**Segments May 2020. Bread**

**Poetry inspired by the workshop**

**Exercise: House in Lockdown by David Winbow**  
I see that you are beginning to notice me again. I suppose the isolation helps, as does the sunshine. I always look at my best in sunshine, I think- my crenellations seen best against a blue sky- these things matter to a house, you know. The solid work you did with me in our early days have paid off; I feel the better for it, but I’ve noticed a falling-off, recently. I make allowances, I think, for the rapidity of human decline, but, really, it’s time you braced up a little; you know perfectly well what I am lacking, and there’s no point in prevaricating. At present, it seems all the effort in this relationship is coming from me. I know these contagions can be distressing- I remember the Spanish Flu of 1919- a whole generation of builders and decorators lost. Those were trying times for a house, but let’s cut to the larger picture here. You are just a passing affaire to me, and not the most interesting one, to be frank, and I feel you are just not making the effort. True, my beauty still shines through, but it’s not all down to me! Don’t complain to me about age, or debility, I’ve heard it all before. Others are waiting to take your place, and soon will. Just snap out of it, and we can do wonderful things together.  
Yours (not for ever)  
The House

**Bread by David Winbow**  
Bread torn from a loaf.  
Cheese from the folded paper.  
Cold tea from the twist topped bottle.  
The cooling engine ticking.  
Warmth.

Morning comes grey over the bonnet.  
The ghosts of trees find shape.  
Bibury’s playing otters.  
A day unlike the others.  
This is mine.

**Give us this day by Gill Garret**(Open Day, Clencher’s Mill)  
Except for days like this  
when history, briefly resurrected,  
leaps into life to catch us unawares,  
they’re stilled and silenced now –  
wallowers, brayers, bridge trees, tuns.

Alien to our generation,  
those names our great grandparents knew,  
whose daily bread depended on them –  
stone nuts, runners, damsels, shoes.

But in this soundscape of the miller’s world –  
the clank of wheel, the scrape of stone –  
we haul them back like sacks of grain,  
dust them off, reclaim them for the moment –  
launder box, penstock, layshaft, flume.

**Warm up- Everything is Alive….My House by Maggie Matthews**  
So! Maggie you and Bill followed a long line of my temporary owners in 1987. Dilapidated and falling apart I had seen better days, much better owners. The Bishop being one of them, leaving most of the Garden to Herefordshire Council, now known as Bishops Meadow. Rumour runs that Orlando  Haines ran a bakery. That needs checking out Maggie. I gave refuge to a poor family, who were unable to look after me properly. No fault of theirs! I am entrusted to you now, good luck with it all!  
I wasn’t sure I liked being made into flats, but I’m happy now, I feel lived in and comfortable, like an old pair of slippers with a refreshed soul. I quite like the conservatory and love the garden. I really enjoy prodding you into maintenance when the need arises.  
I hope I am being kind to you. I love having you here, as much as you seem to love living within my welcoming walls.

**Waste not Want Not by Maggie Matthews**  
You’ve left me in the bread bin  
Unloved and going stale.  
What’s this? Cold tea being poured all over me Tanning my pale body brown Melted butter, yummy, molasses scrumpy And now you are making me fruity!  
And watch out! Here comes cinnamon  
To spice me up a bit.  
Again I’m oven baked  
Again I wrap the home  
With comfort and flavour expectation  
I hear the children shout  
There’s Bread Pudding about!

[From Maggie: “Quite by accident 13 lines. The bakers’ dozen!”]

