**Pictures and Poetry April 2020. The paintings of Edward Hopper.**

**Poetry inspired by the workshop**

**Questions by Christine Hopcutt**

The woman in the window, what does she see?  
Is it a man who has left her, her lover maybe?  
Run through the bright  grass or sombre dark trees Was it a row, an argument, a tiff, maybe more?

She looks anxious, leaning towards the glass Is she watching a child playing in the sun?  
Worried he’s strayed too far in the long yellow grass Is he defiant, neither  looking nor taking any heed

Perhaps she’s watching, waiting for her husband to come back Is she excited maybe not seen him for a while ?  
Expectant, elated maybe he was a soldier in Iraq?  
Watching waiting for him to appear through the trees

Or maybe she’s not waiting for anyone at all Is simply happy to be there looking through the glass  
Glad to be alive and living in the thrall  
Of a beautiful day in the sun with a view

**Room In Brooklyn by Malcolm Whitehead**

*Don’t you get lonely?*  
*Living by yourself  
in a one-bedroomed apartment  
on the eighteenth floor?*

Look closely, I say,  
look at the horizon beyond the rooftops,  
see the white vase against  
the browns of high rise buildings,  
see how beautifully I have  
arranged these flowers –  
pinks and greens against  
a pale blue sky.  
Does that look lonely to you?

*Do you ever wave to your neighbours?*

Never.

*Do you mingle? Socialise? Party?*

Hardly ever.

*But, surely, that rocking chair  
is meant for the elderly –  
and those views meant to be enjoyed.*

This chair fits me perfectly.  
This chair is entirely mine.  
Gives me access to these views  
whenever I choose.

*I could not live as you do.*

Your view of my life  
is a view I choose to ignore.  
Others will paint their own  
pictures of my life,  
but I paint my own pictures.

You are not required to view my gallery.

With or without your approval,  
my pictures hang proudly on these walls.

**Tableau by Gill Garrett *(written to A Room in Brooklyn)***  
Beneath a vase of tall white blooms  
she’s arranged the light blue cloth with care,  
half lowered the blinds,  
positioned her chair at the open window  
to catch the last rays of a dying sun;

Is this a tableau replicated  
in countless other homes  
across the silenced streets,  
in shadowy redbrick buildings

whose inhabitants watch, like her,  
as days and weeks slip slowly by,  
their lives on hold,  
a glimpse at a distant casement  
their only brush with humanity?

**Husband dear husband, I am furniture no longer by PS *(written to A Room in New York)***

I’m wearing my best dress  
It’s orange – your favourite colour  
Just like your chair, and the lampshade  
Am I furniture – like them?

I tinkle the piano, you don’t hear  
Engrossed in your paper, tie tight  
You are buttoned up, waistcoated  
Drawn into yourself

I look down, not seeing  
the door behind me like a ladder up to the sky  
Reaching outwards  
An ascent to escape

If I but turn my gaze right  
I would spy an open window.  
Like a wisp on the night air  
I would assume my freedom.  
Furniture no longer

**Hopper Haikus by Gill B**

Poised to spring forward  
Your feet in the starters blocks  
Awaiting a sign.

Pent up energy  
Sizzles in your orange frock.  
You are trapped in time.

You’re ready to leap.  
You’re peering to the distance.  
You long for escape.

The shutters frame you  
Captured in that one instance:  
Arms, chest, shoulders, face.

What do you yearn for?  
What burdens do you carry?  
What fear do you know?

The woods are lovely.  
The yellow field is airy.  
To which will you go?

What silence is here  
What patience do you wait in  
Your gaze on afar.

What are you thinking?  
Are you loving or hating?  
Tell me who you are.

**An English morning 2020 by Christine Shaw  (*written to Cape Cod Morning 1950)***  
When you wake up in the morning  
You believe that everything’s okay  
Then just as your brain starts clearing  
You realise that you’re not hearing …  
anything

That eerie silence isn’t normal  
The day’s plan is nothing formal  
You get up and open the shutters  
Birds swoop down to the lawn from the gutters  
Dawn’s early light hits the clapperboard wall  
Reflecting it’s whiteness, echoing its pall

The birds are singing like we’ve never heard them do  
At times, they are singing, just for me and not for you  
The clouds, the bay window, all a shade of Covid blue  
My mood, ambiguous, less hopeful, easy to misconstrue.

I’m looking for an answer, I cannot meet your gaze  
My emotions once expectant, now forlorn, I’m in a haze.  
We are bound to be apart for many weeks, how will we cope?  
We hear the briefings, and the podcasts, we must not give up hope.

