,
like ships, together with their sorrow.

And the countries, cities, gardens, the bays of seas
assigned to my brush came closer,
ready now to be described better than they were before.

I was not separated from people,
grief and pity joined us.
We forget—I kept saying—that we are all children of the King.

For where we come from there is no division
into Yes and No, into is, was, and will be.

We were miserable, we used no more than a hundredth part
of the gift we received for our long journey.

Moments from yesterday and from centuries ago—
a sword blow, the painting of eyelashes before a mirror
of polished metal, a lethal musket shot, a caravel
staving its hull against a reef—they dwell in us,
waiting for a fulfillment.

I knew, always, that I would be a worker in the vineyard,
as are all men and women living at the same time,
whether they are aware of it or not.

(2004)

Golgotha

John Heath-Stubbs (1918 – 2006)

In the middle of the world, in the centre
Of the polluted heart of man, a midden;
A stake stemmed in the rubbish.

From lipless jaws, Adam's skull
Gasp'd up through the garbage:
'I lie in the discarded dross of history,
Ground down again to the red dust,
The obliterated image. Create me.'

From lips cracked with thirst, the voice
That sounded once over the billows of chaos
When the royal banners advanced,
replied through the smother of dark:
'All is accomplished, all is made new, and look—
All things, once more, are good.'

Then, with a loud cry, exhaled His spirit.

(1990)

Gethsemane

Rowan Williams (b. 1950)

Who said that trees grow easily
compared with us? What if the bright
bare load that pushes down on them
insisted that they spread and bowed
and pleated back on themselves and cracked
and hunched? Light dropping like a palm
levelling the ground, backwards and forwards?

Across the valley are the other witnesses
of two millennia, the broad stones
packed by the hand of God, bristling
with little messages to fill the cracks.
As the light falls and flattens what grows
on these hills, the fault lines dart and spread,
there is room to say something, quick and tight.

Into the trees' clefts, then, do we push
our folded words, thick as thumbs?
somewhere inside the ancient bark, a voice
has been before us, pushed the densest word
of all, abba, and left it to be collected by
whoever happens to be passing, bent down
the same way by the hot unreadable palms.

(2002)

Into The Light (excerpt)

Meir of Norwich (13th century)

He has rent the heart's enclosure
and harmed those who come in your name.

I waited for good and evil came,
yet I hoped for light.

*Majestic you are and luminous,
you irradiate our darkness with light.*

Every seer's words were rash
for the foe has mocked your child
to the point where he no longer knows
where is the path that leads to light.

*Majestic you are and luminous,
you irradiate our darkness with light.*

In the land of the heavy-hearted and exhausted
we have heard the people's reproach.

Silently we await the light

*Majestic you are and luminous,
you irradiate our darkness with light.*

[...]

Have you forgotten, my God, to be merciful?

When will you gather your people
scattered to the corners of the earth
like children that lack the light?

*Majestic you are and luminous,
you irradiate our darkness with light.*

[...]

And if you have increased Israel's affliction
multiply your mercies to him
for he despairs of his dwelling place.

Yet on your ways light will shine.

*Majestic you are and luminous,
you irradiate our darkness with light.*

[...]

Always Israel has been waiting
day after day, for his consolation.
majestic, awesome heavenly one,
he will bring judgment into the light.

*Majestic you are and luminous,
you irradiate our darkness with light.*

(13th century)

Lachrimae Amantis

Geoffrey Hill (1932 – 2016)

What is there in my heart that you should sue
so fiercely for its love? What kind of care
brings you as though a stranger to my door
through the long night and in the icy dew

seeking the heart that will not harbor you,
that keeps itself religiously secure?
At this dark solstice filled with frost and fire
your passion's ancient wounds must bleed anew.

So many nights the angel of my house
has fed such urgent comfort through a dream,
whispered "your lord is coming, he is close"

that I have drowsed half-faithful for a time
bathed in pure tones of promise and remorse:
"tomorrow I shall wake to welcome him."

(1985)

waiting

Jonathan Chan (b. 1996)

there is grace in the
rustle of autumn leaves.
the midday auburn sifts
in gentle cinders, rising
in the scattershot breeze.
the dull whirring of a
restless mind, playing into
empty space. the eyes flicker
lazily across walls of text, the
messages that will never break
beyond ellipsis, the rounded pixels
that glimmer green. that there is
only waiting is rarely new; when
every muscle stiffens in
expectation, every clasp of
hands drifts into abeyance.
there is grace in the
rustle of restless quiet,
the contours of holy
discontent.

