

Magma 58

Personal anthologies

These poems were chosen by poets and others as poems they particularly cherish for reasons explained in Hannah Salt's article in Magma 58.

They appear in the order Hannah talks about them in the article.

Spring and Fall

to a Young Child

Márgarét, áre you grieving
Over Goldengrove unleaving?
Leáves, líke the things of man, you
With your fresh thoughts care for, can you?
Àh! ás the heart grows older
It will come to such sights colder
By and by, nor spare a sigh
Though worlds of wanwood leafmeal lie;
And yet you *will* weep and know why.
Now no matter, child, the name:
Sórrów's spríngs áre the same.
Nor mouth had, no nor mind, expressed
What héart héard of, ghóst guéssed:
It ís the blight man was born for,
It is Margaret you mourn for.

Gerard Manley Hopkins

chosen by Helena Nelson and Kona Macphee

Loch Thom

1

Just for the sake of recovering
I walked backward from fifty-six
Quick years of age wanting to see,
And managed not to trip or stumble
To find Loch Thom and turned round
To see the stretch of my childhood
Before me. Here is the loch. The same
Long-beaked cry curls across
The heather-edges of the water held
Between the hills a boyhood's walk
Up from Greenock. It is the morning.

And I am here with my mammy's
Bramble jam scones in my pocket.
The Firth is miles and I have come
Back to find Loch Thom maybe
In this light does not recognise me.

This is a lonely freshwater loch.
No farms on the edge. Only
Heath grouse-moor stretching
Down to Greenock and One Hope
Street or stretching away across
Into the blue moors of Ayrshire.

2

And almost I am back again
Wading in the heather down to the edge
To sit. The minnows go by in shoals
Like iron-filings in the shallows.

My mother is dead. My father is dead
And all the trout I used to know
Leaping from their sad rings are dead.

3

I drop my crumbs into the shallow
Weed for the minnows and pinheads.
You see that I will have to rise

And turn round and get back where
My running age will slow for a moment
To let me on. It is a colder
Stretch of water than I remember.

The curlew's cry travelling still
Kills me fairly. In front of me
The grouse flurry and settle. GOBACK
GOBACK GOBACK FAREWELL LOCH THOM.

W S Graham

chosen by Kathleen Jamie

W S Graham – *New Collected Poems*, edited by Matthew Francis (Faber 2004)
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<http://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poetry/poems/loch-thom>

On the Move

'Man, you gotta go'

The blue jay scuffling in the bushes follows
Some hidden purpose, and the gush of birds
That spurts across the field, the wheeling swallows,
Have nested in the trees and undergrowth.
Seeking their instinct, or their pose, or both,
One moves with an uncertain violence
Under the dust thrown by a baffled sense
Or the dull thunder of approximate words.

On motorcycles, up the road, they come:
Small, black, as flies hanging in heat, the Boy,
Until the distance throws them forth, their hum
Bulges to thunder held by calf and thigh.
In goggles, donned impersonality,
In gleaming jackets trophied with the dust,
They strap in doubt--by hiding it, robust--
And almost hear a meaning in their noise.

Exact conclusion of their hardiness
Has no shape yet, but from known whereabouts
They ride, directions where the tires press.
They scare a flight of birds across the field:
Much that is natural, to the will must yield.
Men manufacture both machine and soul,
And use what they imperfectly control
To dare a future from the taken routes.

It is part solution, after all.
One is not necessarily discord
On Earth; or damned because, half animal,
One lacks direct instinct, because one wakes
Afloat on movement that divides and breaks.
One joins the movement in a valueless world,
Crossing it, till, both hurler and the hurled,
One moves as well, always toward, toward.

A minute holds them, who have come to go:
The self-denied, astride the created will.
They burst away; the towns they travel through
Are home for neither birds nor holiness,
For birds and saints complete their purposes.

At worse, one is in motion; and at best,
Reaching no absolute, in which to rest,
One is always nearer by not keeping still.

