



AUTUMN  
POEMS ON THE UNDERGROUND

*Where are the songs of spring? Aye, where are they?  
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too. . .*  
*To Autumn* by John Keats

The poems now riding the Tube, on  
autumnal themes of love and loss, are  
reprinted here, along with personal  
favourites from earlier years.

These poems range across time and space,  
from the anonymous ‘Western wind’ to a  
contemporary poem lamenting the decline  
of the house sparrow. Israeli, Italian and  
Irish poets appear alongside English poets  
from the 16th to the 21st centuries.

In their very different voices, the poets  
gathered together here affirm the enduring  
value of the written word. We hope  
readers who have met the poems on the  
Tube will enjoy them as they return to the  
printed page.

We are grateful to London Underground,  
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Council for enabling us to produce and  
distribute free copies of this leaflet.

The Editors  
London, 2019

MY FATHER

The memory of my father is wrapped in white  
paper  
like slices of bread for the workday.

Like a magician pulling out rabbits and towers  
from his hat,  
he pulled out from his little body—love.

The rivers of his hands  
poured into his good deeds.

YEHUDA AMICHAÏ  
translated by Stephen Mitchell

AND SUDDENLY IT’S EVENING

Everyone is alone on the heart of the earth  
pierced by a ray of sun:  
and suddenly it’s evening.

SALVATORE QUASIMODO  
translated by Jack Bevan

FOR THE HOUSE SPARROW, IN DECLINE

Your numbers fall and it’s tempting to think  
you’re deserting our suburbs and estates  
like your cousins at Pompeii; that when you  
return  
to bathe in dust and build your nests again  
in a roofless world where no one hears your  
cheeps,  
only a starling’s modern mimicry  
will remind you of how you once supplied  
the incidental music of our lives.

PAUL FARLEY

ALL SOULS’ NIGHT

My love came back to me  
Under the November tree  
Shelterless and dim.  
He put his hand upon my shoulder,  
He did not think me strange or older,  
Nor I, him.

FRANCES CORNFORD

DIARY

Her diary  
the way words hurry  
into each other  
and then  
apart—  
as the days and her body  
lost out

I took the diary from her bedside  
did nothing else  
no sorting of clothes  
touched nothing  
of hers  
save the diary, reading

how she wrote across days  
and off the edge  
of the page

KATRINA NAOMI



POEMS ON THE UNDERGROUND  
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Maev Kennedy, *The Guardian*

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**Frances Cornford:** ‘All Souls’ Night’ from  
*Selected Poems* (Enitharmon 1997)

**Paul Farley:** ‘For the House Sparrow, in  
Decline’ from *The Ice Age* (Picador 2002)

**Katrina Naomi:** ‘Diary’ from *The Girl with the  
Cactus Handshake* (Templar 2009)

**Salvatore Quasimodo:** ‘And Suddenly It’s  
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TO —

Music, when soft voices die,  
Vibrates in the memory;  
Odours, when sweet violets sicken,  
Live within the sense they quicken.

Rose leaves, when the rose is dead,  
Are heaped for the beloved’s bed;  
And so thy thoughts, when thou art gone,  
Love itself shall slumber on.

P. B. SHELLEY

SONNET 73

That time of year thou mayst in me behold  
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang  
Upon those trees which shake against the cold,  
Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds  
sang.

In me thou seest the twilight of such day  
As after summer fadeth in the west,  
Which by and by black night doth take away,  
Death’s second self, that seals up all in rest.  
In me thou seest the glowing of such fire,  
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,  
As the deathbed whereon it must expire,  
Consumed with that which it was nourished by.  
This thou perceiv’st, which makes thy love  
more strong,  
To love that well, which thou must leave ere  
long.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

‘WESTERN WIND’

Western wind when wilt thou blow  
the small rain down can rain  
Christ that my love were in my arms  
and I in my bed again

ANON (EARLY 16TH CENTURY)

WHEN YOU ARE OLD

When you are old and grey and full of sleep,  
And nodding by the fire, take down this book,  
And slowly read, and dream of the soft look  
Your eyes had once, and of their shadows deep;

How many loved your moments of glad grace,  
And loved your beauty with love false or true,  
But one man loved the pilgrim soul in you,  
And loved the sorrows of your changing face;

And bending down beside the glowing bars,  
Murmur, a little sadly, how Love fled  
And paced upon the mountains overhead  
And hid his face amid a crowd of stars.

W. B. YEATS

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