

Celebrating Spring

SELHuG's April 2022 meeting, also a fundraiser for AFRIL

Will do an intro with a little bit about AFRIL and what they are doing at the moment – and Ann has a refugee friend who may speak. And explain how to donate to AFRIL via Facebook.

1. Tony

Two haiku

To Daffodils by Robert Herrick

Fair Daffodils, we weep to see
You haste away so soon;
As yet the early-rising sun
Has not attain'd his noon.
Stay, stay,
Until the hasting day
Has run
But to the even-song;
And, having pray'd together, we
Will go with you along.

We have short time to stay, as you,
We have as short a spring;
As quick a growth to meet decay,
As you, or anything.
We die
As your hours do, and dry
Away,
Like to the summer's rain;
Or as the pearls of morning's dew,
Ne'er to be found again.

2. Corinne

The tale of Echo and Narcissus

3. Ann:

Spring by Dave Mann

Eat the Damn Chocolate Cake, Anon

4. Becky

Miracle on St David's Day by Gillian Clarke

'They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude'
– 'The Daffodils' by W. Wordsworth

An afternoon yellow and open-mouthed
with daffodils. The sun treads the path
among cedars and enormous oaks.
It might be a country house, guests strolling,
the rumps of gardeners between nursery shrubs.

I am reading poetry to the insane.
An old woman, interrupting, offers
as many buckets of coal as I need.
A beautiful chestnut-haired boy listens
entirely absorbed. A schizophrenic

on a good day, they tell me later.
In a cage of first March sun a woman
sits not listening, not seeing, not feeling.
In her neat clothes the woman is absent.
A big, mild man is tenderly led

to his chair. He has never spoken.
His labourer's hands on his knees, he rocks
gently to the rhythms of the poems.
I read to their presences, absences,
to the big, dumb labouring man as he rocks.

He is suddenly standing, silently,
huge and mild, but I feel afraid. Like slow
movement of spring water or the first bird
of the year in the breaking darkness,
the labourer's voice recites 'The Daffodils'.

The nurses are frozen, alert; the patients
seem to listen. He is hoarse but word-perfect.
Outside the daffodils are still as wax,
a thousand, ten thousand, their syllables
unspoken, their creams and yellows still.

Forty years ago, in a Valleys school,
the class recited poetry by rote.
Since the dumbness of misery fell
he has remembered there was a music
of speech and that once he had something to say.

When he's done, before the applause, we observe
the flowers' silence. A thrush sings
and the daffodils are flame.

From Gillian Clarke's [Selected Poems](#)

To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time by Robert Herrick - 1591-1674

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
Old Time is still a-flying;
And this same flower that smiles today
Tomorrow will be dying.

The glorious lamp of heaven, the sun,
The higher he's a-getting,
The sooner will his race be run,
And nearer he's to setting.

That age is best which is the first,
When youth and blood are warmer;
But being spent, the worse, and worst
Times still succeed the former.

Then be not coy, but use your time,
And while ye may, go marry;
For having lost but once your prime,
You may forever tarry.

5. Deborah Hooper

Florescence

Music - *Recomposed by Max Richter: Vivaldi, The Four Seasons (Spring 0 and Spring1)*
with a montage of spring flowers (from my garden, photos taken by Barry Willis)

6. Audrey

Spring by Benedicta Mbanuzue

Nature Undisturbed by Benedicta Mbanuzue from her *Sunrise in Africa* collection

7. Hester

Swifts by Anne Stevenson

Spring comes little, a little. All April it rains.
The new leaves stick in their fists; new ferns still fiddleheads.
But one day the swifts are back. Face to the sun like a child
You shout, 'The swifts are back!'

Sure enough, bolt nocks bow to carry one sky-scyther
Two hundred miles an hour across fullblown windfields.
Swereee swereee. Another. And another.
It's the cut air falling in shrieks on our chimneys and roofs.

The next day, a fleet of high crosses cruises in ether.
These are the air pilgrims, pilots of air rivers.
But a shift of wing, and they're earth-skimmers, daggers

Skilful in guiding the throw of themselves away from themselves.