(2018)

patience

Jonathan Chan (b. 1996)

i sat in quiet so i could learn to pray
to learn again a native eloquence
the gaps in what is said and left unsaid
the wordless groans that could not find their shape.
i sat in stillness for i tried to tame
the errant flickers of a wandering mind,
to quell the fidgeting of anxious flesh,
to learn again to hear His still small voice.
when silence was the crucible of doubt
and prayers wafted loftily like smoke,
when starlight painted avenues to home
and aching feet tread on a patchy road,
i learned that waiting was in the becoming
and held the words that never were my own.

(2019)

I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day

Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844 – 1889)

I wake and feel the fell of dark, not day.
What hours, O what black hours we have spent
This night! what sights you, heart, saw; ways you went!
And more must, in yet longer light's delay.

With witness I speak this. But where I say
Hours I mean years, mean life. And my lament
Is cries countless, cries like dead letters sent
To dearest him that lives alas! away.

I am gall, I am heartburn. God's most deep decree
Bitter would have me taste: my taste was me;
Bones built in me, flesh filled, blood brimmed the curse.

Selfyeast of spirit a dull dough sours. I see
The lost are like this, and their scourge to be
As I am mine, their sweating selves; but worse.

(1880s)

Psalm 130 (NIV)

A song of ascents.

Out of the depths I cry to you, LORD;

Lord, hear my voice.

Let your ears be attentive

to my cry for mercy.

If you, LORD, kept a record of sins,

Lord, who could stand?

But with you there is forgiveness,

so that we can, with reverence, serve you.

I wait for the LORD, my whole being waits,

and in his word I put my hope.

I wait for the Lord

more than watchmen wait for the morning,

more than watchmen wait for the morning.

Israel, put your hope in the LORD,

for with the LORD is unfailing love

and with him is full redemption.

He himself will redeem Israel

from all their sins.

In A Country Church

R. S. Thomas (1955)

To one kneeling down no word came,
Only the wind' s song, saddening the lips
Of the grave saints, rigid in glass;
Or the dry whisper of unseen wings,
Bats not angels, in the high roof.

Was he balked by silence? He kneeled long
And saw love in a dark crown
Of thorns blazing, and a winter tree
Golden with fruit of a man's body.

(1955)

Skewed Space

Cecily Fasham (b. 1999)

On the one hand, waiting is an emptiness.

On the other hand, emptiness makes.

(If the words crammed out to the corners
the page albeit involving no waiting
blackfilled with ink could not be read
however diligent the attempt.)

So exact this – ripple it out,
how to think about things always the question --

Perhaps it is how

in the gaps

between winter-bare tree-branches

the sky shines in.

That bluegrey empty-boundless expanse is one view of the waiting.

The sky-gaps show
the finger-like beauty of natural lacework
show the framework holding up everything
show He behind the framework, maker --
maybe.

Waiting on God calls up something.
as the greysky shows the filigree tree.
as the pagespace shows up the skeletal words.

Calls up some kind of wonder.
Whatever
freefall discovery or gradual fall into love.

The difficulty is in remembering yourself it is in
swallowing your *horror vacui*, the innate human fear of the void, and

Remembering instead that space can be – will be – filled.

In the end.

And you know if you think about it
That
the waiting
is
the secret

to
producing the effect.

-- that the longer you wait on Him, the more of God you get,
and this applies
whatever god
you're waiting for, even if you do not know or if it is not *God*.

(2019)

How I Talk to God

Kelly Belmonte (b. 1967)

Coffee in one hand
leaning in to share, listen:
How I talk to God.

“Momma, you’re special.”
Three-year-old touches my cheek.
How God talks to me.

While driving I make
lists: done, do, hope, love, hate, try.
How I talk to God.

Above the highway
hawk: high, alone, free, focused.
How God talks to me.

Rash, impetuous
chatter, followed by silence:
How I talk to God.

First, second, third, fourth
chance to hear, then another:
How God talks to me.

Fetal position
under flannel sheets, weeping
How I talk to God.

Moonlight on pillow
tending to my open wounds
How God talks to me.

