LUNCH



005

Welcome to another LUNCH time.

Suitable for vegetarians and vegans.

LUNCH 005

Welcome to the fifth edition of Lunch. Our magazine is full of the poetry created by poets who are friends of Poetry Kit Courses.

This edition edited by Jim Bennett

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CLAIR CHILVERS

Heatwave

I The Optimist

This is not a poem about the taxi being late nor the flood that turned us back half-way It isn't about the check-in queues that zig-zagged right to the door of the departure gate. Nor about my passport being out of date or the flight cancelled.

It is not a poem about arriving in scorching heat to queue at passport control staffed by a newbie afraid to miss an illegal immigrant. It isn't about losing my suitcase nor even about it being last on the carrousel so that all the taxis were gone and I missed my boat to the Island.

It is about arriving at a hotel in a Venetian building on the hottest day on record to an air-conditioned room and a waiter who found me a table for dinner even though I had forgotten to book.

CLAIR CHILVERS

II Heatwave

The year when it was too hot to walk barefoot on the terrace to sleep even with windows wide open and a fan to stroll to Mongonisi through the olive trees

the year when the pool was like a warm bath when there was no evening breeze on the terrace when the supermarket ran out of water

the year when we dared not barbeque outside for fear of a spark when the mountains above Igoumenitsa hid all week behind the heat haze

the year I sat on my terrace at night after the cicadas finished their chorus a glass of wine on the table beside me putting off trying to sleep

CLAIR CHILVERS

III Departure

The alarm woke me before the cicadas from the blessed sleep of dawn after a sleepless night.

Just light, but hot, as it had been all night.

I put on my travelling dress, black and white linen, too dull to wear on the island but suitable for a wet English summer day.

Corfu had forest fires overnight.

White smoke drifting from the forest beyond the town a layer of brown haze above the island.

My taxi driver is optimistic, tells me it is contained, or is that just for a tourist's ears?

The airport now has a Duty Free a new Street Food Café outside and can scan my electronic boarding pass but queues long as ever, information sparse. The plane leaves late.

GERALDINE COUSINS

A Case of Preposterous Optimism

from 'Light and Shade' a linocut By Cuillin Bantockt

How to dare alone at night to float towards two arches one roughly rounded one gently squared in a craft so flimsy nothing buta frame of balsam light as matchsticks nothing but a skin of vellum thin as cobwebs.

The artist selects twenty centimeters of linoleum, chooses a v-shaped tool to cut. Struggling for space ithin this most unforgiving media. My struggle is for words against the narrative agenda.

From these docks the Bounty set sail, full of flowerpots. A familiar reek, a rich brew of hair, bodies and sweat emerged from each household. Pepys walked the streets Busy with naval affairs and the diary working in his head.

Every step counts.
Out of the realisation
of huge limitations
the heart must make its choices.
Vertical lines waver
descendby reflection
into deep waters.
My vessel surfaces slowly.
Everything finally shows.
Deptford Creek is lit with gaiety,

GERALDINE COUSINS

Cherry Blossom

On our doormat my two shoes made from lasts and lasting thirty years lie plastered with clay one cast on its side Fraying laces loop through eyelets. Tongues without speech.

Through double glazing and spattered rainbow droplets I dream I see my father's shoes neatly placed side by side as if he wants to remind me how his slender left hand was inside one shoe like a glove while the right hand brushed on cherry blossom polish till they shone.

Perhaps his pleasure came from memories of years dug into muddy trenches.

Now, I scrape the earth from my sturdy shoes, wipe them clean and nourish them with beeswax.

GERALDINE COUSINS

Clockwise

Outside, cows maunder by the hawthorn hedge up Lower Willow field

to munch on nettles at our edge. The kitchen clock always running fast

requires subtraction. Green numerals on the cooker flash fourteen fifty two; ten to

three, after translation. It's hard to judge exactly when to leave for the station.

On platform one, information rolls in circles. An earlier train now late, is just arriving.

Ensconced in a padded seat time unwinds, unfetters hours and hands, stretches out

in all directions; patchwork fields some green, some tilled, prepare by work for growth, in imagination.