Quick flutter, a scimitar upsweep, out of danger of touch, for
Earth is forbidden to them, water's forbidden to them,
All air and fire, little owlish ascetics, they outfly storms,
They rush to the pillars of altitude, the thermal fountains.

Here is a legend of swifts, a parable —
When the Great Raven bent over earth to create the birds,
The swifts were ungrateful. They were small muddy things
Like shoes, with long legs and short wings,

So they took themselves off to the mountains to sulk.
And they stayed there. 'Well,' said the Raven, after years of this,
'I will give you the sky. You can have the whole sky
On condition that you give up rest.'

'Yes, yes,' screamed the swifts, 'We abhor rest.
We detest the filth of growth, the sweat of sleep,
Soft nests in the wet fields, slimehold of worms.
Let us be free, be air!'

So the Raven took their legs and bound them into their bodies.
He bent their wings like boomerangs, honed them like knives.
He streamlined their feathers and stripped them of velvet.
Then he released them, *Never to Return*

Inscribed on their feet and wings. And so
We have swifts, though in reality, not parables but
Bolts in the world's need: swift
Swifts, not in punishment, not in ecstasy, simply

Sleepers over oceans in the mill of the world's breathing.
The grace to say they live in another firmament.
A way to say the miracle will not occur,
And watch the miracle.

Anne Stevenson, "Swifts" from *Poems 1955-2005* www.bloodaxebooks.com

The Fight of the Year by Roger McGough

And there goes the bell for the third month
And Winter comes out of his corner looking groggy
Spring leads with a left to the head
followed by a sharp right to the body
 daffodils
 primroses
 crocuses
 snowdrops
 lilacs
 violets
 pussy willow
Winter can't take much more punishment and

Spring shows no signs of tiring

tadpoles

squirrels

baalams

badgers

bunny rabbits

mad march hares

horse and hounds

Spring is merciless

Winter won't go the whole twelve rounds

bobtail clouds

scallywag winds

the sun

the pavement artist

in every town

a left to the chin

and Winter's down!

1 tomatoes

2 radish

3 cucumber

4 onions

5 beetroot

6 celery

7 and any

8 amount

9 of lettuce

10 for dinner

Winter's out for the count

Spring is the winner!

8. Sam

Come Hither by John Clare

Come hither, ye who thirst;

Pure still the brook flows on;

Its waters are not cursed;

Clear from its rock of stone

It bubbles and it boils,

An everlasting rill,

Then eddies and recoils

And wimples clearer still.

Art troubled? then come hither,

And taste of peace for ever.

Art weary? here's the place

For weariness to rest,

These flowers are herbs of grace

To cure the aching breast;

Soft beds these mossy banks

Where dewdrops only weep,

Where Nature turns God thanks

And signs herself to sleep.
Art troubled with strife? come hither,
Here's peace and summer weather.

Come hither for pleasure who list--
Here are oak boughs for a shade;
These leaves they will hide from the mist
Ere the sun his broad disc has displayed.
Here is peace if thy bosom be troubled,
Here is rest--if thou'rt weary, sit down--
Here pleasure you'll find it is doubled.
For content is life's only crown.

Disciples of sorrow, come hither,
For no blasts my joys can wither.

Art sick of the naughty world?
There's many been sick before thee;
Then leave these young shoots with their tendrils curled
For the oaks that are mossy and hoary.
Art weary with beating the flood?
Here's a mossy bank--come sit down:
'Twas Nature that planted this wood,
Unknown to the sins of the town
Full of pride and contention--come hither,
We'll talk of our troubles together.

The world is all lost in commotion,
The blind lead the blind into strife;
Come hither, thou wreck of life's ocean,
Let solitude warm thee to life.
Be the pilgrim of love and the joy of its sorrow,
Be anything but the world's man:
The dark of to-day brings the sun of to-morrow,
Be proud that your joy here began.
Poor shipwreck of life, journey hither,
And we'll talk of life's troubles together.

A letter by the naturalist Gilbert White written on 12 April, part of the *Natural History of Selbourne*