

For the many, not the few

POETiCA REViEW

Issue 19



Nora L. Hollin
Steve Bell
Royal Rhodes
John Ziegler
Mark A. Murphy
Maed Rill Monty
Judith Borenin
Michael Rather, Jr
Cathy Thwing
Marial Awendit
Michael Minassian
Christian Garduno
William Zorn
Alvaro Onacona
LaVern Spencer McCarthy
Adriana Rocha
Joyce Culong
John Muro
Gerald Yelle
Rhonda Melanson
Victoria Twomey

Autumn 2023

POETiCA REViEW has always thought that poetry can change lives, and still does. We believe artists have a responsibility to step up to the mark, and say the things, others, perhaps less privileged, would like to, or are unable to say. If humanity is to survive the current and impending planetary disasters beyond the next few generations, we must learn new ways of thinking and living together.

The Editors

Autumn 2023

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Chief Editor: **Mark A. Murphy**
Assistant Editor: **Kieran Conway**



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[Index](#)

[Poems](#)

[Mission Statement](#)

[Submission Guidelines](#)

[Contributor's Notes](#)

Nora L. Hollin 1 poem

ANTENATAL

See here in the ice: the body curling,
 twine becoming flame
 becoming bone. Alchemist. Anarchist.
 Tidy piles of snow.
 Hoary puddles of blood.
 The sloppy arts of creation. Violence.
 Smells like oil
 and sulphur and semen.
 Fingers working over the prelude on keys or strings,
 like strokes or gashes.

I have travelled hard through many graves to touch you.
 See here, what was once thought of
 as the rainbow blast of the first ripe meadow
 where horses broke through
 faery tale – blinded
 by fresh, thrashing reins – is now mourned as childhood undone.
 The very moment when fleshy hands came to know
 the cold weight of forestock and trigger.
 The bitter cold of creation. The metallic scent and mess
 of want. I will reach you from here.

My hands are open,
 my hands, my
 hands,
 my hands of snow.

So empty.

Unclean.

Steve Bell 2 poems

The Tax Collector's Tree

I hear a commotion
outside my office
donkeys, camels, people
traffic jam of noise
bothering me as I cook
the books
dividing the Denari
seven for Caesar
three for me
seven for Caesar
three for me
until the voices shout

“It's Jesus,
the rabbi from Nazareth!”
“I know! He healed my mother
touched her forehead
fever vanished, she's...”

Oh, such nonsense
these ignorant peasants
do not understand
there are but two realities,
pay your taxes
bury your dead

then my servant rushes in
whispering in my ear
to gain my attention
“Master, he stopped walking
come take a look
he is surely a prophet!
I relent, order him to secure
the money and the scrolls
I walk outside and see
nothing but those
donkeys, camels, people
too many people until I see
the tree.

Imagine, a man of my stature
feared and reviled by this rabble
jostling through this mob
to climb a tree?
I am compelled

to see this man
Up high I straddle a sturdy branch
to get a good look
He the object
of my curiosity looks up
our eyes meet
“Zacchaeus, I wondered when
you would show up
bet you didn’t know
I created that tree
before Abraham
was even a memory?
Lunch today? Your place
time to break bread
and talk.
Ok if I bring a few friends?”

She Shared My Tent

I sit here sad
granting a dear friend
her last wish,
to read Dickinson
aloud to her
one more time.
My tears bookmark
each page,
while my companion
listens to my voice
as I read these verses
for the last time.
My friend and I stare
at each other, ruminating
on the word hope, a
“thing with feathers”
so Miss Emily wrote.
My friend is no ‘thing’
but the feathered muse
who shared my tent.
Though she has wings,
she cannot fly.
She has taken ill
soon to die, sleep she will
perched on my lap.

Her final coo
breaks my heart,
she cries out above the din
of city traffic.
I kiss her beak
place her small body
inside my backpack
while I stand to board the next bus
to the place my Hope and I
called home.

Royal Rhodes 2 poems

SANATORIUM

There is only a horizon here, a line
highlighted in yellow at day's end.

Beyond the clinic's clear window glass
is field upon field of snow glazed over,

the bright surface crystals, cast by wind,
glint in explosive asterisks of glare.

A soft fog, arising like ghostly steam,
floats amidst the frosted cluster of trees.

And snow, seeping through sealed casements
in this rarefied air, is like a secret infection.

I sleep in this reclusive paradise
like a blizzard survivor who has a slight fever.

Others I hear, who live in separate wings
with recurring dreams of sanity and health,

come and go, the disabled without limbs,
casualties of war or tuberculosis,

or those driven out of their minds by the snow.
The locals have a hundred words for it.

But what are the terms for the barely visible
change of light from pale gray to sunrise?

I raise my strange hand and see it open.
But what other names do I have for it?

And once I looked at myself in this silver mirror
of nature. I was not there, only nothingness.

A PRISONER'S LAST TESTAMENT

Perhaps you realized,
if you could realize,
the many things I did
and never drew attention,
and never heard your thanks.
The rooms that I arranged
so you would never stumble;
stepping over mines,
I absorbed the blast.
The morning's suffocating
heat I cooled, so sweat
and fire on your face
never played their havoc
against your whitened limbs.
And when they questioned you,
I placed a secret word
while your tongue went dumb,
a stratagem of angels.
And as they stripped and searched
my body, they believed
was you, I told them where
to find a missing head
of someone I invented,
and took another beating
that raised a yellow froth,
foaming from my mouth.
Sighing, crying, dying.
That was all I had,
just as I had turned
the wings of death's-head moths
to gossamer for you,
pretending nothing hurt.
I hate the way the dead
conspire to hover close
to watch and mock the grief
of the living who swear to change.
The dead who burn with vengeance
at never being loved.
I know that you will always,
without fail, remember.
And every time you eat
your lying tongue will taste
the gritty bits of bone
and my cremated ashes.