ANNEST GWILYM

Introduction to Poetry

After Billy Collins

I ask you to take my poem, hold it like an opal to the bright eye of the sun, see the colours.

Or clasp it to your ear like a seashell.

I suggest you drop an adder into my poem, watch it slide around the curdle of words.

Or you could walk into the poem's dungeon, try to unpick the locks.

I want you to swim in the river of my poem, see if you can get to shore.

But all you want to do is place my poem in a birdcage, force it to sing its song.

You start by starving it to find out what it really means.

ANNEST GWILYM

The Rejected Maiden

Yr Eneth Ga'dd Ei Gwrthod

The wind's pulse and stubborn rain corrugate the Dee's deep water – sky-tinted – into tarnished tin, but I will find shelter in smooth stones, a welcoming bed at the bottom.

The swollen river rushes like a steam train as the crisp scent of water forget-me-not and wild mint sweetens the air.

The sun's relentless blade — like the mouths of my father

and all of Cynwyd – whittles waves in the milk-pale sky. My skirt balloons – I become a lotus flower until the weight of water and subtle currents pull me down.

I will no longer fear winter's anvil or spring's whetstone as the effervescence of the summer morning, the comfort and hum of deep water, bring me a healing and home.

Bury me in a lonely grave, give me no gravestone or memorial showing the place where the whitening bones of the rejected maiden lie.

"The Rejected Maiden" ("Yr Eneth Ga'dd Ei Gwrthod") is a traditional Welsh song about the drowning of Jane Williams in the River Dee, near Cynwyd, in July 1868. The cause of death is thought to be suicide, after she was rejected by her lover and then her father and the whole community, for being a 'fallen woman'.

ANNEST GWILYM

Home

To be Welsh is to never know who you are: abroad, you are *English*; in the Home Counties you are *Welsh*; in *Welsh Wales* you are *Seisnigaidd*, your language that of a *dysgwr*.

You try to explain to a tourist angry at hearing Welsh spoken for the first time that it's not a choice, an awkwardness or resistance to progress. You try to explain to one of your neighbours that despite your English accent, you are *proper Welsh*.

This language you spoke before any other – survivor of the *Welsh Not* – brittle on your tongue, slow as lichen, tactile as clay. The language you dream in, yet cannot write. Intimate as the *pridd* you played with as a child, untidy and ragged as a rook's nest.

This imperfect mother, this *home*.

CATHERINE HEIGHWAY

Seasonal Quartet

thin forsythia stems laden with yellow tinged buds sway in gentle rain

wrens splash at pond's rim toad rests in shade of peony respite from hot sun

fat pumpkins dot fields scarlet maple leaves tumble beneath snow filled clouds

crimson cardinal perches on evergreen branch brightens white landscape

CATHERINE HEIGHWAY

Conversations

in the exhibit hall at the McMichael Gallery between *en plein air* paintings by the Group of Seven jewels of the collection we have come to see

lay three metal horns larger than dinosaur bones waist high openings at one end point over the treetops of the Humber Valley while the opposite taper

to grapefruit-sized apertures craggy surfaces resemble rocks other places are smooth like something unearthed at an archeological dig

neither of us fond of modern art we talk about what these have to tell us Anne is reminded of alpenhorn I think of ogres blowing calls to battle

Anne doesn't see the sign that says *do not touch* raps on one leans forward asks *is anyone home*? echoes loudly like a steel rimmed culvert

the smiling docent comes over I think she is going to give us heck for touching the exhibit two old ladies should pay more attention

she explains that the artist wants us to understand the need to listen to nature points to the smaller ends each covered by the raised figure of an ear

then I see that these look like ear trumpets early hearing aids held to catch sound waves the title of the exhibit "Wave Sounds" makes sense

Anne engages in easy dialogue with the docent my friend can talk to anyone she's a great listener I hover in the distance catch dribs and drabs

contemplate what escapes me in a day keen to move on to the next exhibit

Biting Off More Than You Can Chew

She said to me – 'Jeff's got a bloody cheek.' Didn't agree, we've never seen eye to eye. Jeff's that sort of guy, lands on his feet smelling of roses, strutting like a ram, nose in the air, all horny with wandering hands. Spitting blood, Jen whacked his ostrich ear.

