

POETiCA REVIEW

Autumn 2022



[Victoria Twomey](#)
[Damien O'Brien](#)
[Melissa D. Burrage](#)
[F.I. Goldhaber](#)
[Douglas Colston](#)
[Gary Lark](#)
[Andrew McBride](#)
[Colleen Kam Siu](#)
[DS Maolalaí](#)
[Sophia Butler](#)
[David Capps](#)
[J.D. Isip](#)
[Adepojo Isaiah Gbenga](#)
[Louis Efron](#)
[Michael Edwards](#)
[Mark Flekenstein](#)
[Oindri Sengupta](#)
[Nolcha Fox](#)
[Kayla Knight](#)
[Charlie Brice](#)
[Lynne Kemen](#)
[Sharon Mitchell](#)
[Shai Afsai](#)
[Jim Murdoch](#)
[Madeleine French](#)
[Peter Mladnic](#)
[Rp Verlaine](#)
[Bobbie Saunders](#)
[Megan Wildhood](#)
[Smitha Sehgal](#)
[Edward A. Dougherty](#)
[Kim Malinowski](#)

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Index

Poems

[Contributors](#)

[Mission Statement](#)

[Guidelines](#)

[‘The Ruin of Eleanor Marx’](#)

POETiCA REViEW

For the many, not just the few.

Victoria Twomey 3 poems

Constant Window

I open my heart to find you
unfasten the bright round buttons of the starlit sky
reach into the black felt cloak of silence

feeling along time's flattened breast
my fingertips push through porous ribs
scattering a heart-shaped cloud of dust

searching forbidden inky pockets
I find the note you left for me
written in a teacher's hand

saying, I am right here
the palm of my hand forever pressing
against my side of the constant window

look again
this time from your side
see, the glass is as wide and blue as the sky

to touch me
you need only raise your palm
and press it up against the heavens

First published in *The RavensPerch*.

Velvet Pouch

the man at the parlor door
in the understated gray suit, the respectful tie
wearing the perfect smile for his line of work
who, with well-rehearsed and subtle ceremony
placed a small velvet pouch upon my open palms
carefully, as if it were a bag of diamonds

a regal dark blue sack, soft to the touch
drawn tight at the top with a golden string
an unexpected weight of bone and ash

a fountain of liquid glass
can rise like clear flowing fire in the body
release out sighted spillways
and still not help the drowning heart

it will get easier, he said
knowing better than I
my pocket of dust was not my father humming a song
not the same as remembering
he would have wanted me to write this poem

the man in the suit
was well versed in the business of what lingers
long after the aroma of so-sorry flowers

you will see, he said

I did not understand
I did not believe him
until now

Waiting Embrace

lying back on a black satin sheet
in your sequined gown

stippled courtesan
to the alpha and the omega

moons ringing your neck like pearls
iridescent breasts plump as star clusters

dark hair lying long as a light year
from one heaven to another

lips
the color of Martian soil

arms endless, spread open
in promise of holy ruin

as if to say take it slow and don't worry
I am the fated traveler's velvet dream

I have given my forever love
to everyone from Eden to Ursa Major

there will be no going back
when we embrace in consuming desire

when I burn you down
into a single tongue of flame

and finally, make of you an echo
of that one small light

Damien O'Brien 2 poems

Sports Star

All his life, an indifferent sportsman,
a clumsy participant in football,
a fumbler in cricket. The hand never
understood the eye, the foot never
followed the play. The last child
chosen. All his life he loved sport but
could not run, longed to take one of
those classic catches to win a match
but could not have caught a cricket
ball if his life depended on it.

All his life, except that one time that
the toddler had crawled her curiosity
through an open window while her father
lay dozing on the sofa, and slipped
from the ledge through seven floors of
game highlights and he saw her fall.

All his life and that was the easiest
catch he ever took. What did it mean,
that one time? All his life he'd wonder.
All his life, for all her life. One catch.

Low Tide

If you are interested, the police have a file
as thick as your wrist for the lost girls and boys
left 'for a moment' or 'just a little while'
at Broadbeach's sands, surrounded by toys.
That's the beach closest to the casino
where their parents will be found hours later
punching empty morse into a fruit machine's glow.
So many things stronger than love, sirens greater.
The days grow colder, swimmers leave the beach.
The tide pulls childhood further out of reach.

Melissa D. Burrage 1 poem

Half Brig (*An Ekphrastic Poem for my Dad and his Grandson, August 2016*)

Norman Rockwell was conflicted in 1927
when he gave his painting three names: The Stay at Homes,
Outward Bound, Looking Out to Sea. Couldn't decide,
each made sense. He was thirty-three, had no children,
newly divorced, his father would die four year later,
the son perhaps aware of life's fragility.

The setting likely Provincetown, above Commercial Street
east end, a shingled cottage, mast of a ship aground
in the harbor, half brig in the distance, likely sketched
in 1912 when he studied with Hawthorne and Chase
learned to paint waves, rooftops, grass, men's pants.

The old captain and young boy watch the hybrid
hermaphrodite vessel from shore: square rigged foremast
fore-and-aft rigged main mast, two different sail plans
on one boat, like different life plans for man and boy:
senior sailor near completion—
a 'stay at home' ceases going forward,
young sailor looking out to sea—
outward bound, his life lay ahead.

The elder brittle-backed man with cane
rests his hand gently on the boy's shoulder as if
to offer protection, a warning, as a brig would do
for smaller ships.

Beneath their feet, brown grass turns green, buds push forth
from soil, the brig a sign of spring, new life, as seagulls
seeking decayed meat circle above the man.

