

Should I expire as swallows swoop
As days pickle
Flat arms crepe
Dishevelled whispering
Pigeon wings
Tumble to a lap
Unmade
A maid
Spittle caustic
Cuts the quick
And makes an ordinary
Moment
Sick
At sea
In turbulent denial
Do sit youth
For just a while
Love does not watch the clock you know
It's always been a bird
That settles on a wire
And sings a song
Absurd.

Tracie Peisley

I call my Mum Mummy hen. I don't know why but I think it's because she likes to look after her brood of children.

Anonymous

"Oi! Yes you! Up here!"
I looked up, and promptly looked away.
"Check our that BIRD!" He said to his mate.
I started to walk, quickly, my high heels clacking on the pavement.
"Check you out! Hot stuff" he yelled, followed by a stream of whistling.
"Sod off!" I shouted, becoming upset.
Why is this kind of harassment viewed as acceptable?

Anonymous

When things go wrong, my mother's love is always there to protect me. It's like I am still in her womb.

Anonymous

The woman who has had the most impact in my life (apart from my mother of course!) has to be **Madonna**.

Growing up in a small northern town in Margaret Thatcher's Britain in the 80s, Madonna was the only straight person in the public eye, using their platform to say that being gay was okay. Not only was she saying that it was ok, she was saying it was normal, fantastic and something to be proud of. **As a gay teenager she managed to reach me in my small town, where I was feeling very isolated and gave me the confidence to be the person I have become today.**

I hugely admire and respect Madonna because she has spent her whole career and used her platform to fight for equality for everyone.

Peter Davis

My mother's biggest nightmare was not to be able to provide for everyone, such that she once cooked two turkeys for Christmas Day, in order, she said, that everyone could have breast if they wanted. My dad was not best pleased, but my brothers and I kept going and going - and going - until she could cut into the second turkey and give my dad a triumphant look of, "See, I told you!"

Anonymous

You are not made up of me you are your own being I see that and feel that, everyday I get to watch you become you, I promise I will eat all your pain away as we dance and sing our way through hell and back, don't ever stop becoming you...

love you till the sun dies my daughter.

Anonymous

My mother took so much from my father. All the bad stuff. Lying down. He went off with other women leaving her alone with four children and no food. They fought, she screamed and he left. We sat outside the kitchen door, huddled together, in silence. The pain became stillness inside us, etching itself into our ability to communicate. We were silent children, who didn't know how to express ourselves. We kept secrets a child should not be expected to keep. And we were starving. Eventually, mother left father and met a man who called us his chicks. He was an idiot -in a good way. He made us laugh and he was faithful to mother. I felt safe with him. He took us on holidays to local Butlins-type places, bought us kinder surprises and ensured we didn't go hungry. But what am I doing? I'm lying again. Thing is, he didn't exist. This man who I so longed for was never there, aside from in my silent belligerent head. I lived a childhood with a man who was cruel but who I wanted to please and impress so much. He didn't care. When he died, young, I was filled with sadness and relief. Now **I long to be cared for by older men, who call me their little chick as they wrap a protective arm around me.** In the same way, I do not long to be called a bird because I'm an independent and successful woman. How fickle the messed up the mind is.

Anonymous

Sitting on hands
Feet turning inwards
Trying to hide the inside
From the outside world
Goosebumps on pale skin
Patiently waiting
For the hand that feeds
crumbs
Listen carefully
can hear a tiny voice?
Perched precariously
Head lifts
Heart beat quickens
Fingers unhinge the cage
The door creaks
With wings unclipped
Freedom beckons
Yawn awake
Hear the delicate song

Clair Meyrick

**It is
that I
remain
a bird
with broken wings
forever.**

Carly Jennings

When I was about 11, I asked my mum if she could get my brother and me tickets for a big football game. This was in the early 1980s and it could be quite rough at that time. She allowed us to go and picked us up afterwards. Only some years later did I learn that she had bought herself a ticket on the opposite side of the ground from where we were, so **she could keep a watchful eye on us** all game!

Anonymous

She lifts me in the air and grounds me all at once; she is stronger and braver than I could ever be. Her perception brings my blur into focus, her understanding aligns my offset direction, her will reminds my own to be decisive, her control reigns in my lack of restraint. She challenges me like no one else can, yet her voice is the one to which I pay most heed. She steers me so I don't crash into the rocks. She reflects my mistakes, yet brings out the best parts of me. She is so much more than I should ever deserve. Years and moments have fallen together and our roots have entwined until we are two parts of one whole, but she is the strength that holds up our tree and she is the leaves that let us breathe. She is the branches that allow me to reach and she is the bark that protects me from harm. I am one and she is one and we are one together. If I could thank her each day I would, and I try, but I fail more than I would ever admit. **She is the most important part of me,** the soul in my shell. She is my lifeblood.