Guess I owe her. She rabbit-rabbits in my ear, I listen and wipe her tear-stained cheek and gently hold her manicured hands, my sheepskin smile soothes her beetroot eyes. A sniff, a snuffle, a red snotty nose, weakly she rises on drink-wobble feet.

Those trainers *So* last-season on her feet and Grandma-dangles hanging from each ear, and black-head pimples on her shiny nose, *no* surely not puff-powder on her cheek? No wonder Jeff dumped her. His roaming eye has trapped a new belle, a proper hand—

ful. *She's* no putty in his fumbling hands. This damsel, un-distressed, swept-off her feet had long-time drooled, giving him the eye, yearning to whisper sweet nothings to his ear. Vixen thief, she stole him — of all the cheek. Dressed in sexy best, I watch Jen fume, nose

out of joint, she hasn't a clue, not a nose whiff that it was *I*, her Bezzie, whose hands did the dirty. Now Jeff and I are cheek by jowl like peas in pods, rotten at her feet. Banshee yells — she catches our kiss; my eardrums burst, dragon-flames pierce my eyes.

(Cont...)

(Cont...)

But I am smitten, red roses light my eye. His after-shave — Merlin magic to my nose, his every word— singing treacle to my ear as we walk life's Champagne, hand in hand floating the sky, no land to touch our feet, lips of spring-flower nectar smooch my cheek...

until

No husky whisper greets my ear, no meld of eyes. *Her* lipstick on his cheek. Long office-hours, nose to grindstone? No. Cold hands and walking feet.

Distant voices

(after 'Memories of Christmas' Dylan Thomas)

We tobogganed down the hill, towards the Welsh-speaking sea, like a moon bundling down the sky.

At the ice-edge, fish-freezing waves, it was snowing, white as Lapland, though no reindeer. We snowballed cats

and padded streets leaving spoon-footprints. 'What would you do if I saw a hippo?' 'I'd raise my arm, go bang and eat snow-pie.'

'Can fish see through sea and see it's snowing?'
'They think the sky's falling down.'
Trudging desolate streets homeward,

we stumbled on ancient oak-roots in mine-soot black to the cries of ghosts carrying their heads under arm.

Kranken and Yeti lurked in shadows of fear, 'Hark the Herald?' 'No-'Good King Wenceslas.'

'I'll count to three.'
We sang fortissimo in boy-soprano,
earth-dry voices added bass harmony.

Dent de Lion

To taste forbidden love, yellow flowers, summer sun-kissed blush of youth he loves me... he loves me not...

Fizzy Corona pop on a school trip, purple-brown nectar, sugar rich to fuel the group sing-song, he loves me.

Tears, ice-crystals trapped in a bell-jar, silk-worm wisps with browning-dead stalks, he loves me not.

Dandelion leaves eaten for thirty days, Theseus draws strength to defeat the half-man, half-bull, Minotaur, he loves me.

Weeds on a neighbour's nurtured lawn, a dawn attack with glyphosate, shrivelled debris, stollen stature, he loves me not.

Ground roots, caffeine-free winter warmth in a mug as winter sun dips below the horizon, he loves me.

dance

amor odit inertes

```
playful mood
                                        the hoverfly
calm air
     threads its dance
                settles
                                      on my red nose
advances
mouthful of air - small twirl -
     danced on tongue
twisted its way
     ran off with my wit
fifteen years -
yet her cheek on mine -
     wind caresses
     body recollects -
     something true that cannot be
forgotten
ooune two ooune two
sea r ching terns
```

body of knowledge

a set of body memories I own – gums play the nipple – discover we are two -

a set of body-anchored memories I own grew from seeds, from acts of war right deeply sown

the boats of Lofot lads drew searoads to our northern sphere well before the Germans came to Vågan - they used slaves to build their fortress here -