Thom Gunn

chosen by John Stammers

Thom Gunn – *Collected Poems* (Faber 1994)

<http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/on-the-move-man-you-gotta-go/>

The Jaguar

The apes yawn and adore their fleas in the sun.
The parrots shriek as if they were on fire, or strut
Like cheap tarts to attract the stroller with the nut.
Fatigued with indolence, tiger and lion

Lie still as the sun. The boa-constrictor's coil
Is a fossil. Cage after cage seems empty, or
Stinks of sleepers from the breathing straw.
It might be painted on a nursery wall.

But who runs like the rest past these arrives
At a cage where the crowd stands, stares, mesmerized,
As a child at a dream, at a jaguar hurrying enraged
Through prison darkness after the drills of his eyes

On a short fierce fuse. Not in boredom—
The eye satisfied to be blind in fire,
By the bang of blood in the brain deaf the ear—
He spins from the bars, but there's no cage to him

More than to the visionary his cell:
His stride is wildernesses of freedom:
The world rolls under the long thrust of his heel.
Over the cage floor the horizons come.

Ted Hughes

chosen by Judy Brown

Ted Hughes – *Collected Poems* (Faber 2003)

<http://members.tripod.com/poetry-pearls/ePoets/Hughes.htm>

<http://thefasttrack.blogspot.co.uk/2006/10/poem-of-the-week-jaguar-by-ted-hughes.html>

Two poems from 'Games'

Before The Game

Shut one eye then the other
Peek into every corner of yourself
See that there are no nails no thieves
See that there are no cuckoo's eggs

Shut then the other eye
Squat and jump
Jump high high high
On top of yourself

Fall then with all your weight
Fall for days on end deep deep deep
To the bottom of your abyss

Who doesn't break into pieces
Who remains whole gets up whole
Plays

Between Games

Nobody rests

This one constantly shifts his eyes
Hangs them on his head
And whether he wants it or not starts walking
backwards
He puts them on the soles of his feet
And whether he wants it or not returns walking
on his head

This one turns into an ear
He hears all that won't let itself be heard
But he grows bored
Yearns to turn again into himself
But without eyes he can't see how

That one bares all his faces
One after the other he throws them over the roof
The last one he throws under his feet

And sinks his head into his hands

This one stretches his sight
Stretches it from thumb to thumb
Walks over it walks
First slow then fast
Then faster and faster

That one plays with his head
Juggles it in the air
Meets it with his index finger
Or doesn't meet it at all

Nobody rests

Vasko Popa

chosen by Helen Ivory

Collected Poems of Vasko Popa (Anvil Press Poetry 1998)

<http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/before-the-game/>

<http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/between-games/>

An Absolutely Ordinary Rainbow

The word goes round Repins,
the murmur goes round Lorenzinis,
at Tattersalls, men look up from sheets of numbers,
the Stock Exchange scribblers forget the chalk in their hands
and men with bread in their pockets leave the Greek Club:
There's a fellow crying in Martin Place. They can't stop him.

The traffic in George Street is banked up for half a mile
and drained of motion. The crowds are edgy with talk
and more crowds come hurrying. Many run in the back streets
which minutes ago were busy main streets, pointing:
There's a fellow weeping down there. No one can stop him.

The man we surround, the man no one approaches
simply weeps, and does not cover it, weeps
not like a child, not like the wind, like a man
and does not declaim it, nor beat his breast, nor even
sob very loudly—yet the dignity of his weeping

holds us back from his space, the hollow he makes about him
in the midday light, in his pentagram of sorrow,
and uniforms back in the crowd who tried to seize him
stare out at him, and feel, with amazement, their minds
longing for tears as children for a rainbow.

Some will say, in the years to come, a halo
or force stood around him. There is no such thing.
Some will say they were shocked and would have stopped him
but they will not have been there. The fiercest manhood,
the toughest reserve, the slickest wit amongst us

trembles with silence, and burns with unexpected
judgements of peace. Some in the concourse scream
who thought themselves happy. Only the smallest children
and such as look out of Paradise come near him
and sit at his feet, with dogs and dusty pigeons.