**Home Alive by Maggie McGladdery**  
We’ve been together now for quite some time, and we seem to rub along quite well.  
You do seem to be with me quite a lot at the moment and the living room is getting more lived in! I am really pleased about the dining room, – that isn’t one any more. The table in the kitchen I has been used for eating for a while, and so this poor neglected room, full of ……stuff, was left to fill with dust, carpet mites and boxes. Your efforts to clear, rearrange and repurpose have been really appreciated. It means that now you are in and out of this part of me more often and the need to scratch the itch has gone.  
The products of activity in this room are now being distributed elsewhere, but please be careful how and where you bang in the next nail for their display!  
Talking of cleaning, there seems to be more of it elsewhere in my insides! Sorting of contents does help me breathe slightly better, though the disturbed spiders do tickle somewhat!  
My surroundings also seem a little more cared for. Thank you for the flowers, they are always welcome! You both appear to work with a will, and I quite enjoyed the power wash cleaning of my approaches. However, not many seem to be arriving to appreciate it, except men in a hurry, carrying boxes and parcels. My bell is silent, apart from these men arriving, but they never come over the threshold.  
What happened to the younger folk who used to roam my interior, and the regular visits on a Friday from one of them to my garage? It’s still a hive of activity, but no visitors or small person learning how to put one metal bit together with another.  
Is this how it’s going to be now – our new normal? It’s pleasant enough, but I do miss the occasional party with all the energy, music and excitement to raise the rafters! Maybe soon.

**The Motherload by Maggie McGladdery**  
The mother, whose children have grown  
and now flown  
the nest of the oven and home,  
continues to grow with the flower of youth and is pregnant with need and the flour of the seed producing and proving her worth.

**How Heavy is Bread? by Maggie McGladdery**  
Developing taste; it rises with age,  
To the sour, the crust and the seed.  
This love of the dough, containing the grain Proves costly on hip and on thigh.  
Then heavily pounding the lanes and the streets, Face rising with heat, Exhaustion that leads To the need for the treat Of fresh bread and butter and jam.

**A New Cough by Malcolm White**

Mum checks a loaf for the use-by date.  
Her son looks on. He looks about eight.

Both are looking a picture of health,  
an aisle to themselves is newfound wealth.

As an elderly couple approach  
mum nods to her son – he’s been well coached.

He begins to persistently cough.  
Could be Covid! The couple are off!

Quiet again, he catches my eye.  
I smile, wink – I’ve spotted his lie.

He laughs, I laugh, our hands to our throats  
as mum moves on to muesli and oats.

**My House in Lockdown** **by Gill Betts**  
You have made changes to me.  
Do I like them? Do I not?  
All that you have done, you have done with thought and care.  
That means a lot to me.

Major changes happened, I felt scared.  
Floors removed, ceilings taken down, stability shaken.  
Dust and dirt everywhere.  I could not breathe.  
My equilibrium shattered.  Life as I knew it gone.

Then demolition ceased and reconstruction followed.  
Slowly I could breathe again, equilibrium restored.  
Normality returned, but life was not the same.  
A changed reality. A new normal.

Do I like it? Do I not?

**Temptation – An Ode to Bread by Gill Betts**  
Oh bread! How I love you.  
Your crusty body and your soft inside.  
I look with longing.  I am tempted.

The roundness of your form draws me towards you,  
Calling, like a Siren on the rocks.  
As I come near, I feel your warmth.

Taking you in my hands, desire floods my body.  
Your heady aroma tantalises, pulls me in.  
I am tempted.  I cannot resist.

Pressing my mouth against your sun-kissed skin,  
The urge to devour you overwhelms me.  
I succumb, as Eve did with the apple.

I am consumed by you, and you by me.

**Life Paten by Ros Trafford-Roberts**  
My childhood bread of life  
was the days of crossover aprons  
and rolled-up sleeves –  
Bread proving on the window sill  
Wiping my fingers round the bowl and eating the dough, Uncooked bread will damage your stomach Said my mother.

My girlhood bread of life  
Was leaving the safe and familiar  
And testing a different love on foreign shores  
Bread proving on the window sill  
And grabbing at life impatiently, hungrily, Uncooked bread will damage your stomach Said my mother.

My bridal bread of life  
Was finding a rock in my shipwreck,  
Harbouring in the warm sunlight  
Bread proving on the window sill  
Finding the utterness of motherhood,  
Enfoldingness of love.

My flowering in life  
Was becoming a priest  
Holding the searing pain and ecstasy  
In others’ lives  
Bread proving on the window sill  
Holding the body of Christ in my hands from the paten And somewhere in my head, resolution

Uncooked bread will damage your health,  
said my mother.