behind fences dogs and guards skeletons watched us kids spoke no word

operation Claymore set in motion was in fact post Dunkerque the allies first offensive act

midnight sun turned on
winter darkness sits
red balls grow
red balls grow
mother's chest is warm
light on beach and sand
five years heavy on the land
nearer closer really? true?
fill the window view

hornmines powderkegs dynamite

one lad lost a hand

all lights off five years of moon and sun cogwheels roll crush splash gnash soundless run cogwheels roll crunch crush splash

bed is warm

villagers but shades all bowed and bent we know us best by voice and scent

storytelling evenings are max

listen lost on stockfish stacks

voice is warm

an uncle climbed aboard a British ship joined Norwegian forces on that trip (fortyfive brought his stories and his wardog home stuck on Walcheren they'd fought)

(Cont...)

(Cont...)

an uncle lacking judos wanted easy kudos so betrayed an uncle on the other side

tortured into death darkness in a bubble

fills up a five-year old

chain links framed eyes grasp the links still the flight of time

us kids we heard them call now we were told

yesterday the Germans killed them all

peace arrived on our shores dressed in rags

we told each other never more never more

today we quote another set whispered words subterranean archives rows of tags

Hiroshima Nagasaki
Viet Nam Kosovo
and the next the next epicentre

Africa Asia Americas

so many we forget a lot of text of faded photographs forget to count Kristallnacht cenotaphs

EssA EssS GoebbEls Zauberlehrlings

vomit in a torture lab

these names they do not rhyme

krupp friedmann
hitler pickova
rosenberg niemoller
heydrich levi
mengele wiesel

defensive forceprojected fragments in Nurnberg escrow excuses explanations I did not know as relevant did not accept followed orders never more innocence

(Cont...)

(Cont...)

blind goddess lad of no return I kill I maim I burn

u c again? ok

Butchery

I wept so much when the tree surgeon came to prune the silver birches in our back garden.

It seemed to me like amputating a dancer's arms, brutally reducing each unrestrained arabesque to a crude sculpture.

In Winter, without leaves, the branches are Lavinia's butchered stumps or like shelled trees along the Western Front.

In Spring random growth gives the leaves the look of a bad haircut — shorn Samsons after Delilah's betrayal.

The Prayer Flag

I am making a prayer flag: it will hang wind-blown in the sky above my mind's mountain ranges, its frayed ends mutable, impermanent poetry.

Bursting from imagination's core – the heart's bolt hole, the ends, humming zephyrs, will sing their way via pen and ink to paper's star lit spaces.

White Death: Moscow 1812

(After Adolphe Yvon's 1856 painting of Marshal Ney Supporting The Rearguard During Napoleon's Retreat From Moscow 1812)

Whatever comes – the Russians or the white death, we'll face it together. Ammunition's running out ... bravado is all we have left.

Sky, grey with night and snow, closes in. We upturn the carts, flank together to conserve what heat we can.

Next to me, Marshall Ney steadies his musket with one hand, bolsters wounded Brossard with the other – a show of courage and defiance. Taking his cue from the Marshall, Gaspard holds the flag high.

Most of the men are out of their minds. Old Lavalle has dropped his gun. He's cradling a dead baby in one arm: Petit Jacques clings to the other.

Almost fifteen, Petit Jacques, but he's whimpering like a five-year-old.

We're stuck in the middle ... all around us, the Russians, brutal experts in guerrilla tactics, pick us off, one by one. Behind us, Moscow burns — its spiteful fires useless against the white death. White death, the Russians, they take no prisoners.

There's a naked corpse at my feet: stripped while hope still drove us forward.

I look at him and see myself ... Dupont's the name – Lieutenant Dupont —

not that it matters now...

Tough Roots

Searching online for a gardening gift, I settle on a fork, its prongs pointing with satisfying logic towards the earth. Americans call them 'spading' forks to distinguish them from pitchforks.

'American Gothic' has a farmer with a pitchfork standing with his daughter in front of their white clapboard home. Church-like, the pointed-arch window reinforces their terrifyingly pious deportment.

