

## *Salvage*

Spring sky,  
white cat,  
bluebells:

cobalt, silver,  
and delicate,  
frilled pinks.

They rise  
through nettle,  
bramble,  
wild garlic.

The cat prances;  
the bluebells offer  
their silent music.

Once I picked  
an armful  
from the woods:  
I was six.

Now I see  
a snapped stem,  
and reach to save it.  
I place the orphan  
in water,  
on the windowsill.

*Drink this, I say –  
and live.*

Katie Donovan

## May Swim 2020

### Whiterock Beach

I wade in,  
my hands wringing  
from the pain  
of the water's  
freezing touch, its greed  
to suck the warmth  
from my toasted skin.

After immersion,  
every cell tingles:  
glowing and replete.  
I peel off wet togs  
and dress -  
the clench of fear  
released.

I'm a sea pink  
blooming in the rocks.

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## *Airplanes*

*That one is going to Spain, you say —  
though sometimes when I push you  
in your buggy we don't talk.*

Today, I'm silenced by the petals  
falling so evenly from the cherry tree  
it's like they're pulled by spider silk

and thinking how the candles on the chestnut  
used to rise the heat in me while seeming, always,  
like nature's evening vigil for the dead.

You slump in the buggy, I catch a glimpse  
of your cheek's smooth curve. But neither of us speak,  
and I wonder, is this comfort or lack?

Above us, just one airplane –  
a molten drop –  
sliding down the sky's blue lens.

Jessica Traynor

## *Back Garden*

Neglected for so long, it has developed  
its own deep time. Its pathways  
are those of animals that only move  
when you blink, borders  
patrolled by feral cats,  
sphinx-like on breeze-block walls,  
speaking only in riddles.

A tyre-rut pulses frogspawn,  
the cat pounces on a shape  
weaving through long grass —  
both disappear into shadow.  
Bird song fractures into alarm calls;  
reknits itself into symphonies.  
With the kitchen dark behind me,  
the whole golden world reveals its secrets.

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*Out and Back*  
*(A Lockdown Journey)*

Open the front door and step through.  
What's different? No sound of traffic.  
Is that a robin singing?  
A blackbird startles out of a hedge.  
One car goes by.  
Someone is coming towards us,  
We cross the road,  
They wave.  
In our estate  
People are in their front gardens,  
Sitting or pottering about in the sun.  
We turn for home.  
Sitting or pottering about in the sun,  
People are in their front gardens  
In our estate.  
They wave,  
We cross the road.  
Someone is coming towards us,  
One car goes by.  
A blackbird startles out of a hedge.  
Is that a robin singing?  
What's different? No sound of traffic  
Open the front door and step through.

## *Listen*

From the church up the road  
I can hear the bell ringers playing a tune –  
It's one I know, I can hear it, scarcely  
any cars to drown it out –  
It's *Make me a channel  
of your peace.*

## *Dear Tadpoles*

Dear Tadpoles,  
I haven't seen you in a while.  
How are you? Keeping well?  
I have to stay in the shade  
under this leaf  
but my neighbour snail is here  
so that's a relief.  
I'll look out for you in the pond.  
Please write, or otherwise respond.  
Well, must stop,  
Got to hop,  
All my love, Mum.

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## *Late Morning Rain*

the eggs were soft when we went to touch them  
it was May, or I imagine it was  
though how can I really know it was so long ago  
one thing I can be sure of is that summer was on its way  
the silent bursting forth which the grass announces  
the way it does now on the brink of release  
pushing every shadow back to where it belongs  
and late morning rain – let's not forget how welcome  
that can be, the umbrella forgotten, and all of a sudden  
it's forty years ago, and you are walking the same street,  
the same road, your hand is in your mother's hand  
her face hidden by ... what? her fringe, or a hat,  
her voice is strong and young, and though she clutches  
your fingers in hers, ever tighter now, you do not run  
from the shower, you do not rush anywhere

Paul Perry

## *A Picture*

The days bleed into one another  
The news is stale  
You turn off the radio  
A neighbour is banging a nail into the wall  
Perhaps he is hanging a picture  
Perhaps ...  
You open an album  
There is a face you recognise  
There is a face you love  
There is no headline for it  
No broadcast to capture that voice  
Everyday something happens  
Everyday you wonder when it will end  
A neighbour is banging a nail into the wall  
Let each picture he hangs be a frame to the future  
An image of what can be again

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