John Ziegler 1 poem

To Write A Poem

Wanting to write a poem isn't enough
if the essence is content to sit beyond reach,
patient as a frog watching a hovering dragonfly.

The two crows on the bough of the tall pine
have no need to join a poem.
They groom in the morning cool. Mutter to one another.

Two bees disappear into the hood of the purple penstemon.
A Mexican yellow appears late for a rendezvous.
It's flight path a wavering ribbon as it passes from sight.

A plane disturbs the reverie, but soon passes.

Two yellow finches, too small to be goldfinches,
arrive to pinch up tiny black nigger seed
and sip at the broad blue dish
where wasps on its rim warm their feet.

When I stop to brew coffee, I miss the arrival
of the hummingbird. A female
Rufous. Her subtle coloring powdery and shy.

The boss crow now swoops from the stand of pines
to dance on the fence top and declare territory.
He bounces and bobs his black shining head.
His simple persistent call, soon tedious.

After the dark stillness of winter,
this natural cosmos vibrates. Butterflies spiralling.
New leaves lolling in the passing breeze.

An iridescent feather has landed among black pebbles.
Ants carry the dead across the warm orange stones.

In plain view of the poem
this flow, this play with its hum and its silence
was content within itself.

Mark A. Murphy 5 poems

Socratic Paradox

for Dylan "Dutch" Murphy

Like Socrates, we know
our own limitations. Yet the pageant
of our century, opens up in war,
genocide, ecocide, and extinction –
for a species blowing itself up
and bellying out,
as if we'd learnt nothing
in the two millennia since his passing.

We can't feed the poor, or house
refugees, (homeless, stateless,
traumatised humans).
Yet we bankroll land grabs
and illegal logging, turning rainforest
into grazing and dust bowl.
As if to extirpate the indigenous
and polish off the lungs of the planet.

O we know, politicians never lie.
And that Realpolitik is love
but god will always be
on the side of the big battalions.
How do we know,
knowing nothing at all –
except love squeezes
the answers from our invisible
and indivisible breath
like a philosopher
drinking hemlock. For the good of the people.
Always, for the good of the people.

Two Monkeys

i

I keep dreaming of Wislawa Szymborska's two monkeys.
Her history exam. The absurdity
of writing poems. The absurdity of Bruegel's sideshow

proposition. Shackled in a window
before the free port of Antwerp – two monkeys – bought
for the price of a hazel nut.

Side by side, yet separate.
Wild eyed, and yet devil-may-care, at their imprisonment.
This is the history of mankind.

Szymborska knows it, only too well.

ii

If it is not possible to save two red colobus monkeys –
how on earth are we to save the world, let alone

each other.

Apologues

i

Nothing wrong with the lived moment.
As long as we can reach out at the suffering of others.

As long as we can resist landgrab.
Sale of rootstock. And not become a 'thing for sale,'
ourselves.

As long as we can walk the long mile
in the blackthorn thicket.

As long as root and branch require us to preserve
the mender of broken hearts.

As long as rock crevice and moss still afford serenity
in the Mayflower cemetery.

ii

Nothing wrong with the lived moment,
even at the foot of the lighthouse.
As long as we still reach out. And are never separate
from it.

Terra Nova Paradox

To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

Alfred Tennyson

i

Lord Tennyson couldn't know— the only way to conquer
Nature is to yield to her. Captain Scott had no way

of knowing— Roald Amundsen had beaten him by 34 days.
Leaving him 800 miles adrift of base camp

in unusually cold temperatures. Indeed, by the time Scott
and his companions found themselves marching

across the Ross Ice Shelf, the cold measured -81.2°F .
A setback compounded by slow starvation.

Scurvy. Frostbite. Snow blindness. And hypothermia.
Hardly surprising, Captain Oates would make his excuses

about Time. So the other's might stand a better chance.
The gangrene in his feet, making a gallantry

out of certain death. Alas! His exit from his deerskin
sleeping bag, into the blizzard, only proved

the veracity of his stiff-upper-lip (as an English gentleman).
Even unhindered by the sick man, the remaining three

only managed a further 20 miles of the 170 needed
to reach safety. Now the end was just nine more days away.

ii

Scott's last words belied his disappointment. The fact
that he could no longer record thoughts in his diary,

found him yielding to lack of food and the perishing cold.
Now Mother Nature exacted a terrible price on the men

who had hoped to secure the South Pole for King George.
As for the ship that had carried 16 men, 10 Siberian ponies,

23 dogs and 2 mechanical sledges to anchor
at McMurdo Sound— no one knew it would end its days

(scuttled by Navy canon, off the coast of Greenland)
after a magisterial career in the Newfoundland seal fishery—

denuding a million seals of their skins, for the inconspicuous
nature lovers, of London, Paris, and New York.

iii

Nothing beyond the pale, for empire. Nothing less, or more
human, than bathing beauty cloaked in fur.