The farmer grips his fork as he would a weapon, ready to defend his land in troubled times, or warning off an undesirable suitor pitching a claim for his compliant, solemn-eyed daughter, whose child-bearing years are slipping away.

2019: Timeless in Lyonesse*

(La Vieux Benauge: Bordeaux)

Not Cornwall but Aquitaine: ancient woodland and vines, home to deer and wild boar, surround chateau and villa —the only buildings in sight. Though grateful for modern amenities, buttressed walls and arrow slits seem more meaningful. We might have slipped through a portal of rising mist and found a mystical land.

I half expect Sir Lancelot to ride out from under the chateau's archway, harness bells a-jingle, hoofbeats vying with crickets to override the infrequent drone of car or tractor. Most of the time, it is so quiet you can hear the grapes grow, a swelling promise of wine.

At night, plunged into medieval darkness, we dine simply on cheese and crusty bread — their time-honoured taste part of Aquitaine's past.

*First published in Reach Poetry 2019

SIMCHA LEBOF

Cerberus

It's difficult to believe advanced forecasts. Some call them mere speculations for when the country is caught in early autumn cool though it's mid-July, who can believe high summer will visit this Isle? A heatwave may hound Continental lands, drought-stricken as climate crisis tightens, scarcity's lean fist dominant as spring's rains fell short in Iberia and Northern Europe. In Southern Europe wildfires rage Greece, La Palma, even the Swiss Alps smoulder and blaze whilst people, young and old, suffer its sultry intensity, no gentle lover's kiss in scorching all it touches. Will Cerberus turn a head to us?

SIMCHA LEBOF

A Parent's Life

They never warn you that being a parent isn't easy, that babies don't let you sleep the night through, that toddlers may not comply with your planning, that children may borrow without asking and not return those 'loans' to you, that teens may be embarrassed by your sense of dress and a million other things too. But what some do assure is here you'll find purest love that'll remain with you beyond the day you die and when that love leaves home for the first time you'll find it hard not to cry.

ANNA MARIA MICKIEWICZ

theatrum

he stood behind the first curtain the woman behind the second behind the third, a cloud

after the fourth, we see the sky with droplets condensed with latent greenery with translucent wetlands the heralds of the day with roots the signs of the night of silence

yesterday's mists breathe clouds where they rush?

blackberry orchard of sorrows of body

the legs alone carry the wanderer he lost the track in that autumn of hollow leaf wet with shining lanterns in a distant kingdom on loess hills

ANNA MARIA MICKIEWICZ

Dream

they sleep in the forest
on a pine bed
smells
next to a glass wall
night goddess Nyx
protects against noise
tomorrow
you can enter them
creaks
rusty gate
the cat brings them food

in the murmur of the night naked

ANNA MARIA MICKIEWICZ

still in love with the sun

sunken once upon a time in the fields

now melt in the London fog

sealed a cobweb possessed

overgrown with grass thicket bent

accustomed to breakups

are you still in love with the sun?

MANDY PANNETT

Keats at the Casement

He turns on his heel as he always does when he enters a room, neglecting his host

for the gift of a sky and a dazzle of words in the air. Below the ledge, a sparrow, shabby in brown

picks about the gravel, an entrepreneur of bugs and grit. A blink and it becomes

the Muse of a spring-time nightingale in an orchard of blossom and buds.

He exists in this moment of sparrow and sky. Not yet that birdless vista.

MANDY PANNETT

One Thing

I met her again, suddenly, in a dream. She looked unwell, skinny and lined, hair like straw. Unfriendly, unhappy to see me. I thought you were dead, I said. I'm glad you're not.

She said nothing.

Later I found her waiting
by a window and the light
was not bright
but not too dull either. And I said
I'm sad we lost touch.
Every time I use the pencil case you gave me
the one with a pattern of paper clips
I think of you.

A moment. An unfreezing. Something I had forgotten was unfinished is finished.

MANDY PANNETT

Sir Walter in the Park

My grandparents lived in Beddington near two gasometers which terrified me. In my mind they were Gog and Magog. Beyond, lay the park where my grandfather picked up litter and autumn leaves with a spike. Invisible, but close, walked Walter Raleigh in a scarlet cloak, tending an orangery with Bess, his wife.