I know that you are the best of the very best  
You work all hours that God sends, you have very little rest.  
The skies are clear, the stars are bright  
We must all walk towards the light  
This has been going on for weeks now, do not give up the fight.

*Oh to be in England, now that April’s here*  
I take comfort in good poetry (you won’t find any here!)  
The month has been exceptional, so many hours of sun  
At least from my perspective the mental battle’s won  
But tomorrow is another day, and still we’re overrun.

Let’s pull ourselves together, and get on with another day  
We will phone and write and text and our normal lives delay.  
I won’t look out of the window, so longingly again  
But for your safety darling, I will pray and pray and pray.

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**The Rainbow Bridge, Polperro – artist Carol Gowing – watercolour and ink by Maggie Sanderson (Warm up exercise)**  
Golds, aquamarines, peaches, greens, blues, black and grey  
Wonky windows, sweeping shapes within shapes  
Colours overlapping each other, taking my gaze from the water  
Over the bridge, touching the rooftops, up to the hillside beyond.  
Each stone, each slate captures the feel of this tiny, Cornish village.  
I can smell he sea, hear the gulls, remember the peacefulness…….  
On the corner is a favourite restaurant, The House on the Props, a pointer lives there.  
Now I can taste the crab sandwich  
Followed by warm scone crumbs falling onto the tablecloth  
I tried to paint in this style later that week – colour on colour – shape upon shape

This painting spoke to me on the exhibition wall that summer’s day.*Maggie Sanderson*

**Anticipation by Maggie Sanderson***(inspired by ‘Cape Cod Morning 1950’ by Edward Hopper)*  
Edward,  
You’ve taken me back twenty-nine years  
To a single mum in her Victorian home.  
Standing, waiting, anticipating

The clock on the wall was ticking  
The children watching TV  
And I was waiting for a car to appear  
Now a distant memory

You’ve made me remember the solitary years  
New job, new responsibilities  
Learning, coping, sometimes moping ……

You’ve made me grateful for how far we’ve come  
Happy families – no longer alone  
Creating, sharing and always caring  
Twenty nine years – long gone.

**Lady In The Window by David Winbow***(inspired by Cape Cod Morning 1950 by Edward Hopper)*  
Where is it headed, this glowing boat of a room,  
skirting the darkened shore?  
No lookout ever more vigilant than this,  
no figurehead more ready to part the seas.  
It’s not here yet, what is desired;  
that is to come.  
Perhaps the telegraph of the phone  
will signal for some change of speed,  
some new direction,  
or halt things, midstream.  
But, for this moment –  
the momentous one,  
tranquillity.

**David Winbow**  
Imagine Billy Collins here  
In this slow New England afternoon –  
he could delight it with his chosen words,  
captivate  
finding depths not seen, but sensed,  
my soul purring, a warm cat.

**Poem inspired by Cape Cod Morning 1950 by Edward Hopper, by Maggie Matthews**  
So Mr Hopper  
you think you know me  
You think I am waiting  
Waiting and expecting  
Is it so clear?  
I am alone yet well dressed,  
An effort made with my hair  
The light is on in welcome  
But I do not know why  
I search the distance  
And why the dark wood  
dominates my view, and my mind  
I only know that night is nigh  
The shutters will shut  
Me efforts will go un noticed  
‘Til tomorrow when  
I will live in hope again.

My aside to this!  
This is by no means me –  
Everyday is a bad hair day!  
Everyday in everyday clothes!  
The day is ruled by a to do list  
Never fulfilled  
But there’s always hope for tomorrow.

**In loving memory of Amanda Ingham, a long-time participant and dedicated supporter of Ledbury Poetry Festival’s community workshops**

**Anonymity by Amanda Ingham  
*(Inspired by the painting WESTERN MOTEL by Edward Hopper, right)*In a motel room, what’s her story?  
Bags packed, ready, waiting  
Battered, worn, holding their breath.  
Just arrived or just going;  
Sun coming up or going down?  
She waits for a signal.

Streamers of light dull the details  
Bare walls, bare floors;  
Curtains barely wide enough to cover  
Windows. The door unadorned with material,  
Shut. Gripping the edge of the bed, stiff,  
She looks through me.

Picture frame on the bedside  
Incongruous, inappropriate,  
Unlikely. Shares its space with  
A light – functional, lifeless,  
Unromantic. Bed, chair, solid  
Unmemorable, leaving no lasting impression.

Just her, poised, waiting.  
Waiting for what, who, why,  
An anonymous life, a story  
Untold, but not unrecorded,  
This snapshot in time haunts  
Me. Familiarity in anonymity.