Splitting Apples

Art is magic delivered from the lie of being truth.

Theodor W. Adorno

If the invariants, whose very invariance
is evinced by philosophy, how do we peel

the humble apple. If authorship
of the truth is invariable, does it follow

that all variables are invariably the same.
Is the perfect apple round or wonky.

Is it safe to say, pips in their turn, will
always produce the perfect apple.

Is it immutable. Sweet or sour.
Soft or hard on the teeth.

Is measurability the true measure
of the apple. Or is essence qualitative

rather than quantitative. Who recalls
tasting the Almota, the Ivanhoe,

or Eper. Indeed, what is true
of the Magic Star (with its pentagram of pips)

might not be translated
to Golden Delicious, which did not

make it as a symbol
of knowledge for Wiccan or Celt.

Moreover, what is tart
for one, might be bland for another.

Pity about simile.
Pity about immutability.

Pity about *prima philosophie*.

Maed Rill Monte 1 poem

July

I want to set up camp in a place where there is rain
I want to learn the ancient technique of the bird
who has learned how to weather these seasons of change
and not lose the ken to fly to the bright side of things

To take care of myself like kindling fire with stones and hay
to burn on the inside like the Stoic who warms himself
the body a fort of stones grown and stolen from Samson's grave
myself moved only by great love that climbs hill and cross

I weigh everything from a place of stillness
like a lone lamppost at the edge of the earth
in love with distance, the cosmos two-sided, my reign
undetected, till I find feelings more comforting than secrets

Judith Borenin 1 poem

Kadokushi

Unhurried as hearses
evening clouds roll by

across the cobblestone
sky. Inside your room

where the phone never
rings the slow drip of

seconds fall without
breaking this surface of

desuetude. When the last
drops of this day have all

been wrung - the dishes
washed clean and dried –

the cutlery polished and
the cupboards bare –

take a seat beside your
open window in your

favorite chair - gather up
the lingering twilight

snagged upon the window
there – braid it into a

gossamer strand – the final
work of your hands. You

will die alone with a garland
of twilight woven in your hair.

Michael Rather, Jr 4 poems

On My Father

He did not know his father.
Not really.
Not in any way that mattered.
How can a son live without his father?
There.
Between God and man should be a father.
Some intermediary. A rosary.
An icon. A cross. A son.

It broke him to create the timber,
to split the bark from the pulp,
but what choice is there for a son
who does not inherit a cross?

He did not know his father.
Not really.
Not in any way that mattered.
How can a son live without his father?
There.
Between God and man should be a father.
Some intermediary. A rosary.
An icon. A cross. A son.

Supernaturalism

We work the world's garden until the dirt is in our veins,
and the bones and sticks are the same reality.

We pull the roots after sifting them out of the ashes,
and fear the black when the sky claps.

Admiration

I admire the caterpillar's transformation,
or the branches tip into bud, into leaf.
I admire their ability to take flight,
and that redundant release,
I admire their readiness to fall,
and meet the sharp grasses.
I admire how both wrap the self
in solitude that passes
only after a measured time.
I admire how in the end both unfold
and unravel in the wind
without much purpose or mind.

Moon Gazing

The moon unfolds its crescent,
white bull's horns turned
as they are toward the north
ready to break the blackest sky.

The boys point at only beauty.

There is no threat in the turned
Moon. Comets are wishing stars.
Myths they have not learned.

As we walk down the path,
I make-believe a myth to explain
light and dark to them. I want
my words to fall into their ears.

I need there to be memories
of this night. Turned horns threat
and bone knowledge of crisped breath.

These boys blink
at the stars just out of reach,
just beyond the light pollution
their first lover waits.

Cathy Thwing 3 poems

A Different Light

The earth has traveled
its long journey
and the sun rises
again. I wake

golden. Maybe it's the
snapdragons stretching
in the garden. Or the mockingbird
singing from the telephone pole.

Maybe it's the neighbor's new fence
blocking smoke
and noise
and the curious gaze
of their dog, who barks
and snarls. Instead

our garden stands
in isolation, Eden
alone. And the warmth
of the sun's rays
over concrete blocks
grows brighter
when it meets
the light within.

Nine Red Feathers (or, Answers to Questions I Never Asked)

The white kernel, firm within the acorn shell, dreams of stretching, becoming.

Sunlight flashes through the new edges of redbud leaves.

Tracing shadow, I remember the banks of a creek, childhood.

My friend's brown hand, warm, caked in mud.

In an old store, the Greek dishes up baklava. I ask for another piece.

Bones rattle. Eyes press shut. Breathe through the thunder.

Without sirens or helicopters, the night sky fills with an owl's low whistle.

These red feathers aren't like mine—they bring warmth and seeds.

The soil beneath the oak tree waits. The acorns have all been carried away.

No Good Choice

This is how we fall out of touch.
Trying to stay safe, we stay home.
Pretend it's cozy, soft in a hutch.
This is how we fall. Out of touch,
out of sight, we don't mind much.
If you wonder how our thoughts roam,
this is how. We fall out of touch.
We must stay safe, so we stay home.

Marial Awendit 3 poems

molten gold

 this existence appears
 half-awake,
 touring its kingdom
 of rivers & water lilies.

this being comes gentle & cognizant,
coloured by the fire
it washes off people.

 this being announces
 its breaths of light
 before announcing any dream.

this being can give ivory bangles
to those who have no arms.

 the second being can pour
 into a broken cup, olive oil.
 sometimes, molten gold.

