



Don't Bring Me No Rocking Chair: poems on ageing (Newcastle/Bloodaxe Poetry)

Joan Bakewell

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Gathering poems from Shakespeare to the present, Don't Bring Me No Rocking Chair addresses ageing through the several ages of poetry. Now more than ever, as more of us live for longer, the idea of what it means to age or to grow old engages and concerns people of all ages. One of the problems of ageing is the language we use to define it and the list of pejoratives associated with it, with attitudes to ageing ranging from 'fatalism, denial, negative stereotyping and tunnel vision to fantasy' (Professor Tom Kirkwood, Newcastle University). Poetry can help to give us a fresh language to think about ageing and these poems are chosen to fortify, celebrate, lament, grieve, rage and ridicule. There is not one way to age but neither can any of us truly stop our bodies from ageing. Ageing is not a single phenomenon but complex, multiple, perplexing: experienced historically as well as individually. This anthology may not console but it can widen our perspectives, helping us to change what we can change: our attitudes. Joan Bakewell writes in the Foreword: 'With age comes a growing thoughtfulness: what was it all for? What have we made of our lives, what have we known of love, what have we enjoyed of beauty and how do we come to terms with our going? This remarkable book contains thoughts on all such concerns. Its variety is extensive but one thing is sustained throughout. The quality of ideas and expression is of the highest. On whichever page you alight there is something that will offer comfort, delight, and insight. While the world of money, ambition and worldly cares recedes, matters of the heart and spirit come to matter more. This book is the ideal companion on that journey.' This anthology was prepared for the Newcastle Centre for the Literary Arts as part of the Societal Challenge Theme on Ageing at Newcastle University with support from the Institute of Ageing and Health, Newcastle University. 'In our youth-obsessed culture, there is something exquisitely subversive about a book that celebrates old age...As with all anthologies, its delight lies in revisiting old favourites and discovering poems one might not have come across otherwise.' - Juanita Coulson, The Lady.

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