Seb Reilly

The house is so empty without the girls in it. Quiet and bereft of their love.

Catherine Nash

I've been a fledgling bird, a flapping bird, a cooing turtle dove bird.
I've been a caged bird, a free bird, **a little broken winged bird.**
I've been a 'fit' bird', an 'old bird', a heralding in the dawn bird.
I've been a soaring bird, a flightless bird, an 'I've laid a little egg' bird.
I've been a mocking bird, a pecking bird, an albatross round the neck bird.
I AM a songbird, a lovebird, a rising from the ashes bird.

Paula Farrell

The person I most admire is my elderly friend June. She was introduced to me as a straight-laced suited and booted old bird. she was obviously a groovy chick in her time with a vast collection of clothes from such designers as Biba and Jacques Vert. She has survived cancer, domestic violence and loss of her home and health. Her mantra is 'tomorrow is going to come whether you like it or not so better get on with it'. She's helped me through so much over the years including my own bad marriage and **I don't know what I'd do without her.**

Robin Vaughan-Lyons

I told my teacher that I have a problem with some of the language that we use...it's become culturally gendered. We weren't thinking of the same words. He laughed: "what, like bird?" It wasn't an endearing response. He was trying to avoid a serious conversation. Then: "no, wait, that's my favourite type of custard". I thought, at least if I'm a bird I have the potential to fly...

Anonymous

I have often been referred to as a bird, often in a derogatory way. I was once in a bar and a group of men shouted: "look at the tits on that bird". I promptly poured my pint on the most vocal bloke's crotch and ran away, like a chicken.

Emily Peasgood

On a working visit to S. Australia in '94, bloke: **"You scrub up well for an old bird".**

Elaine Bayes

Dressed up as a bird the night I met my husband. We flocked into Soho
as it was Halloween. **I preened a bit before going out.**

Michelle Thomas

Sitting quietly watching the moon go down
Looking out from under her hat.
Standing in the corner, being told, she'd acted, like a clown.
only to see herself collapse.

Running into trouble, her mind getting under her skin.
Afraid of meeting and making contact.
The mystery wouldn't unravel, only manifest within.
Trying hard not to overreact.

Living without any sense of time.
In solitary, where the sentence fits the crime.
Living in the past, having never made a choice.
She was the girl without a voice.

Breaking through the wall of silence
Inspired by the sound of the crowd.
In a mood of defiance.

Mark Johnson

BIRDS are weak, fragile creatures. They chirrup and flutter, and look pretty.
Sometimes they make a sweet song. **They don't Chair meetings or head up
corporations.**

Anonymous

I don't remember ever been called a bird, perhaps I looked too serious. I grew up in
the 1950s in the rock n' roll era and by the time the 60s came round I was in
Australia and married. Seems I missed all the fun!

Shirley Everson

Miss Frost was the junior librarian at the Public Library when I was seven or eight
years old. I remember her being very tall and thin, with dark hair, cut in a fringe at
the front, and longer at the back and sides, curling inwards to frame her face. She
had dark brown eyes. She seemed always to wear long, below the knee, black and
white check skirts. She was rather severe. I was half afraid of her and half in love
with her. The most important thing about Miss Frost was that she loved books, and
wanted every child who came into her library to love books too. So she introduced me
to Just William, Billy Bunter, Biggles, Dr Dolittle, the Greek and Norse myths. When I
had exhausted all these at around twelve years old she suggested that I looked at
some of the books in the adult library. I started with Sherlock Holmes, scared myself
with Dennis Wheatley, discovered Ray Bradbury, George Orwell and Aldous Huxley.
I went on to read more and more authors and developed a deep love of books. **I will
never forget Miss Frost** for opening the magical world of books to me.

Martin Tanton

Surging out of Derbyshire Lane
City Centre bus leaves us standing.
Young woman waving wildly from the upper deck.
'Mad bird! Who is she?' said Alec.
'We call her Sky,
My anatomy group.
Same table.
Same body...'
We four surround and probe and peck our prey
The remains of our benevolent donor.
Forged in this grim reality
Friendships are for life.
Bright, quick and chattering,
Like a magpie she gathers facts, wisdom and glittering prizes.
Music is in her soul, and laughter bubbles out
Like a nightingale chortling in summer woods.
Together we roosted.
A life caring and nurturing all comers;
She does the same again at home
Until her fledglings leave the nest.
Now 50 years have flown away,
She's still the same.
We ride the bus
(We have passes now!)
Same bird.
Same body.

Joe Eddington

The headmistress at my primary school used to call me "**little bird**". Partly because I was so undersized and partly because there were two Amanda Browns in my class. We were also sometimes Amanda Brown the Good and Amanda Brown the Bad - and sorry to say I was the Good.