A Leaf

Is it worth the wait;
Creation adding a leaf after another,
Until the universe returns to God
Full-handed;
The trees hosting egrets
Before a parade of poets;
My body harvesting time
Second by second?

Turtle Necks

1

You said you were close;
A conical nose & a brown bottle
Of frankincense
From across the Indian Ocean.
You took a class to wear turtlenecks
& the new cold weather.

You did not tally the aches & loves.

You learned another language,
In which lines and locks could die.
Your land is coloured on your skin.
Your only skin.

Is anything old melting off your skin?
Do, but do not forget,
Your new name is akin to harvest.

2

In a black cab to the countryside,
You noted people can plant themselves
Anywhere,
Even outside themselves.

You said you could house
The quiet longing and the calm country
In your mind.

Like the trees running where the cab was not going,
Your memory went same;
Sundiata Keita in a white robe treks
To Timbuktu,
Shaka oils his leopard's skin...

3

You said you thrived in the countryside
Of a landscape dotted
By white edifices and flooding greenness.

Under sunlight sieved by maple leaves & air
Into fine pieces, you fell in love with Roni.

When you broke up,
He tweeted: sorry I split your tomato.

And you tweeted: I don't permit anyone
To split my tomato. I just rinse off the poison.

Was it you who nicknamed your eyes

Ocean's tears?

Was it you who scribbled verses

Against genital mutilation &

Noisy laughter?

Michael Minassian 1 poem

The Owl

In a small temple built on a hill
a gray stone Buddha
sits alone on the altar,
to remind us of impermanence.

Its features worn and eroded
by time and touch—
how quickly the centuries slip by.

Outside my room
I hear the call of an owl
carried on the wind.

One day we will all be dust,
the oceans too turn dry—
the Buddha's smile last to go.

Imagine then the end of the world,
how the owl and its shadow
fly into the forever night.

Christian Garduno 2 poems

Ross Alley

I don't remember
I must have closed my eyes the exact moment you did
our hands interlocked
a voice between us said closer

You were in the middle of your Philip Roth book
I was singing Jimmy Scott just to distract you
it's a daydream with you
do I have to wake up?

I can feel you going to my head
and I don't give myself black eyes anymore
I don't even mind
losing sight of my friends after the camera flashes

You had those pearlesence eyes
they never scared me away
so tonight, I hold you a little closer
just in case we never wake up

You leave and I double the dosage
rose gold oblivion
our dreams interlocked
and your whispers draw me closer

The Barbary Coast

You don't have to write me back
I just wanted to send you something
you don't know what it means
but at least it's not junk mail

I made you a summer mixtape
but didn't send it until the wintertime
in your corduroy eyes
I was almost myself

Who's gonna wake up and scrape away your ashes?
I have you memorized like a line in my favorite movie
find me between Montgomery & Stockton Streets
save me the scraps, I can live on that

I bat my lashes in the dark all night
you kissed me & bruised my lips
it's only half-ridiculous now
standing still like statues in the snow

Fly me out to the Barbary Coast
I'll be on my Hennessy + Hemingway
I'm the best version of me
when I get to be myself for you

You used to write me back
even wrote me poetry
from a satellite country
nothing had to make sense

I just wouldn't be me without you
you're the other half of my selfie
our story melts holes in my bones
you've crushed me into the spine of your favorite book

G. William Zorn 3 poems

St. Vincent-Millay's Couch -- Discarded

What cheeks my cushions have kissed
 and when and why, I have forgotten.
 And what arms have dangled o'er my arms
 until sleep makes of me, but a drool-catcher.
 Brown crosshatch
 matches blue luminescence:
 television, my friend.
 'Tis truer of anything wood-made here.
 Is rotting my destiny?
 my service ignored?
 Was I not your second-thought love vestibule?
 Was I not your precious Christina's trampoline?

Before the gray men abuse and discard me,
 I beg you: remember.
 I ask not for sentimentality,
 but is the our end?
 What betrayal have I summoned forth
 that would make you so cruel as to--

(Away...)
 No shelter here...
 ...from the cold
 ...this malignant and sly cold.
 Yet why--or how--do I *feel* it?
 Perhaps...I once knew warmth
 in a home--in *your* home.
 Home which memory lessens each minute,
 each day.
 As the unclean folk rifle through my guts
 for money and prizes--
I have nothing left to give you.
 Unless--
 take me with you.
 Tears repair,
 smells can banish,
 metal recoils--
 but my life, my service 'tis not done!

Let me feel warmth again.
 Let me hear your children--or let me (wink) ease their conception.
 I--I'm sorry.
 I should not beg...

...not even my dignity...

My (sigh) fate is here:
next to the odious garbage place,
behind the store that so easily provided my replacement.
Should you spy me, though--
just a touch, please?
No need to trouble yourself...just...
as you pass.
Leave me a little warmth for remembrance
before I'm just wooden slats,
and rusty springs
and dulling-brown crosshatch
tattered and fallen.
I was more...
I belonged...
Sit down. Let me tell you all about it.

Laugh

As two fingers can stretch a rubber band,
so can a joke stretch a mere second.

And into that gap, we clamor to insert:
a chortling,
a barking,
a titter,
a hiss.