Pulling from my heap
of words, the ones that mean yes:
How I talk to God.

Infinite connects
with finite, without words:
How God talks to me.

(2013)

Every Riven Thing

Christian Wiman (b. 1966)

God goes, belonging to every riven thing he's made
sing his being simply by being
the thing it is:
stone and tree and sky, man who sees and sings and wonders why

God goes. Belonging, to every riven thing he's made,
means a storm of peace.
Think of the atoms inside the stone.
Think of the man who sits alone
trying to will himself into the stillness where

God goes belonging. To every riven thing he's made
there is given one shade
shaped exactly to the thing itself:
under the tree a darker tree;
under the man the only man to see

God goes belonging to every riven thing. He's made
the things that bring him near,
made the mind that makes him go.
A part of what man knows,
apart from what man knows,

God goes belonging to every riven thing he's made.

(2011)

Habakkuk 3:16-19 (NIV)

I heard and my heart pounded,
my lips quivered at the sound;
decay crept into my bones,
and my legs trembled.
Yet I will wait patiently for the day of calamity
to come on the nation invading us.
Though the fig tree does not bud
and there are no grapes on the vines,
though the olive crop fails
and the fields produce no food,
though there are no sheep in the pen
and no cattle in the stalls,
yet I will rejoice in the LORD,
I will be joyful in God my Savior.
The Sovereign LORD is my strength;
he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,
he enables me to tread on the heights.

September Rain: A Song

Matt Lewis (b. 1995)

Waiting for September rain
'Cause spring has gone and summer's back again
Looking across this dry and weary plain
The garden's gone and the desert's here again

Not a cloud in the sky since I said my goodbye to hope
Somehow I know I won't see the storm roll in till I give in to hope

That the rain will come again

Waiting for September rain
Where my heart is healed and I can dream again
Looking for the end of pain
When my wounds are washed and my lungs can breathe again

'Cause I have wandered across this land
But all I found was the taste of the mocking sand
And I have wondered if you'll ever come
Turned my longing to the skies above

Will the rain ever come again

But I remember the sound of thunder on the mountain tops
I felt the touch of a heavenly love in the raindrops
There's time it feels like the season never ends
But when the rain comes, it always makes amends

I'll put my umbrella upside down
Though the world says its the wrong way around
I'll keep my mouth open
Though it's dry and broken
'Cause I know I'll taste the rain again

Waiting for September rain
'Cause it came last year and I know it'll rain again

(2019)

Love's as Warm as Tears

C. S. Lewis (1898 – 1963)

Love's as warm as tears,
Love is tears:
Pressure within the brain,
Tension at the throat,
Deluge, weeks of rain,
Haystacks afloat,
Featureless seas between
Hedges, where once was green

Love's as fierce as fire,
Love is fire:
All sorts—Infernal heat
Clinkered with greed and pride,
Lyric desire, sharp-sweet,
Laughing, even when denied,
And that empyreal flame
Whence all loves came.

Love's as fresh as spring,
Love is spring:
Bird-song in the air,
Cool smells in a wood,
Whispering "Dare! Dare!"
To sap, to blood,
Telling "Ease, safety, rest,
Are good; not best."

Love's as hard as nails,
Love is nails:
Blunt, thick, hammered through
The medial nerves of One
Who, having made us, knew
The thing He had done,
Seeing (what all that is)
Our cross, and His.

(1964)

Beannacht/Blessing

John O'Donohue (1956 – 2008)

For Josie, my mother

On the day when
the weight deadens
on your shoulders
and you stumble,
may the clay dance
to balance you.

And when your eyes
freeze behind
the grey window
and the ghost of loss
gets into you,
may a flock of colours,
indigo, red, green
and azure blue,
come to awaken in you
a meadow of delight.

When the canvas frays
in the currach of thought
and a stain of ocean
blackens beneath you,
may there come across the waters
a path of yellow moonlight
to bring you safely home.

May the nourishment of the earth be yours,
may the clarity of light be yours,
may the fluency of the ocean be yours,
may the protection of the ancestors be yours.

And so may a slow
wind work these words
of love around you,
an invisible cloak
to mind your life.

(2010)

iii.

Despair / Hope

Love (III)

George Herbert (1593 – 1633)

Love bade me welcome, but my soul drew back,
 Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
 From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning
 If I lacked anything.