Amanda Brown

Stripped and re-clothed in a hospital gown, it was clear to me that what was left was, by bodily definition, **the essence of a woman**. A woman redefined not only physically but foremost by her experience, by her bravery, her strength, those qualities which make up, in my mind, the true essence of a woman, one who would put the needs of her family before her own, who would selflessly bleed and suffer pain and mental anguish unimaginable to most, just to live for us, her family.

Mark Hearne

A shared closeness never before experienced,
A synergy of acceptance of both our lives,
The world crashing down around us and I,
I turn and hide.
Reaching out to aid me,
To guide me through this time,
My stalwart standing fast and I,
I turn and hide.
The crushing realisation that this,
It's slipped away,
Clawing on to remnants but you,
You turn away.
You still stand taller than any I've seen,
A beacon of hope and strength,
Put through so much yet remaining true,
To your own ideals and sense.
I see you in my mind's eye,
A warrior, strong and true
After all this time, I finally see,
I should never have turned from you.

Anonymous

My mum is so kind that, for years, I thought I had an "Uncle John" who always came over for Christmas lunch. In fact, as I found out years later, he was no relation but a lonely old man who lived in the same road as my Grandad and Grandma and whom she couldn't bear to be on his own at Christmas.

Anonymous

I was on a negotiation course, and they asked us each to think of someone we looked up to as a great negotiator. I thought about it for a while, and realised that my mum was that person for me. Her approach is never to slam her fist down on the table or to shout, but rather to smile and have a two-way conversation. Perhaps something Donald Trump could bear in mind...

Anonymous

Great Grandmother, Bridget, work her self to death looking after children
My great Irish grandmother, brought an end to family violence, committed,
Against wives, and children
Great granny Bridget, though we never met, I know you all the same

Ken Williams

Sometimes in life,
You are blessed with a Very Special Friend
A Friend whom is always there for you,
A Friend that shares in all of your ups and downs,
A Friend that loves you for what you are,
A Friend that cares about every part of your life
BIG and Small
A Friend so connected, that you
think the same thoughts,
dream the same dreams,
suffer the same pains,
cry the same tears,
worry the same worries,
laugh the same laughs,
raise the same smiles,
pray the same prayers.

This is a forever friendship

And when you find this Friend
You have found your Special Friend
Your Soul mate
Your Angel

Michael H

Me and my best friend call each other Bird, and have done for over 15 years... so I never think of it as a derogatory term, it reminds me of her, so that's all good with me.

Pip Thomas

A Maths savant. An early adopter in the world of computer software. Stifled for being a woman she left a secure job to become a freelance programmer. Many women, many women, many women, women, women queued to join her. Gradually extricating from the business her energies were drawn to the care of mentally ill young people like her only son, setting up her own residential care homes. A Dame called Steve. **She is an inspiration.**

Jonathan Moxey

She knew everyone and everyone knew her, she became a legendary go-to woman, or for those in the know, a fence. Selling on whatever came her way from the London docks which still ran then, many decades before the docks died and became luxury apartments for rich city workers. Nothing was ever "too hot or too heavy". She was magnificent, I remember her introducing me to a man called Burglar Bill when I was maybe four years old, when I asked why he had such a strange name she told me "well he's a burglar and he's called Bill and he's got you a lovely coat my love". That was my nan, **she had the craft, she could charm the birds from the trees and then charge them when they landed on the ground.**

Dan Elliot

He'd plucked her out
Made her his own
When she was still young
From the nest she'd just flown
He called her his bird
She didn't mind
It didn't 'ruffle her feathers.'
he was the best she could find
And it was after all mating season
As it always is
flapping around on the whitest of cliffs
so totally classy

Pecking at chips

cocaine they would sniff
champagne by the sea
(Cava probably)
He tantalisingly
spread her... wings
set her adrift

The summer of love
A sensual whiff

Just a young chick

And her sugar dad
Some might say
She was the best he'd ever have
And likewise they'd play
And she'd fly for him
Until dusk turned to day
With these other old chicks
he'd been messing about
wooing them on the nights
that her wings were clipped
Him out of her sights
His appendage he'd dip
In the naive belief that she couldn't know
But she knew other birds
Who had the down low
And woman have an innate
Primal instinct to protect
And they won't see their flock
Get played by a man sket
This eagle has eyes
And a brain in her head
Powerful yet small
She didn't need that man at all
So this bird collected her feathers
Headed back my her nest
Fluffed up her plumage
Puffed out her chest
Ate a worm or two
And stomped her feet on the ground
So ready for the second round
"No heartbreak over here"
She squalled into his hairy ear
"I'll never let this happen again"
Because he was just a disappointing old cock
And she was a sassy wee hen

Lis Tull

I asked Sharon how she felt about being called a **"black bird"**. "I don't mind being called a black bird. What I do mind is the black girl being portrayed as a sex object by Beyonce, for instance".