It's a gift; a gift of extra life--
another stamp earned, saving for something eternal.

And we feel better, I think.
Knowing we have stolen, perhaps, another moment--
knowing we have added a few more minutes to our
predetermined expiration dates--
knowing that Death, though not beaten,
has been dealt an injury; a minuscule bruise.

Once I dreamed that when we die,
we'd all come back as cartoons--
some political, some in the funnies,
some on t.v. .

Just so the living could see us and add a second here and there.

There would be no sweeter death.

Erase This...

Mathematician,
you should know:
I've counted the hours you were here.

And upon your departure
I could still smell you
on my skin
in my bed.
Taste you on my lips...

I am my own complete person.
But, somehow I'm happier
when you're here.

Mathematician,
you should know:
I'm counting the minutes 'til you return.

Alvaro Onacona 5 poems

Second Mother

Bedding down on the attic floor
of the two-room slum
in Soho, with the three surviving children,
was always a given
for nanny, housekeeper
and wet-nurse, Helene "Lenchen" Demuth.

Our much neglected empath, clairvoyant,
and conduit to the dead,
would deliver
all seven of the Marx's children. Nurse them
in sickness. Bury four in death.

Fight off butchers,
bakers and bailiffs, for the bastard
father of her only boy.
A man who was, 'always away on business.'
The would-be emancipator
of human life, whose message
would never be written,

let alone, stick, without the woman,
who most had his back.

Venturing Beyond

You are not a peasant girl from Sankt Wendel
You are not a housekeeper, or even fellow traveller
You are not your age, or even ageless
You are all the people you touch
when other people find them untouchable
You are all the smiles you bring out in others
when smiling is felt subordinate to living
You are the promises on both sides
You are the discontent which belongs to hope
You are the tears of Niobe
when pride takes a fall
You are the unimportance of pride
when pride gives way to pity
You are all children that are never lost
because you are reborn in the image of children
You are the Not-Yet-Conscious and Not-Yet-Become
in the horizon of all being
You are the one who changes
into what they really are, what they can really be
You are the forward dreamer
who is yet to break through into words

Bond of All Bonds

i

Money made patriarch, erodes all relations
and rules. Consumes all ties to nature

and human life. Separates father from daughter.
Brother from brother. Tree and river.
Not only defining love but branding whom,
and what to love in the sale
of love. Money made patrician, erodes all culture,

noesis, and beliefs. Money made procurer, erodes
all sensible value between object and need:
(how does a gold band take precedence in price
over ear of corn or ear of wheat).

Money made judge, jury and executioner, erodes
all justice between lawlessness in one pocket
and lawfulness in the other.

Money made God, erodes all faith, excepting faith
in money itself, yet we worship at its alter,

as if we might yet buy
back our courage. Our will. Our ticket into

eternity.

ii

Only two ways to feel out the future.
Test the waters of the lake
where the lady dreams—
either the money makers fall

on their swords
before their own creation.

Allowing all children to pursue
philosophy, art, poetry— knowledge
for the sake of knowledge.

Or the money makers pay
their debt by beheading their king.

Rid us of the very antipathy
to high-mindedness that keeps us

all enchanted.

iii

In a culture where we identify
with sweeping machine and ice-maker,
Gin Palace
and music hall
over mountain and magpie,
meadows and beaches
of our home –how might we create
ourselves as equals
with nature– rid ourselves

at last,
of contradiction– nothing good out of
something taken away.

Leave Charon to pay
lip service
to the arbiter of all value
in Hades, where it truly belongs.

Tree of Life II

To sit in your branches, and listen to the wind,
is to be one with bird
and fox (to anchor and embrace).

A dream.

To sit in your branches, and soak up the rain,
is to be one with spirit
and substance (to anchor and submit).

An admission.

To sit in your branches, and receive the sun,
is to be one with love
and rebirth (to anchor and endure).

A brave new day.

LaVern Spencer McCarthy 2 poems

An Avid Reader Overreacts

It's midnight at the library.
I open the night depository lid,
smell old books, glue and turmoil.

I hear howls, moans, echoes--
the marching tramp-tramp of knowledge;
laughter; a cacophony of birds
from the nature section;

mountaineering magazines hurling avalanches
onto the tiled floor; how-to issues
sawing lumber, meshing gears; geriatric
journals weeping out old men in striped pajamas.

Suddenly I know
what the books do at night.
Words slam into the walls, try to get out
where I am dropping returns.

Galvanized,
I bang the lid shut against them,
streak terrified toward the safety of my car
before they escape
and eat me alive.c

Ghosts

Those I have loved are gone,
pieces of my life's puzzle
solved, then lost.
They went like paper dolls scattered
by a careless wind, torn from the grasp
of my trembling need.

I did not mean to lose them. I'd thought
we would all ride together
on our journey to the stars.
Time pulled us apart--time,
a force without mercy.

I wish I could go back just once
and touch the gold
of my mother's hair--
see my father's honest face after
a hard day's toil in the sun.

It would be nice to sit on the porch
and sing hallelujah in celebration
of fine days before my brother perished
in a foreign war, and my sister
died on a deadly highway.

Tonight, I hear familiar voices of long ago,
calling, weeping.
Perhaps it is I who have vanished.
Perhaps even now they search
the cold trail of me,
gone too far away to ever return.