“A guest,” I answered, “worthy to be here”:

 Love said, “You shall be he.”

“I, the unkind, ungrateful? Ah, my dear,

 I cannot look on thee.”

Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,

 “Who made the eyes but I?”

“Truth, Lord; but I have marred them; let my shame

 Go where it doth deserve.”

“And know you not,” says Love, “who bore the blame?”

 “My dear, then I will serve.”

“You must sit down,” says Love, “and taste my meat.”

 So I did sit and eat.

(1613)

Maundy Thursday

Malcolm Guite (b. 1957)

Here is the source of every sacrament,
The all-transforming presence of the Lord,
Replenishing our every element
Remaking us in his creative Word.
For here the earth herself gives bread and wine,
The air delights to bear his Spirit's speech,
The fire dances where the candles shine,
The waters cleanse us with His gentle touch.
And here He shows the full extent of love
To us whose love is always incomplete,
In vain we search the heavens high above,
The God of love is kneeling at our feet.
Though we betray Him, though it is the night.
He meets us here and loves us into light.

(2012)

Pietà

R. S. Thomas (1913 – 2000)

Always the same hills
Crowd the horizon,
Remote witnesses
Of the still scene.

And in the foreground
The tall Cross,
Sombre, untenanted,
Aches for the Body
That is back in the cradle
Of a maid's arms.

(1966)

Liberty

Matt Lewis (b. 1995)

So crowding in, we're confounded
Thinking we can hear from within
A rumbling, it can't be far off
From here to there – where the earth
Lets forth its untimely birth
Thump, thump! We hear its ancient sound
Resounding within a pounding that its taken
For countless generations- who knows
What its seen, what its heard,
What it received, was it hurt?
When we bound it in chains
And said, "Here's to the day
When you will be free
But it's not on me
I was deceived."
Thump, thump! We hear the beat
Of a half-dead heart, that fights hard
To hold onto hope that it will survive
Or more, revive, to attain a way out of its endless pain.
It waits, has waited, anticipated our arrival here
It has etched out for posterity
In its very nature, a future hope of prosperity.
We put our ear to the ground –
Can you hear the sound?
Thump, thump! Goes the echo of the universe
A sound that's been woven into songbird's verse
And been freed through groanings that stir up
The inter-workings of our planet
Here it is, the culmination of this plan
It's not far off
Can you hear the thump, thump that calls to us
It's the universe
Saying I'm ready
To be brought into your liberty

(2019)

Hope

Matt Lewis (b. 1995)

Heart gasped for air
Arteries choked up with malice and despair
Drowned in a pool of disappointment
Found no remedy, no balm or ointment

Lungs filled up with lost expectations
Hopes and fears and failures of past generations
Felt the heart torn asunder
Lost dreams in the sound of rain and thunder

No matter how hard the gasp
Or how deep it breathed
The terror inside would not pass
Like a poison within it seethed

In this dark night of my soul
Eternity passed by five times
Pitiless like the night it passed on by
It took out my heart and left a hole

In this pit I try to throw up my rope
My last chance of hope
But it keeps on falling down
Eternity comes again, around and around

I resign my own attempt
To lift myself up out of a sea of contempt
Instead I lift a desperate plea
To some pliant ear to show me mercy

Immediately I hear a small whisper
A voice that stills the rage
That kept me bound up without a key to my cage
In the quiet now, I lean in to that whisper

For all my gasping was a rattled try to get on by
When what I needed was to stop looking within
And instead look to the sky

For the voice came from a face which came from a man
Who stepped down into my pit, and said to me,
“Take my hand”. When hopes gone for so long,
Can I trust the voice that promises escape?
I’ve heard thunderclaps of empty lies,

But never once did I see the light.

But as I listen, I realize that I hear and see kindness in those eyes.

The hand that takes mine is pierced, and so are his sides.

I see behind those eyes a depth of pain he shares with mine,

But somehow the flicker I see in his gaze

Says I can believe for better days.

In this moment, tenderly unaware of where I've been for what has felt like an age,

I take the chance, I take his hand, and start a new page.

(2019)

Babel

Jacob Henstridge (b. 1998)

In the beginning was the Word.
Every beginning is the beginning of a story
And this was the best story. The Story.
It was mostly about people.
The people were special because
The Author chose to make them like himself;
They too could choose.
And they chose authorship
To decide their story for themselves
Even though he told them not to.

