

Jane Williams– Five Poems



Feature Poet

Lifting the roof

Preoccupied by cloistered lives ...
The level of humidity required
for the Never Never plant
to breathe indoors.
The rain slicked moves
these suburban roofs make
tidal riverward.
Paths cracked with winter-greening.
Gardens overlapping best intentions
root bound under layers of spheres:
tropo, strato, medo, thermo, exo ...
See what happens
when poems are unpeopled
exposed to the elements
with minimal interference.
Why there's space enough for birds
to ride currents of air
for a fur seal to dive in
and resurface shaking the sun
lit fish into bite size pieces.
Before long time itself
becomes a generous benefactor
a constant instant -
take this very second
(albeit just passing through)
230 beats of the honey bee's wings
300,000 kilometres of light

I try not to wonder what the neighbours might think

except those times ...

I'm on the phone playing the belly button game
you show me yours etc during lockdown facetime
with my granddaughter in the courtyard at dawn
in my dressing gown - you get the picture.

Or as the postie delivers a succession of ebay
parcels stamped with my daughter's name because
she lives in a part of town where stealing isn't
the risky business it should be

or when I'm sitting on the balcony
reading poetry drinking tea in my floppy red paper
sunhat that's seen sunnier days
occasionally rotating my bare feet as if
I'm on a long-haul flight
to the other side of the same world.
Looking up now and then at the sky
then back to the poems. All this by way of placing
myself in time and space, giving myself
some workable kind of form.

Note to child-self

Remember the blood-warmth of the sun
aligning your senses. Remember a frisson
of days leaping from one nerve end to the next.
Remember your sap chewing, nectar sipping self.
Remember climbing trees, reading in trees, being
swayed by trees. Remember your rapport with
collared dogs, harnessed horses, any caged and
vital thing. Remember holding shell after shell
to your ear listening for the ocean's memoir
listening for your name. Remember how the rain
that kept you indoors also rewarded with its
thrumming song against the window and the roof
then later with puddles and streams, how the world
glistened and you with it, the visceral comfort
of your mingling scents. Remember the rhythmic
stability of the moon remembering you...

Song of being

May the music of the spheres bless and enliven you
when your own song catches, disabled in your throat.

May the air be always breathable and supportive
of your flying dreams, your falling dreams.

May the earth recognise and welcome your steps
as pilgrimage, even the fleeing and frenzied ones.

May your play with fire be purposeful and wise -
checking motive, regenerating intent.

May water divide the weight of your burdens
until you find your own centre.

May you acknowledge the origins of the food of others
as the taste of prayer.

May you detect in the scent of incoming rain
the potential of each growing pain.

And when the elements reset and the aether softly sings you
back through that first wind tunnel of stars

may it be not a moment before you are done,
before those who have aligned their hearts with yours are done.

Hum and fray

What does it matter whether
we ignited in space
or crawled out from the sea

if such questions merely serve
to distract us

from our sense of belonging,
from our active belonging.

By us of course I mean those
for whom wonder too readily
morphs into near-useless
analysis. Pass the petri dish.

Once we believed lemmings fell
from stormy skies
then
we got on with our days.

Now plagued by face values
we have become perilous
as these warming degrees of separation
as the rhino and the honeybee
as the sea turtle and her finite sons.

Still the world turns and us with it
every imbalance gravitating toward its centre
coaxing us into unthinking moments of awe
into quelling indifference
and the imagined power it affords.

Hush ...

humming at the edge of our senses
all the live wires of common existence
desirous and willing to reconnect.

Jane Williams is an Australian poet who lives in Tasmania and is the author of eight collections of poetry, most recently *Between Breaths* (Silver Bow, Canada 2021). She has featured at readings and festivals throughout Australia and several other countries including Slovakia where she held a three-month residency in 2016.
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