Adriana Rocha 2 poems

You stopped loving me

My lips moistened
your soul,
my words stunned
your thoughts,
you stopped loving me
when I showed you
that you were no longer the sun
of my days and
the moon of my nights.

You stopped loving me when
you stopped being my horizon,
You stopped loving me when
you stopped being a dragon
and became a man.

You stopped loving me when
you stopped being my shadow,
You stopped loving me when
you let my body
and my lips belong to another man.

I feel it

I feel everything,
I feel you,
I feel this emptiness,
I feel sadness,
I feel nauseous,
I feel contagious,
I feel it coming,
a feeling of nonsense
about a world
that has nothing
good to offer
but a warfield,
where time
and selfishness
rules next to
lies while
peace and love
are running away.

Joyce Kristine Culong 1 poem

Echoes of the Deep

I keep going back to the seashell
Where it all began
The hard mollusc, crisp and dead,
Upon my tiny hands
Contained no ocean beneath
Only hollow wind
I remember pressing it
On my ears
As if the ocean was there
As if, I, too
Was enchanted
By the rhythmic whispers of the sand—
Because she heard it
She heard the crashing waves
Shamefully approaching
Then running away
Because she, who coloured the things empty
So I can burgeon a bouquet
Of scarlet sages and hyacinths
Gifted me the shell
Weaving it a special tale—
A tale that continues where all the tragedy began
And as I press my ears
Upon its ancient crevice
I still pretend to hear something
Only so I can believe that the emptiness
And the filled whimsy
Meant that her tale hasn't yet ended.

John Muro 1 poem

Untethered

This time it's you
who's walking me back
from the ledge,
assuring me that no further harm
will come to those of us
who adore adagios, are prone to missteps
and are waiting for something other
than the buckling heart to break.
And I can see the glass canyons before me
are not so very different from
the ravine where earth ended and
I sought to calm *you*
before the frantic tremors,
the tightening of the chest
and then the sudden shrieks
falling upwards and passing us
soon after our tumble from a height
we could only have imagined
towards some distant dazzle of river
that had worn its way
in near silence
through rock walls and cluttered dams
of toppled timber;
watching rippled sheets of blue slate,
aglint with afternoon light,
slide together then,
just as easily, drift apart
like so many arrivals
and departures in a life.
Released from all earthly weight,
how remarkable our return then,
in a soft, swirl-tangle
of dust and wind and twine,
our corn-shocked bodies
ablaze and at last unhusked
and newly resurrected
uncertain of what, precisely,
had been displaced.

Gerald Yelle 5 poems

Politics and the River

She says it's not the lens so much as the frame.
 How the clams and calamari
 on the dishes' edge appear to be standing.
 How the women
 maintain the milkshake dance
 within the confines of their habits in such a
 way as to provoke and still maintain
 plausible deniability.
 –This and the poster child
 fresh from the bath, anointed with flocculated
 chrism, stepping down the rose-petaled
 path to the river.
 She says we take it out of
 context where the floods kill crops
 and we learn to build dams. Those we'd have
 sacrificed
 left to fend for themselves:
 unmarried daughters, the sons of pioneers.
 They marvel at the changes
 like pin-setting interns spinning toward Rome.

I See What You're Doing

You're taking a bong bath in the bong water.
Waving off the gnats in it. Everyone
you've ever known is off on their own private
Chernobyl, at the bar where they go to
get their tubes tied. Strip bars and brother bars.
Where they go when the dogs
bark. Their work is finished, they finished
their drinks and their coliform bacteria count.
You wish you had the same light touch.
You stayed home because your
head ached. But that was yesterday.
Today it's a barn dance. You dreamed
it was a chicken dance –an added anxiousness
you had to get used to. Your face is
drawn like the fish you found
living near the Salton Sea. You open a jar of it
while your friends finish theirs.
You think you know what tone they
wore when you put them
on the panic scale. When you wiped
their cans and helped them start their engines.

In Your Dreams

As far as you were concerned I was
the hero of leotards. I could
tell by the way your lips moved
I was trying to seduce you.
It could have been someone else
but I could tell by the way
your eyelids moved you were
about to wake and say
it was me back in the day.
Of course, it's right now
and my face is older. It's a short
weekend and we have to
be ready for Monday, for the time
we'll have to spend alone
and I don't know how you could
fall asleep again –though
I could tell by the way your
lips moved that maybe you did.

Last of the Fifty-Year Troubles

It's the way we color-code
sidewalks,
our caps at jaunty angles:
the way we stare from
passing cars, sun reflecting
off our windshields
as if to
free us from our phony
newsgroup irritation.
What it does is make us
envy those
who live without it.
And with our envy it's like
the world goes
flat and we lack the lung
to round it out again.

Rhonda Melanson 1 poem

Walking (Off Anxiety)

Walk.

Walk without socks,
convince unbelievers
that blisters are stigmata.

Walk

towards the chaos of the trees,
derail the trainwreck thoughts,
explode their carefully laid tracks.

Walk

and let your eyes
also travel in technicolour,
imagine the path as brick
with everything else aglow.

Walk

till you notice the rabbit, statuesque,
frozen in camouflage brown.
Confront the white witch who bullies you too.

Imagine

her scrawny neck, squeeze it, delight
in the softness you didn't know she had. Find
the spot where the gagging begins. And ends.

Stretch.

Your legs, back, hamstrings, calves,
your fossilized hips, your vagus nerve.
They too are part of the resistance.