The Author had given them the power to name;
The people had one language, for
Words were names and names had power.
“Come, let us build,” they said, and so they did.
They wrote their story in stones,
Placing each above the one before,
Reaching higher, building themselves up,
Making their story like themselves – or
Like the selves they wanted to be.
“Let us make a name for ourselves,” they said.
For what are words but names, and names have power,
And to make ourselves a name is to close the circle –
To name ourselves is to write our story –
To build a tower so high that we break the glass ceiling
Break the fourth wall
And grasp our story from the outside.

The Author looked down
At the people reaching up
And he saw that they knew him not,
And saw only themselves sitting where he sat.
“Let us make a name for ourselves,” he heard them say,
“For we have the power to name.
Who is this sitting up here?
Let us name him.
Let us build him.
Let us make him like ourselves.”

And he said, NO.
I AM WHO I AM
AND ONLY ME.

A wind blew from heaven and

They fell
And the narrative
Fragmented.

“Come, let us build,” one said.
“Where?”
“No, you come.”
“Why should I?”
“You can’t tell me what to do
 Who put you in charge?
 I refuse to let anyone define me.”

No one looked at the ruined tower.
The wind whistled through the stones,
But no one recognised the tune.
A stone fell on a foot
And a cry of pain penetrated their ears;
They found it hard to listen.

*

Later, the wind blew through a room,
And tongues of fire separated
And came to rest on the people in it,
And for a little time
They understood
And heard others’ stories as if they were their own.

Because before that
The author had written himself inside his story,
So that the ending the people had written for themselves
Happened to him.
He wrote the world another story
And showed the people how it ended.
Some of them listened;
They are running towards that ending now.
And even though they sometimes lose the plot
They will get there eventually.

(2019)

Candlelight

Cecily Fasham (b. 1999)

You have been in that moment

when the veil (greydustgossamer)
is pierced
or drawn back
and the light bright-shining
insinuates itself: sly
illumination
or rather
in your case flings itself
over the threshold, comes roaring
opposite
of subtle
bearing down triumphant!

*It was they say as if
he had
a thousand candles burning
on the inside of his head. You could see
the flickering static of light
blue-golden in the corners of his eyes
when he moved just so.*

This is the aim, then
not to be hopeful
but rather embody the hopelight
to borrow a glimmer
of flame
from the tinderbox offered and be
set alight –

*so they will say of me: it is as if
she has
a thousand candles gentle-blazing
on the inside of her head. [Votive?] Sometimes
when she turns her head the angle catches
just so
and for a second in her eyes the impression
of painted-glass cathedral-windows seen
from an outside view at night -*

can't help but wonder, can you
what it's like inside?

(2019)

the problem of rain

Cecily Fasham (b. 1999)

Strange creatures, idioms, that twist
a word round on itself so when it glances
at the glass it does not recognise
the meaning glaring back. Such is the case
with Hope, who we imagine woke
one morning to find he had been
thwarted. *There's a hope*, they said,
You've got a hope! And what they meant

was you will never be the thing you wish
or have it. Your desires are all in vain. So Hope
grew into the role and, trying hard, became
a byword for foolishness. Subtly he shifted
to the edge of the circle, to the back row
of the House, yes Hope folded himself up
into drawers and filing cabinets the way
documents do that never re-emerge, and sank
to the mire in the back of the mind.

He was unfashionable all of a sudden,
uncalled-for. Hope found himself
a shameful secret, hermit, hidden.
Knowing he had not been made
for the reclusive life, he nonetheless began to live it.
And so he listened to the radio-news,
watched correspondents flicker like cold flames
on his television set, and did his best
to despair in the way he assumed
that one ought. But always with Hope
clawing forwards in his head, past all his fine efforts
to be pessimistic, overcoming, overgrowing
turning verdant-blossomy, unmasked but undeniable
came gliding whispering-moving thoughts and feelings.

Hope imagined them something like
tendrils, seething and climbing and reaching out
shoots like many-fingered hands, bedding themselves
in, curling up about him and holding him
green. And always with the vine-like thoughts the scent
of the springtime, the fresh-fleeting smell of the earth
at the onset of rain. Rain was a problem for hope,
a case study of just what went wrong
for as hard as he tried he could not – quite – parse it
as saltweeping tears or the onset of flood but only

as a distillation of unawakened green-stirring beauty –
a pearlescent prelude to life.

