**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.