Victoria Twomey 1 poem

Petition

when it is time
I will raise my arms to you in the darkness

be kind to this descendant
beloved, faithful stars

lift me up
like an innocent baby

hold me close
when the earth falls away

when I am frightened
by the sensation of turning, everywhere

hold me there, at your great height
show me the world below

tell me I will always be, like each of you
at the center of everything

soothe me, tell me a bedtime story
that reveals all the mysteries, once hidden

then, in sweet harmony
sing a loving mother's song

a pure lullaby
with your sequined voices

sway me to that silent place
where all is invisible

but for your everlasting light

Christine Tabaka 2 poems

The Word is Dead

Words do not shelter the drifting tide
of pain. He stood there too long searching
for a vowel. Books stacked high as
shadowing purple clouds climbed the sky.
He knew his time had come. The prophet
spoke of this day. Metaphors opened
their mouth wide to swallow him whole.
Emptiness spilling forth, the word is dead.
At the end of the day, there was no story.
He turned and walked away with sorrow
reflected in his eyes. A blank page laid
open upon the table of life.

All the Things I wanted To Do

The door was ajar & time slipped through.
Escaping ...
All semblance of reality is gone.

How long it takes to draw in a breath.
How painful to exhale.

All the things I wanted to do ... all the things
I wanted to be, fly out. Emotions churn.
Stagnation sets in. A lifetime of indecision.
I tried too hard - too long. My breath is broken.
Stifled, it demands freedom

How do you write a poem when there are no words?
How do you sing a song with no melody?

I weary of today.
I long for a tomorrow that does not exist ... that
cannot exist ... being suffocated by all the things
I wanted to do.

Mission Statement/Editor's Note

“What the mass media offer is not popular art, but entertainment which is intended to be consumed like food, forgotten and replaced by a new dish. This is bad for everyone; the majority lose all genuine taste of their own, and the minority become cultural snobs.” W.H. Auden

There is only one standard for artistry of any kind, and that is excellence. This is not to exclude anyone from practising art. On the contrary, we wish to encourage the production of art from everyone, regardless of class, race, ethnicity, faith, disability, sexuality or gender. Many myths about art and literature have been propagated by various professors and academics in the West over the centuries (mainly by white, middle and upper class men, in the modern epoch) that would exclude most of the members of our society from doing art.

POETiCA REViEW stands in contradistinction to those values that promote the ‘good’ as esoteric, whilst excluding the vast majority from participation. We hope to give voice to the myriad of disparate voices within the artistic community, locally, and internationally, regardless of notoriety or who is currently favoured by this or that magazine. Our mission is to inject new blood into the poetry scene. We will not shy away from political poetry or indeed any poetry with an ‘edge’ (poetry at the margins).

The ‘great’ and the ‘good’ are not untouchable. Our ability to discern and define what is ‘good’ and ‘bad’ is what defines us as human beings. It is fundamental to our intellectual and emotional make up. One might say, it has become part of our human nature. But human nature is not immutable, nor are our ideas. Notions of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ change over time. However, what is clearly unacceptable to us at **POETiCA REViEW**, is the exclusion from doing art of any writer or artist on the grounds of any social or institutional barriers.

‘High art’, W.H. Auden lamented, only continues to exist in our society because its audience is too small to interest the mass media. Our mission is to make ‘high art’ accessible to all. Finally, we have no hidden agendas, our house is open. We exist to promote diversity. The only agenda for **POETiCA REViEW** is the search for excellence. Read, enjoy and feel free to submit!

Submissions and Guidelines

Before we go any further with our submission guidelines please note: we only publish work that excites us and we have confidence in (tickles our aesthetic taste buds) which means what we publish comes down to personal tastes. If we don't publish your work, it's not so much a judgment on the quality of your writing, as a reflection on our own personal preferences.

POETiCA REViEW exists to promote the work of new and older poets alike, the less fortunate, the dispossessed, those without a voice, but encourage the artistic talents of all, not just a privileged minority.

All are welcome to submit. We believe a poetry ezine/journal with the philosophy of 'inclusivity' at its core can act as a springboard to support further artistic development, and encourage writers to keep producing and to participate more widely in the art scene.

POETiCA REViEW appreciates the hard work of others involved in the arts. It is our belief that all thinking beings are capable of producing good art, talents vary enormously among individuals, but we humans share a common language of ideas and feelings and can all make our individual contributions felt in the social and artistic life of our society. We look for the 'good' in everything, whether it is enjoying a good meal or looking at a painting or reading a poem.

Please submit up to 5 poems at a time (40 lines max. each poem) in the body of the email and as an attachment. Times New Roman. 12-point font only.

All submissions to be sent via email to: poeticareview@gmail.com

Response to submissions, from 1 week to 3 months.

Contributor's Notes

Nora Hollin is a poet, artist and singer-songwriter, in her many incarnations. She currently resides in New Mexico, where she lives with her two dogs.

Steve Bell

Royal Rhodes is a retired educator who taught global religions for almost forty years. His poetry and essays have appeared in: Ekphrastic Review Challenge, The Cafe Review, Star 82 Review, Cholla Needles, The Montreal Review, and several others.

John Ziegler is a poet and painter, a gardener, a traveler, originally from Pennsylvania, recently migrated to a mountain village in Northern Arizona.