(2019)

I Am

Maddy Constant (b. 1998)

I am told they swallowed you
with wide awestruck mouths and eyes for millenia
Tracing you through light and heat and harvest
Until we located you, just the other day, and you were inside us
A feverish pranging and short-circuiting
In a fist-sized brain that couldn't contain being the biggest thing out there.
I am told you're air or less
Forget it, I'm told, I hear, it (He) is the myth you were taught to teach yourself. Your life is a whole
cold thing
In your hands. Cold because dead, I think, already dead. It doesn't matter where I bury it. Only it and
I will know, and it's dead.
I heard you were the biggest thing out there
I heard you swept seas up against themselves,
and you could liven with a touch, and that if I look closely I'll see where you touched everything, and
this stone in my hands.
When I go to them, what shall I say?
Who shall I say sent me?

(2019)

The Age of Second Chances

Leonard Yip (b. 1995)

Coming back was to this:
taking the flowers from their windowsill
where they had died and the green
long faded, leaves crumbling
like broken bread.

The turning aside of the vase
must not be an apology. I will not
say sorry for my graceless striving,
for the withered petals,
for in the brambles and thorns
I have seen the patient crown of a bleeding God
who has promised the mourning
and then the dancing.

I am understanding this now,
in this age of second chances.
In my short hour of living,
the language I am still learning over
and over is the spill of water
roping uncertain into dry soil,
the flower in it racing
again to the light by the windowsill.

(2018)

As John to Patmos

Derek Walcott (1930 – 2017)

As John to Patmos, among the rocks and the blue, live air, hounded
His heart to peace, as here surrounded
By the strewn-silver on waves, the wood's crude hair, the rounded
Breasts of the milky bays, palms flocks, the green and dead

Leaves, the sun's brass coin on my cheek, where
Canoes brace the sun's strength, as John, in that bleak air,
So am I welcomed richer by these blue scapes, Greek there,
So I shall voyage no more from home; may I speak here.

This island is heaven – away from the dustblown blood of cities;
See the curve of bay, watch the straggling flower, pretty is
The wing'd sound of trees, the sparse-powdered sky, when lit is
The night. For beauty has surrounded
Its black children, and freed them of homeless ditties.

As John to Patmos, in each love-leaping air,
O slave, soldier, worker under red trees sleeping, hear
What I swear now, as John did:
To praise lovelong, the living and the brown dead.

(1962)

A Song of Hope

Oodgeroo Noonuccal (1920 – 1993)

Look up, my people,
The dawn is breaking
The world is waking
To a bright new day
When none defame us
No restriction tame us
Nor colour shame us
Nor sneer dismay.

Now brood no more
On the years behind you
The hope assigned you
Shall the past replace
When a juster justice
Grown wise and stronger
Points the bone no longer
At a darker race.

So long we waited
Bound and frustrated
Till hate be hated
And caste deposed
Now light shall guide us
No goal denied us
And all doors open
That long were closed.

See plain the promise
Dark freedom-lover!
Night's nearly over
And though long the climb
New rights will greet us
New mateship meet us
And joy complete us
In our new Dream Time.

To our fathers' fathers
The pain, the sorrow;
To our children's children
the glad tomorrow.

(1974)

Kindness

Naomi Shihab Nye (b. 1952)

Before you know what kindness really is
you must lose things,
feel the future dissolve in a moment
like salt in a weakened broth.
What you held in your hand,
what you counted and carefully saved,
all this must go so you know
how desolate the landscape can be
between the regions of kindness.
How you ride and ride
thinking the bus will never stop,
the passengers eating maize and chicken
will stare out the window forever.
Before you learn the tender gravity of kindness
you must travel where the Indian in a white poncho
lies dead by the side of the road.
You must see how this could be you,
how he too was someone
who journeyed through the night with plans
and the simple breath that kept him alive.

Before you know kindness as the deepest thing inside,
you must know sorrow as the other deepest thing.
You must wake up with sorrow.
You must speak to it till your voice
catches the thread of all sorrows
and you see the size of the cloth.
Then it is only kindness that makes sense anymore,
only kindness that ties your shoes
and sends you out into the day to gaze at bread,
only kindness that raises its head
from the crowd of the world to say
It is I you have been looking for,
and then goes with you everywhere
like a shadow or a friend.