Ridiculous, says a man near me, and stops
his mouth with his hands, as if it uttered vomit—
and I see a woman, shining, stretch her hand
and shake as she receives the gift of weeping;
as many as follow her also receive it

and many weep for sheer acceptance, and more
refuse to weep for fear of all acceptance,
but the weeping man, like the earth, requires nothing,
the man who weeps ignores us, and cries out
of his writhen face and ordinary body

not words, but grief, not messages, but sorrow,
hard as the earth, sheer, present as the sea—
and when he stops, he simply walks between us
mopping his face with the dignity of one
man who has wept, and now has finished weeping.

Evading believers, he hurries off down Pitt Street.

Les Murray

chosen by Andrew Philip

Les Murray – *The Weatherboard Cathedral*, 1969
http://www.lesmurray.org/pm_aor.htm

The Kimono

When I returned from lovers' lane
My hair was white as snow.
Joy, incomprehension, pain
I'd seen like seasons come and go.
How I got home again
Frozen half dead, perhaps you know.

You hide a smile and quote a text:
Desires ungratified
Persist from one life to the next.
Hearths we strip ourselves beside
Long, long ago were x'd
On blueprints of "consuming pride."

Times out of mind, the bubble-gleam
To our charred level drew
April back. A sudden beam . . .
--Keep talking while I change into
The pattern of a stream
Bordered with rushes white on blue.

James Merrill

chosen by Katy Evans-Bush

James Merrill – *Collected Poems* (Random House 2001)

<http://www.randomhouse.com/knopf/authors/merrill/kimono.html>

Moment

Now, starflake frozen on the window pane
All of a winter's night, the open hearth
Blazing beyond Andromeda, the sea-
Anemone and the downwind seed, O moment,
Hastening, halting in clockwise dust,
The time in all the hospitals is now,
Under the arc-lights where the sentry walks
His lonely wall it never moves from now,
The crying in the cell is also now,
And now is quiet in the tomb as now
Explodes inside the sun, and it is now
In the saddle of space, where argosies of dust
Sail outward blazing, and the mind of God,
The flash across the gap of being, thinks
In the instant absence of forever: now.

Howard Nemerov

chosen by John Glenday

New and Selected Poems (University of Chicago Press 1960)
permission applied for

Prayer

Our baby's heart, on the sixteen-week scan
was a fluttering bird, held in cupped hands.

I thought of St Kevin, hands opened in prayer
and a bird of the hedgerow nesting there.

and how he's borne it, until the young had flown
– and I prayed: this new heart must outlive my own.

Kathleen Jamie

chosen by Liz Berry

from 'Ultrasound' in Kathleen Jamie – *Jizzen* (Picador 1999)
permission applied for

The Midnight Skaters

The hop-poles stand in cones,
The icy pond lurks under,
The pole-tops steeple to the thrones
Of stars, sound gulfs of wonder;
But not the tallest thee, 'tis said,
Could fathom to this pond's black bed.

Then is not death at watch
Within those secret waters?
What wants he but to catch
Earth's heedless sons and daughters?
With but a crystal parapet
Between, he has his engines set.

Then on, blood shouts, on, on,
Twirl, wheel and whip above him,
Dance on this ball-floor thin and wan,
Use him as though you love him;
Court him, elude him, reel and pass,
And let him hate you through the glass.

Edmund Blunden

chosen by Clare Pollard

Edmund Blunden - *Poems of Many Years* (copyright Estate of Claire Blunden 1957)
reproduced by permission on behalf of the Estate of Claire Blunden

http://www.poetsgraves.co.uk/Classic%20Poems/Blunden/the_midnight_skaters.html

The Sunlight on the Garden

The sunlight on the garden
Hardens and grows cold,
We cannot cage the minute
Within its nets of gold;
When all is told
We cannot beg for pardon.

Our freedom as free lances
Advances towards its end;
The earth compels, upon it
Sonnets and birds descend;
And soon, my friend,
We shall have no time for dances.

The sky was good for flying
Defying the church bells
And every evil iron
Siren and what it tells:
The earth compels,
We are dying, Egypt, dying

And not expecting pardon,
Hardened in heart anew,
But glad to have sat under
Thunder and rain with you,
And grateful too
For sunlight on the garden.