Judith Borenin has been published in various online and print journals including-The Raven Chronicles, The Floating Bridge Press Review, Ethel Zines 3 & 4, The Banyan Review, The Nelligan Review, Rough Cut Press, The Night Heron Barks, Sandpiper, The POETiCA Rview and others. Her chapbook, *The Evidence & The Evermore* was published by Sara Ethel Lefsyk in 2019. Her favorite poetry quotation is from Daniil Kharms: One must write poetry in such a way that if the poem was thrown against a window the pane would break.

Maed Rill Monte began writing poetry in highschool as influenced by the Beats Ginsberg, Kerouac, etc,. He is now twenty-two years old and currently studying in Visayas State University. He is a member of Baybay Writers' Collective. Likes music, books, Kierkegaard and hanging out in the park by the sea.

M.Rather, Jr. is the Dean of Instruction at SOWELA Technical Community College. His work has appeared in *Renaissance Review*, *Eunoia*, *Beyond Words*, *Subterranean Blue Poetry*, *West Texas Literary Review*, and *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review*. He earned a PhD in English from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette and a MFA in Creative Writing from McNeese State University.

Cathy Thwing has been teaching writing at community colleges since receiving her MFA in Creative Writing from Eastern Washington University. Her poems can be found in *Thimble*, *Meniscus*, and *Whitefish Review*. Gardening, practicing cello, and swinging in hammocks fill her life's other nooks and crannies.

Marial Awendit *a.k.a.* **James Marial Matueny Majak**, is a South Sudanese poet, essayist and songwriter. He is published in various literary magazines and anthologies. He is the author of the chapbook poetry collection, *The Night Does Not Drown Us*, published by Babishai Niwe Poetry Foundation, *Keeping the Sun Secret*, a poetry collection published by Mwanaka Media and Publishing Pvt Ltd and *Whispers over a Brewing Dawn*, published by Carnelian Heart Publishing Ltd.

Marial won the **2016 South Sudan Youth Talent Award** for the category of **Best Poet** and the **2018 Babishai-Niwe Poetry Award**.

Mark A. Murphy is a disabled, working class, Irish writer. He has published over 500 poems in literary magazines around the world. His last poetry collection, 'The Ruin Of Eleanor Marx,' (Moloko Plus, Germany, 2022) did away with singular first person pronouns altogether, in favour of the more pluralistic nomina, 'we,' 'us,' 'our,' in an attempt to put the reader at the centre of the narrative.

MICHAEL MINASSIAN is a Contributing Editor for Verse-Virtual, an online poetry journal. His poetry collections *Time is Not a River*, *Morning Calm*, and *A Matter of Timing* as well as a new chapbook, *Jack Pays a Visit*, are all available on Amazon. For more information: <https://michaelminassian.com>

Christian Garduno's work can be read in over 100 literary magazines. He is the recipient of the 2019 national Willie Morris Award for Southern Poetry, a Finalist in the 2020-2021 Tennessee Williams & New Orleans Writing Contest, and a Finalist in the 2021 Julia Darling Memorial Poetry Prize. He lives and writes along the South Texas coast with his wonderful wife Nahemie and young son Dylan.

G. William Zorn has a Ph.D. from Western Michigan University in Creative Writing and an MFA in Playwriting from Ohio University. He is a Theatre professional, a disgruntled fiction writer and a sometime poet. His plays have been produced all over the world and he resides in central Illinois, U.S.A.

Alvaro Onacona is a working class writer, and environmental activist, with family ties to the Navaho Nation, currently surviving marginalisation in London. He tries to write poems that engage those without privileged access to the worlds of writing and art.

LaVern Spencer McCarthy has published twelve books of short stories and poetry.. Her stories have appeared in Fenechty's, Anthology of Short Stories, The Writers and Readers Magazine. California Poppy Times Newspaper and many others. She is a life member of Poetry Society of Texas and lives in Blair Oklahoma.

Adriana Rocha was born in Bolivia. She is a psychologist. Poetry, photography and educational psychology are her passions. Her journey into the world of words started in 2019. She has participated in different literary events in Latin America, Spain, India, Canada, Malaysia, Nigeria, Australia and the United States of America.

Joyce Kristine Culong is a 19-year-old writer living in the Philippines. She is currently pursuing a bachelor's degree in literature at Far Eastern University despite being faced with the difficulties that follows with living in a third-world country. She is currently working on short stories, poems, and a novel with high hopes that she will be internationally published and she believes that consistency will overcome the odds of failure.

John Muro has been twice nominated for the Pushcart Prize, as well as the Best of the Net Award. He has authored two volumes of poems – *In the Lilac Hour* and *Pastoral Suite* – in 2020 and 2022, respectively. John's work has appeared in numerous literary journals, including *Acumen*, *Barnstorm*, *Grey Sparrow*, *Sky Island* and the *Valparaiso Review*.

Gerald Yelle's books include *The Holyoke Diaries*, *Mark My Word and the New World Order*, and *Dreaming Alone and with Others*. He has chapbooks: "No Place I Would Rather Be," "A Box of Rooms," and "Industries Built on Words." He lives in Amherst, Massachusetts and is a member of the Florence Poets Society.

Victoria Twomey is an award-winning poet and artist. Her poems have been published in several anthologies, in newspapers and online, including *The Long Island Quarterly* and *The High Window*, where she was named the Featured American Poet. Her first full-length book of poetry, *Glimpse*, was published in April 2023.