(1995)

Metamorphosis

Jenny Xie (b. 1987)

Nowhere in those kerosene years
could she find a soft-headed match.

The wife crosses over an ocean, red-faced and cheerless.
Trades the flat pad of a stethoscope for a dining hall spatula.

Life is two choices, she thinks:
you hatch a life, or you pass through one.

Photographs of a child swaddled in layers arrive by post.
Money doesn't, to her embarrassment.

Over time, she grows out her hair. Then she sprouts nerves.
The wife was no fool, but neither did she wander.

She lives inside a season of thrift, which stretches on.
Her sorrow has thickness and a certain sheen.

The wife knows to hurry when she washes.
When she cooks, she licks spoons slowly.

Every night, she made a dish with ground pork.
Paired with a dish that was fibrous.

(2017)

'As imperceptibly as Grief'

Emily Dickinson (1830 – 1886)

As imperceptibly as Grief
The Summer lapsed away —
Too imperceptible at last
To seem like Perfidy —
A Quietness distilled
As Twilight long begun,
Or Nature spending with herself
Sequestered Afternoon —
The Dusk drew earlier in —
The Morning foreign shone —
A courteous, yet harrowing Grace,
As Guest, that would be gone —
And thus, without a Wing
Or service of a Keel
Our Summer made her light escape
Into the Beautiful.

(1865)

“Hope” is the thing with feathers

Emily Dickinson (1830 – 1886)

“Hope” is the thing with feathers -
That perches in the soul -
And sings the tune without the words -
And never stops - at all -

And sweetest - in the Gale - is heard -
And sore must be the storm -
That could abash the little Bird
That kept so many warm -

I've heard it in the chilliest land -
And on the strangest Sea -
Yet - never - in Extremity,
It asked a crumb - of me.

(1861)

De Profundis

Christina Rossetti (1830 – 1894)

Oh why is heaven built so far,
Oh why is earth set so remote?
I Cannot reach the nearest star
That hangs afloat.

I would not care to reach the moon,
One round monotonous of change;
Yet even she repeats her tune
Beyond my range.

I never watch the scatter'd fire
Of stars, or sun's far-trailing train,
But all my heart is one desire,
And all in vain:

For I am bound with fleshly bands,
Joy, beauty, lie beyond my scope;
I strain my heart, I stretch my hands,
And catch at hope.

(1881)

Misgivings

Herman Melville (1819 – 1891)

When ocean-clouds over inland hills
Sweep storming in late autumn brown,
And horror the sodden valley fills,
And the spire falls crashing in the town,
I muse upon my country's ills—
The tempest bursting from the waste of Time
On the world's fairest hope linked with man's foulest crime.

Nature's dark side is heeded now—
(Ah! optimist-cheer disheartened flown)—
A child may read the moody brow
Of yon black mountain lone.
With shouts the torrents down the gorges go,
And storms are formed behind the storm we feel:
The hemlock shakes in the rafter, the oak in the driving keel.

(1860)

Lockdown

Simon Armitage (b. 1963)

And I couldn't escape the waking dream
of infected fleas

in the warp and weft of soggy cloth
by the tailor's hearth

in ye olde Eyam.
Then couldn't un-see

the Boundary Stone,
that cock-eyed dice with its six dark holes,

thimbles brimming with vinegar wine
purging the plagued coins.

Which brought to mind the sorry story
of Emmott Syddall and Rowland Torre,

star-crossed lovers on either side
of the quarantine line

whose wordless courtship spanned the river
till she came no longer.

But slept again,
and dreamt this time

of the exiled yaksha sending word
to his lost wife on a passing cloud,

a cloud that followed an earthly map
of camel trails and cattle tracks,

streams like necklaces,
fan-tailed peacocks, painted elephants,

embroidered bedspreads
of meadows and hedges,

bamboo forests and snow-hatted peaks,
waterfalls, creeks,

the hieroglyphs of wide-winged cranes
and the glistening lotus flower after rain,

the air
hypnotically see-through, rare,

the journey a ponderous one at times, long and slow
but necessarily so.