Louis MacNeice

chosen by Isobel Dixon

Collected Poems of Louis MacNeice (Faber 1966)

<http://www.ablemuse.com/erato/showthread.php>

Thalassa

Run out the boat, my broken comrades;
Let the old seaweed crack, the surge
Burgeon oblivious of the last
Embarkation of feckless men,
Let every adverse force converge --
Here we must needs embark again.

Run up the sail, my heartsick comrades;
Let each horizon tilt and lurch --
You know the worst: your wills are fickle,
Your values blurred, your hearts impure
And your past life a ruined church --
But let your poison be your cure.

Put out to sea, ignoble comrades,
Whose record shall be noble yet;
Butting through scarps of moving marble
The narwhal dares us to be free;
By a high star our course is set,
Our end is Life. Put out to sea.

Louis MacNeice

chosen by Isobel Dixon

Collected Poems of Louis MacNeice (Faber 1966)

<http://firstknownwhenlost.blogspot.co.uk/2010/06/at-sea-in-open-boat-louis-macneice-and.html>

i thank You God

i thank You God for most this amazing
day:for the leaping greenly spirits of trees
and a blue true dream of sky; and for everything
which is natural which is infinite which is yes

(i who have died am alive again today,
and this is the sun's birthday; this is the birth
day of life and of love and wings: and of the gay
great happening illimitably earth)

how should tasting touching hearing seeing
breathing any—lifted from the no
of all nothing—human merely being
doubt unimaginable You?

(now the ears of my ears awake and
now the eyes of my eyes are opened)

E E Cummings

chosen by Kathryn Simmonds

E E Cummings – *Complete Poems* (Liveright 2013)

<http://thepoetryplace.wordpress.com/2009/06/01/i-thank-you-god-for-this-amazing.html>

Midge

The evening is perfect, my sisters.
The loch lies silent, the air is still.
The sun's last rays linger over the water
and there is a faint smirr, almost a smudge
of summer rain. Sisters, I smell supper,
and what is more perfect than supper?
It is emerging from the wood,
in twos and threes, a dozen in all,
making such a chatter and a clatter
as it reaches the rocky shore,
admiring the arrangements of the light.
See the innocents, my sisters,
the clumsy ones, the laughing ones,
the rolled-up sleeves and the flapping shorts,
there is even a kilt (the god of the midges,
you are good to us!) So gather your forces,
leave your tree trunks, forsake the rushes,
fly up from the sour brown mosses
to the seek flesh of face and forearm.
Think of your eggs. What does the egg need?
Blood, and blood. Blood is what the egg needs.
Our men have done their bit, they've gone,
it was all they were good for, poor dears. Now
it is up to us. The egg is quietly screaming
for supper, blood, supper, blood, supper!
Attack, my little Draculas, my Amazons!
Look at those flailing arms and stamping feet.
They're running, swatting, swearing, oh they're hopeless.
Keep at them, ladies. This is a feast,
this is a midsummer night's dream.
Soon we shall all lie down filled and rich,
and lay, and lay, and lay, and lay, and lay.

Edwin Morgan

chosen by Judith Palmer

Edwin Morgan – *Collected Poems* (Carcenet)

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I Was a Labourer in the Smoky Valley

I was a labourer in the smoky valley,
within the high walls, the tall dark walls of the mills,
where the hills go up to the wild moor.

I am a dog of the dales, broad is my speech,
and my ways are not the smooth ways of the south,
but hard, and used to keener weather.

All week I worked among the looms
while the cloth slacked out and the shuttles clacked
swiftly, as the woof was shot through the warp
and through my brain dim with the webs of years.

All week I was the servant of the loom,
chained to the steel for the promise of meagre coin,
six days a week, but Sunday comes
soon, and I am my master for the waking day
that found me with my whippet on the moor.

O my faithful lass! Soft was her fell;
her eyes were like deep pools stained with peat,
shafted with light; and intelligent.

She was long in the body, but strong of limb and rib,
and her muscles moved under the skin
like currents in a bay of the river.