Raleigh in Beddington? An orangery in the park? Surely, a child's fantasy. But I've checked online. A vast manorial estate belonging to Bess's family stretched for miles and yes, there was an orangery, one of the first in England.

And there were ghosts. Raleigh's decapitated head buried under a haunted tree. His spectre, searching.

But listen, happier times, overheard on a hot summer day:

'Come, Bess. You have, methinks, been too much alone. Let us wander together with our sons and enjoy the fragrance of this bright fruit for it is golden as sunlight at noon

POETS BIOGRAPHIES

CLAIR CHILVERS

Clair Chilvers was a cancer scientist and lives in Gloucestershire, UK. She has had poems published in numerous online and print magazines. She won second prize in the Poetry Kit Ekphrastic Competition 2020 and her poems have been commended in the Cinnamon Press Pamphlet Prize 2020, the Poetry Kit Competition 2020 and the Gloucestershire Writers' Network Competition 2023. She is a CITN poet and joins PK courses regularly. She has two published collections: *Out of the Darkness* (Frosted Fire, 2021) and *Island* (Impspired Press, 2022) . www.clairchilverspoetry.co.uk twitter@cedc13 https://www.facebook.com/clair.chilvers

GERALDINE COUSINS

Geraldine Cousins lives in Hampshire. Attended courses and workshops at the Poetry School in Lambeth and has had a lot of poems published in the Kent & Sussex Folios and one in Bangladesh.

ANNEST GWILYM

Author of two books of poetry: Surfacing (2018) and What the Owl Taught Me (2020), both published by Lapwing Poetry. What the Owl Taught Me was Poetry Kit's Book of the Month in June 2020 and one of North of Oxford's summer reading recommendations in 2020. Annest has been widely published in literary journals and anthologies, both online and in print, and placed in several writing competitions, winning one. She was the editor of the webzine Nine Muses Poetry from 2018-2020. She was a nominee for Best of the Net 2021. Her third book of poetry – Seasons in the Sun – is forthcoming from Gwasg Carreg Gwalch in early September 2023.

CATHERINE HEIGHWAY

Catherine Heighway lives in London, Ontario, Canada. She has taken a number of Jim's courses through Poetry Kit over the past several years. In addition to writing, she enjoys gardening, swimming and travelling.

FRANCESCA HUNT

Francesca Hunt is an enthusiastic writer of poetry and fiction living near Welshpool in Mid-Wales. As a retired Chemistry teacher, she came to Poetry later in life. She has won poetry competitions, been short listed in several and had poems published in anthologies and magazines.

JON KILI

80+ male alien on British soil

CORINNE LAWRENCE

Corinne lives in the South Manchester area of the UK. A specialist teacher of Speech and Drama for over thirty years, Corinne started writing seriously in 2010. Corinne has had poems published by Indigo Dreams Publishing in Reach Poetry, and also in 'For The Silent' and 'Voices For the Silent – anthologies published in conjunction with The League Against Cruel Sports. Corinne is also a 'Poetry Kit' poet as from 2020. Several of Corinne's poems have been reviewed Writers' Forum and Writing Magazine, and she has won, and been placed or short listed in a number of competitions in both of these publications. Corinne enjoys writing both formal and free verse and is especially fond of ekphrastic poetry.

SIMCHA LEBOF

ANNA MARIA MICKIEWICZ

Anna Maria Mickiewicz (http://faleliterackie.com) is a Polish-born poet, writer, editor, publisher, and foreign correspondent who writes both in Polish and in English. Founder of the Literary Waves publishing house. Anna moved to California, and then to London, where she has lived for many years. She edits the annual literary magazine *Pamiętnik Literacki* (*The Literary Memoir*), London, and Contemporary Writers of Poland (USA), and is a member of the English Pen.

MANDY PANNETT

Mandy Pannett is a creative writing tutor and the author of several poetry collections. She is currently working on a poetry/music/art/collaboration about the South Downs.