(2020)

lament

Jonathan Chan (b. 1996)

why do groans not form in sentences? the wetness, red,
curves by drooping eyelids, at the edge of tiny windows.
prayers catch in the throat, droplets keep to themselves,

faces, lined by tubes and tightened paper, are seen only
in snatches. language offers a loose embrace. the slow
work of the tele-chaplain, watching, waiting, in social

distance: the scene relayed as disembodied voice. where
does God hide when the breath is absent? when the hand
shudders and the phone howls and the masks begin to tear?

he groans. he only groans.

(2020)

Prayer

Carol Ann Duffy (b. 1955)

Some days, although we cannot pray, a prayer
utters itself. So, a woman will lift
her head from the sieve of her hands and stare
at the minims sung by a tree, a sudden gift.

Some nights, although we are faithless, the truth
enters our hearts, that small familiar pain;
then a man will stand stock-still, hearing his youth
in the distant Latin chanting of a train.

Pray for us now. Grade 1 piano scales
console the lodger looking out across
a Midlands town. Then dusk, and someone calls
a child's name as though they named their loss.

Darkness outside. Inside, the radio's prayer -
Rockall. Malin. Dogger. Finisterre.

(1992)

Adrift

Mark Nepo (b. 1951)

Everything is beautiful and I am so sad.
This is how the heart makes a duet of
wonder and grief. The light spraying
through the lace of the fern is as delicate
as the fibers of memory forming their web
around the knot in my throat. The breeze
makes the birds move from branch to branch
as this ache makes me look for those I've lost
in the next room, in the next song, in the laugh
of the next stranger. In the very center, under
it all, what we have that no one can take
away and all that we've lost face each other.
It is there that I'm adrift, feeling punctured
by a holiness that exists inside everything.
I am so sad and everything is beautiful.

(2016)

hold

Jonathan Chan (b. 1996)

to hold on to the promise
of continuity, the mind drawn
not to the wiry stem of a
fallen palm frond, its leaves
browned and crisp, but to
those still verdant and gleaming,
the trunk thickened, the roots boring
through shallow concrete, the
plunge into firmness, solidity, not
just the snap of an old husk,
but the still-holding palm tree,
unassuming, patient, magnificent
in the sun.

(2021)

The Instinct of Hope

John Clare (1793-1864)

Is there another world for this frail dust
To warm with life and be itself again?
Something about me daily speaks there must,
And why should instinct nourish hopes in vain?
'Tis nature's prophesy that such will be,
And everything seems struggling to explain
The close sealed volume of its mystery.
Time wandering onward keeps its usual pace
As seeming anxious of eternity,
To meet that calm and find a resting place.
E'en the small violet feels a future power
And waits each year renewing blooms to bring,
And surely man is no inferior flower
To die unworthy of a second spring?

(1908)

As Kingfishers Catch Fire

Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844 – 1889)

As kingfishers catch fire, dragonflies draw flame;
As tumbled over rim in roundy wells
Stones ring; like each tucked string tells, each hung bell's
Bow swung finds tongue to fling out broad its name;
Each mortal thing does one thing and the same:
Deals out that being indoors each one dwells;
Selves — goes itself; *myself* it speaks and spells,
Crying *W'hát I dó is me: for that I came.*

I say móre: the just man justices;
Keeps grace: thát keeps all his goings graces;
Acts in God's eye what in God's eye he is —
Christ — for Christ plays in ten thousand places,
Lovely in limbs, and lovely in eyes not his
To the Father through the features of men's faces.

(1876)

Acknowledgements

Grateful acknowledgement is made to the Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship, the Cambridge Inter-Collegiate Christian Union, and our mentors, Tim Laurence and Imogen Phillips. Thanks must also be accorded to the English Faculty at the University of Cambridge.

Malcolm Guite's *Word in the Wilderness: A poem a day for Lent and Easter* (2014) and Mark Oakley's *The Splash of Words: Believing in poetry* (2016) served as invaluable references for how to organise a collection such as this.

Thanks as well to all those who shared, read, and discussed these poems over the course of many lovely evenings: Rachel Dunn, Miriam Yeo, Tanya Kundu, Leonard Yip, Jacob Henstridge, Matt Lewis, Madeleine Kelly, Ana Ovey, Kion You, Cecily Fasham, Maddy Constant, and Kristin Briggs.

Above all, we give thanks to the Author and Creator of Life, the One who was and is and is to come.

'Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,
As it was in the beginning, and now, and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen.'