Poetry Day Ireland – 7 May 2015
Programming Resource Pack: Selected Poems from the
Poems that Make Grown Men Cry anthology (ed Anthony
Holden and Ben Holden, Simon & Schuster)

Shakespeare
Sonnet XXX

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste:
Then can I drown an eye, unus'd to flow,
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,
And weep afresh love's long since cancell'd woe,
And moan the expense of many a vanish'd sight:
Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,
And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er
The sad account of fore-bemoaned moan,
Which I new pay as if not paid before.
But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,
All losses are restor'd and sorrows end.
John Clare
I Am!

I am—yet what I am none cares or knows;
My friends forsake me like a memory lost:
I am the self-consumer of my woes—
They rise and vanish in oblivious host,
Like shadows in love’s frenzy’d stifled throes
And yet I am, and live—like vapours tossed

Into the nothingness of scorn and noise,
Into the living sea of waking dreams,
Where there is neither sense of life or joys,
But the vast shipwreck of my life’s esteems;
Even the dearest that I loved the best
Are strange—nay, rather, stranger than the rest.

I long for scenes where man hath never trod
A place where woman never smiled or wept
There to abide with my Creator, God,
And sleep as I in childhood sweetly slept,
Untroubling and untroubled where I lie
The grass below—above the vaulted sky.
Emily Dickinson

After great pain, a formal feeling comes – (372)

After great pain, a formal feeling comes –
The Nerves sit ceremonious, like Tombs –
The stiff Heart questions ‘was it He, that bore,’
And ‘Yesterday, or Centuries before’?

The Feet, mechanical, go round –
A Wooden way
Of Ground, or Air, or Ought –
Regardless grown,
A Quartz contentment, like a stone –

This is the Hour of Lead –
Remembered, if outlived,
As Freezing persons, recollect the Snow –
First – Chill – then Stupor – then the letting go –
Robert Graves
The Cool Web

Children are dumb to say how hot the day is,
How hot the scent is of the summer rose,
How dreadful the black wastes of evening sky,
How dreadful the tall soliers drulling by,

But we have speech, to chill the angry day,
And speech, to dull the roses's cruel scent,
We spell away the overhanging night,
We spell away the soldiers and the fright.

There's a cool web of language winds us in,
Retreat from too much joy or too much fear:
We grow sea-green at last and coldly die
In brininess and volubility.

But if we let our tongues lose self-possession,
Throwing off language and its watery clasp
Before our death, instead of when death comes,
Facing the wide glare of the children's day,
Facing the rose, the dark sky and the drums,
We shall go mad, no doubt, and die that way.
Rabindranath Tagore

Those Who Are Me Do Not Know

Those who are near me do not know that you are nearer to me than they are
Those who speak to me do not know that my heart is full with your unspoken words
Those who crowd in my path do not know that I am walking alone with you
Those who love me do not know that their love brings you to my heart
Theodore Roethke
My Papa’s Waltz

The whiskey on your breath
Could make a small boy dizzy;
But I hung on like death:
Such waltzing was not easy.

We romped until the pans
Slid from the kitchen shelf;
My mother’s countenance
Could not unfrown itself.

The hand that held my wrist
Was battered on one knuckle;
At every step you missed
My right ear scraped a buckle.

You beat time on my head
With a palm caked hard by dirt,
Then waltzed me off to bed
Still clinging to your shirt.
Douglas Dunn

Sandra’s Mobile

A constant artist, dedicated to
Curves, shapes, the pleasant shades, the feel of colour,
She did not care what shapes, what red, what blue,
Scorning the dull to ridicule the duller
With a disinterested, loyal eye.
So Sandra brought her this and taped it up —
Three seagulls from a white and indoor sky —
A gift of old artistic comradeship.
‘Blow on them, Love.’ Those silent birds winged round
On thermals of my breath. On her last night,
Trying to stay awake, I saw love crowned
In tears and wooden birds and candlelight.
She did not wake again. To prove our love
Each gull, each gull, each gull, turned into dove.
I loved your age of wonder: your third and fourth and fifth years spent astonished, widening your eyes at each new trick of the world—and me standing there, solemnly explaining how it was done. The moon and stars, rainbows, photographs, gravity, the birds in the air, the difference between blood and water.

In true life? you would say, looking up and I would nod, like some broken-hearted sage, knowing there would be no answers soon to all the big questions that were left, to cruelty and fear, to age and grief and death, and no words either. And you, like me, will sit and shake your head. In true life? Yes, my sweet, strong daughter, I’m afraid there is all this as well, and this is it: true life.