Jenny Davies

No one would call her a Young chick or a Spring chicken by any stretch of the imagination, but she'd still *fly off the handle* if anyone called her an *Old hen*, though in truth that's what she was. Her one chick had *flown the coop* and so now she was an *empty nester*, attending lectures and creative workshops with other lonely women. It's an old and true saying, '*birds of a feather flock together.*'

Susie Darnton

My mother spent most of her working life employed as a nurse, & while I understand that many thousands of women (& men) perform that role, it's an indication of her caring & selfless nature. As a teenager, I was very easily led & fell in with a bad crowd. I stole from my parents to feed a gambling habit (before I was even legally old enough to gamble) & completely destroyed my relationship with my father.

Despite my actions my mother never once stopped caring about me, & was always the peacemaker, doing her very best for me in what must have been a very difficult & upsetting situation.

Anonymous

We are, let's face it, both posh birds. She used to be a merchant banker and I held down a pretty respectable job in the Civil Service before starting a business with my wife. Yet, we've both experienced that jaw dropping, heart stopping moment, back in the 90s, when we've walked past a building site and been wolf-whistled, and had things like 'Hey chick' followed by the inevitable lewd suggestion shouted at us. It doesn't happen so much these PC days. I never knew what to do with myself at these times. She could always handle it, or make it look like she could.

Jane Coomber-Sewell

I was brought up in America. When I was a teenager, in Cambridge, Massachusetts I had boyfriends from age 10 on up. I was their 'chick'. I lost my virginity at 13. Luckily, I didn't lay an egg. Then I moved to London at age 14. Six months later I met the love of my life, a cockney lad, not a real one, his parents were middle class. I was his 'bird' and I lost him his virginity, though he was 17 to my 15. Somehow I had matured from chick to bird though our relationship was not grown up. He was very jealous, very possessive, and I was a flirt, so there were lots of fireworks. I reigned in my flirting to keep the peace.

Once, a bloke in a pub just looked at me and Mike said: '**Oy, that's my bird you're lookin' at.**' I sort of liked it, though I felt for the guy who reacted as though he'd been slapped (he flushed red) before he grabbed his drink and disappeared. Mike was tall and handsome. A talented cartoonist and a piano player. I adored him. And I liked belonging to him. I didn't say this. I said 'Fuck off Mike, you don't own me.' I put on a big strop because much as I secretly liked being 'his bird', I also didn't like it.

Mike bellowed at the boy on the floor: 'Keep your eyes off my bird!!' I was stunned. So this boy had been watching me. Lee turned Mike round and pushed him up the entrance stairs to the pub above. He called over his shoulder: 'Sorry mate, he's had one too many. No hard feelings.' The guy was just being helped to his feet by his friends, hand still holding his bloody nose, eyes glistening and wild in the dark. Nothing in him was looking for a fight. I went up to him and said 'Sorry, I'm really sorry...'

'You're my bird!' He said pointing to the floor to make his point. I shouted back: 'No I'm not, I'm nobody's bird...' I pulled my coat on violently, yanking my long pony tail out. It felt like I was playing a scene in my drama class at school. I was shaking. 'That's it, Mike, I'm done. We're finished.' My year old cockney accent had slipped and I was American again. I felt ridiculous, suddenly American, suddenly foreign, out of place, and alone. I stormed out into the cold. I didn't want to go home but I had no choice but to keep storming. He ran out after me. 'Rax, I'm sorry Rax!' It was a great relief, but I had to keep storming. I wasn't sure how the scene should end but I knew I had to keep walking away. I was furious with him and desperate to be scooped up by him, hugged, kissed, warmed in the cold night. **I wanted to be his bird, and I wanted to belong to myself,** I didn't understand how I could do both.

He followed me all the way home at a little distance from me. This included waiting for the train from Highbury and Islington, getting on it, and getting off at Hampstead Heath. I loved that he stayed with me. I didn't look at him. I was strangely happy and thrilled by his presence, he was one big apology stalking me home. But somehow I couldn't let him off. After all, he'd punched some poor guy for nothing. Maybe broken his nose. The sudden violence was shocking, all based on a crazy jealous fantasy. How could he think I would do that: flirt with some guy with him watching, like I wanted to start a fight, like I wanted blood on the floor. Why hadn't he stood up during the gig, and walked over to me. Put his hands on me, laid claim. That's all he needed to do. As we walked up my hill in Hampstead I spun on him and shouted 'Leave me alone, Michael, just go away.' He looked the picture of misery. He said gruffly. 'Just making sure you get home alright'. I wanted to cry. I felt like a bird then, a fragile bird. It was cold. I stared at him. He came in and hugged me, lifted me off my feet as he often did.

As I think of this at 57, that angry, jealous boy long gone, our love defeated by the battle of wills about who owned what, and who called the shots, I miss him. **I miss belonging to someone... Being somebody's bird...**

Araxi Utidjian