She was swift as the wind or as the summer swallow,
and I would pit her with the local dogs,
backing her swiftness with my sweaty coin
and many a shilling have I won with her
to spend on some wet evening in a pub
or buy the tickets at the picture palace
when I took out the girl I meant to marry—
but that is all forgotten with the flesh.

I was a labourer in the smoky valley:
I am a brittle bone projecting from the sand

Sean Jennett

chosen by Ian Duhig

Sean Jennett – *The Cloth of Flesh* (Faber 1945)
permission applied for

Anglais Mort á Florence

A little less returned for him each spring.
Music began to fail him. Brahms, although
His dark familiar, often walked apart.

His spirit grew uncertain of delight,
Certain of its uncertainty, in which
That dark companion left him unconsolated

For a self returning mostly memory.
Only last year he said that the naked moon
Was not the moon he used to see, to feel

(In the pale coherences of moon and mood
When he was young), naked and alien,
More leanly shining from a lankier sky.

Its ruddy pallor had grown cadaverous.
He used his reason, exercised his will,
Turning in time to Brahms as alternate

In speech. He was that music and himself.
They were particles of order, a single majesty:
But he remembered the time when he stood alone.

He stood at last by God's help and the police;
But he remembered the time when he stood alone.
He yielded himself to that single majesty;

But he remembered the time when he stood alone,
When to be and delight to be seemed to be one,
Before the colors deepened and grew small.

Wallace Stevens

chosen by John Drexel

Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens (Faber 1955)
www.geocities.ws/jaimeejoyce/poetry/anglais.html

Favourite poems chosen by contributors to Magma 58 and other correspondents with the editors

Pre-20th century

Anon – Lord Randall

Matthew Arnold – Dover Beach

William Blake – The Sick Rose

William Blake – The Tyger

Samuel Taylor Coleridge – The Rime of the Ancient Mariner

Arthur Hugh Clough – Say Not the Struggle Nought Availeth

Emily Dickinson – I heard a fly buzz when I died

John Donne – Air and Angels

Gerard Manley Hopkins – Heaven-Haven

Gerard Manley Hopkins – Spring and Fall [chosen by three people in all]

Gerard Manley Hopkins – The Wreck of the Deutschland

John Keats - Lamia

William Shakespeare – To be or not to be (*Hamlet*)

20th century

W H Auden – Who's Who

Deborah Austin - Dandelions

Elizabeth Bishop – At the Fishhouses

Elizabeth Bishop – The Art of Losing

Rupert Brooke – The Hill

Gillian Clarke - Caitrin

E E Cummings – anyone lived in a pretty how town

E E Cummings – maggie and milly and molly and may

Walter de La Mare – The Listeners

Ian Duhig – The Lammas Hireling [chosen by two people]

T S Eliot – Little Gidding, especially the last 21 lines
T S Eliot The Journey of the Magi
Louise Gluck – Lament (from Vita Nova)
W S Graham – Malcolm Mooney’s Land
Thom Gunn – The Hug
Seamus Heaney – Digging
Seamus Heaney – The Blackbird of Glanmore
Geoffrey Hill – Tristia 1891 – 1938 : A Valediction to Osip Mandelstam
Philip Larkin – Aubade
Philip Larkin – The Trees
D H Lawrence – Kissing and Horrid Strife
Derek Mahon – A Tolerable Wisdom
Glyn Maxwell – Forty Forty
Wilfred Owen – Dulce et Decorum Est
Ezra Pound – The River-Merchant’s Wife : A Letter
Delmore Schwartz – I Am to My Own Heart Merely a Serf
Stevie Smith – Not Waving But Drowning
James Tate – The List of Famous Hats
Edward Thomas – Lob
Edward Thomas – Tall Nettles
W B Yeats – The Circus Animals’ Desertion

21st century

Jessica Greenbaum – I Love You More Than All the Windows in New York City (in Poetry, July/August 2012 –
<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poem/244188>
Adam J Maynard – Soap star (in LOOP magazine, 2003)
Les Murray – Fruit Bat Colony by Day (in *Poems the Size of Postcards*, Carcanet 2002)

Don Paterson – The Lie

Laura Scott – The Annunciation (in *What I Saw*, Rialto Publications)