

Matthew Hollis

The Need



MATTHEW HOLLIS was born in Norwich in 1971. He is one of the UK's most acclaimed new poets, whose poems are admired for their texture, subtlety and sense of place. He brings to his climate change poems a wonderful feel for tradition and for the disquieting nature of change. Matthew was the winner of the coveted Eric Gregory Award in 1999 and his first full-length collection *Ground Water* is published by Bloodaxe. He lives in London, within sight of the Lloyd's Building, and works as poetry editor at Faber and Faber.

the **NEED**

To live kindly,
to live in kindness with the world.

‘She looks out from a dark door’

She looks out from a dark door.
Her hands are sore from salting,
her back from ageing bone;
the skies are quiet, the cattle gone.
All her life she has stood the ground,
owned what she needed, lived
strongly and alone. But now
she means to share this place; to have
trees to take water, a channel for the surge,
to know how sand moves, to understand tides,
to deal with anger, to ask forgiveness. To live kindly,
to live in kindness with the world.

The Diomedes

Summers he would leave for Alaska,
working the crabbers as deckhand or galley;
autumns returning with cold-weather stories of
clam catchers, fur trappers, and the twin isles
of Diomede: two miles and a continent between them;
and how, in winter, when the straits froze over,
the islanders could walk from one to the other,
crossing the ice-sheet to see family, swap
scrimshaw, the season’s stories, or marry,
passing the Date Line that ran through the channel,
and so stepping between days as they went.

As far as I know he never went back;
if he had he’d have learned that
only the bravest now track on foot,
the winter ice no longer reliable,
for walrus, ski-plane or the human step,
leaving the skin boats alone to wait for the summer,
to edge themselves into the melt-water.

Even now, there’s something to his story
I find difficult to fathom. At home, in London,
listening to my neighbours’ raised voices
or catching the girl opposite dressing,
I wonder, what it is we will do to be neighbourly,
how part of us longs for it to matter that much,
to be willing to nudge our small boat into the waves,
or set foot on the winter ice,
to be half-way from home, in no safety,
unsure if we’re headed for tomorrow or yesterday.

THE RISK

If I bring a flower for your window jar, may be
within a life it would be missed just more or less.
I'd risk that, risk that in a flash.

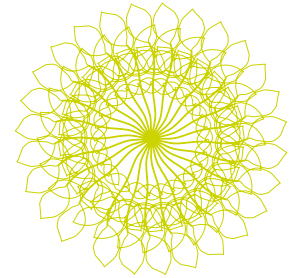
If I bring a tree for your orchard wall, possibly
within a year the woods would dry their roots and fall.
I'd live with, live with that just fine.

If I bring a river for your scrub and soil, could be
within a week the valley floor would crack and choke.
I'd choose that, choose that I should think.

If I bring the land to lay your river, probably
within a day we'd find there nowhere left to stand.
That's harder, harder to defend.

If I bring the sea to work your land, most likely
within an hour there'd be little, less, or nothing found.
I doubt I'd, doubt I'd see that through.

But if I do not promise you the earth, then certainly
within a minute life would breathe the better for it.
But would we, my love, would we?




Poems to cut out and keep

Instructions for Making a Globe

- 1) Blow up and knot a round blue balloon.
- 2) Draw the equator around the middle of the balloon. Use a permanent marker.
- 3) Cut out the continental shapes (provided).
- 4) Glue Antarctica to the bottom of the balloon.
- 5) Find the part of Antarctica that points like a finger. This is the Antarctic Peninsula. Glue South America above the Antarctic Peninsula. South America touches the equator.
- 6) Glue North America above South America. North America touches South America.
- 7) Put your hand on North America. Asia–Europe is exactly on the other side of the balloon.
- 8) Africa is below Europe. It almost touches Europe. Find the top part of Africa that juts out like an elbow. The equator should be below the elbow.
- 9) Glue Australia below the eastern part of Asia.
- 10) Put an X on the map where you used to live.

Adapted from WGBH Education Foundation:
http://pbskids.org/arthur/parentsteachers/lesson/world/pdf/Balloon_Globe.pdf

London Bells



'Liturgy and penance', say the Bells of St Clement's.
'Storms and wild winds', say the Bells of St Martin's.
'Save the Square Mile', say the Bells of St Giles.
'Marsh land and fens', say the Bells of St Helen's.
'What will secure me?' say the Bells of Old Bailey.
'A darn and a stitch', say the Bells of Shoreditch.
'What can I see?' say the Bells of Stepney.
'Flood, rain and snow', say the Great Bells of Bow.
Here comes the fire to light up your bed
Here comes the water to cover your head.
Fire wind quake flood – the last one, the last one is dead.

Song of the Wind

Dust and litter raised in swirls.
Latches lifted, fences felled.
Marquees plucked and deckchairs hurled.

Come Auster, Barber, Bora, Bull.
Come Caver, Coromell, Bull's Eye Squall.

Garage roofs and sheds ripped out.
Mobile homes and trees uproot.
Wood-frame houses, bricks, the lot.

Come Kona, Lester, Mistral, Foehn.
Come Norther, Williwaw, Sundowner.

Airborne cars and stone debris.
Debarking of last standing trees.
Steel-frame houses carried free.

Come Matanuska, Santa Ana.
Come Cordonazo, Tramontana.
Come Pali, Sharki, Squamish, Knik.
Come Warm Braw, Zephyros, Field of Brick.

Song of the Hail

Pea, mothball, marble, bean.
Walnut, squash ball, two pound coin.
Golf ball, goose egg, billiard, peach.
Tennis ball, cricket ball, baseball pitch.
Orange, grapefruit, coffee cup.
Melon, coconut, records stop.