This was my dad and his grandson's favorite painting
for both had copies. But their own story of wise captain
and young protégé did not play out like the canvas
where the aging man protects the child, passes
wisdom to the next generation, where brig and bud
optimistically appear, in the proper order of things,
as the boy lives on.

In memory of **Zachary Burrage-Goodwin** on the one year anniversary of his death.

F. I. Goldhaber 2 poems

Explaining the Hashtags

#NotAllMen

Tell me how are you working
to dismantle the patriarchy?
You aren't? Then yes, all men.

#NotAllCops

Have you reported, investigated,
and testified against a criminal cop?
You haven't? Then yes, all cops.

#NotAllWhites

Exactly what are you doing to fight against
systemic racism and for reparations?
Posting on social media? Then yes, all whites.

#NotAllChristians

Do you stand up to those eviscerating LGBTQ
civil rights and reproductive health care access?
Didn't think so. Sorry yes, all Christians.

#AllLivesMatters

Have you done anything lately to protect
a person of color from racist cops?
Or did you call 911 on someone existing while Black?

#TargetLooting

The store specifically designed to
criminalize POC and the poor?
Do you find policies making it difficult to shop there acceptable?

#RiotingIsIndefensible

What if City Hall won't listen and peaceful
protest is met with militarized police?
"A riot is the language of the unheard." -- Martin Luther King Jr.

#PropertyOverPeople

When a legal system grants more value
to a white man's store than a Black man's life,
extrajudicial property destruction gives POC a voice.

#PoliceBrutality

What if burning down a police station saved
a dozen POC lives, or even just one?

Police must be stripped of power and privilege, held accountable.

#BlackLivesMatter.

#TheyBuiltThisCountry.

They can #BurnItDown

America the Beautiful

"America is better than this"

Only if you're white, straight, cis, neurotypical.

For the rest of us, America is

the land of genocide, slavery, concentration camps;

of pogroms and police violence;

of doors battered down, blood on the streets,

mass graves discovered a century after the smoke

clears.

"America is the land of the free, home of the brave"

Only if you're white, male, xtian, English speaking.

For the rest of us, America is

the land of persecution and prisons populated

with people whose only crime is dark skin,

accents, queerness, neurodivergence, gender nonconformity,

not worshipping the evangelical prosperity gospel.

"America first"

Only in military spending, medical debt, poverty, incarcerations, gun deaths.

For the rest of us, America is last

among "first world" countries in

infant and maternal mortality, food security,

access to health care, longevity, income equality,

literacy, parental leave, vacations, mental health.

"We must protect our democracy"

For white property owners, America was a Republic.

For the rest of us, the Constitution never uses that word and

the structure of these United States discourage Democracy with

an Electoral College preventing democratic election of a president,

a Second Amendment preserving slave patrol militias, and a

Three Fifths compromise giving slave states more

power.

America where "it can't happen here"

Only if you close your eyes to the patterns.

For the rest of us, we see "others" labeled as criminals, perverts, threats.

Populist politicians, government propaganda, travel bans;

children shivering in filthy, over-crowded cages;

police slaughtering POC, LGBTQ, the mentally ill;

homeless people disappearing; cultural genocide.

We know what's coming. Do you?

Douglas Colston 2 poems

An age of reason truly fears war

Affairs and substitutions
are like generations and pronouns.

Logic, reason and truth,
similarly,
are like ‘natural science’
or ‘putting in order’ and ‘managing’
(in the past,
too,
they may have been like an ‘envoy’ , a ‘jailer’ or a ‘matchmaker’).

The target?

The optimal potential in each emerging moment?

Warring against
disputes,
fights,
differences,
absences
and contention
(or that which is otherwise described
by the 25th tetragram of the Tàixuánjīng []).

A seat, bench or desk
may be like a foundation
(perhaps even an altar
or the ‘seat of a deity’).

Killing or injury,
too,
may be like a cause,
a reason,
the plot of a play
or a song
that is prepared,
done,
performed
and accomplished.

Battles, fights and wars?

Weeping and crying.

Offspring, births, descendants,
reasoning, speech and explanations?

Fight that battle.

Begetting reasoning, philosophy and respect?

The single
beautiful, pleasant and agreeable
war.

Family?

The ground,
a grassy field
or the foundation.

And war?

Harmful,
conflictual,
adversarial,
severe,
strife,
unpleasantness,
distressing,
affliction,
grief ...
and war.

Throwing away or abandoning optimal outcomes? Out-dated. The foundation? A plan.

Collapse, abrogation, desertion, decline,
decay, neglect, waste or slaughter?

It happens.

Rejecting or discarding
what is true, bright, clear and optimal
targets what is faulty or mistaken.

This is beautiful, timely and good –
a basic foundation
arranging, establishing, planning and designing
giving, kindness and favour.

‘Forsaken’ and ‘abandoned’
Purāṇā (पुराणः: an ancient text)?

A foundational composition.

To foresee or predict
is the beginning –
it is the ancient and primeval step ...
the foundational structure.

Care, providence, caution and foresight
conserves or restores
foundations
for construction, association, composition and preparation.

Go swimming people!

Hunting or pursuing
old age?

The foundation
is raising humans and humanity
to be great and valued.

Gary Lark 4 poems

Ancient Wisdom

Ancient wisdom
has no clothes.

Auschwitz wasn't an accident.

The slave trade
was business.

Doves dust their mites
in the plaza.

1702 Turner Road

They couldn't tell for sure who was first,
these high school sweet hearts,
Romeo and Juliet in their eighties.
She poisoned and he with a bullet.

The sheriff and examiner would guess
and considered that good enough.
Electricity turned off, food mostly eaten,
the dog at the neighbors.

Was there a crime here? Did it matter?
Unless somebody stirred it up
questions would be buried.
The sheriff had other things to do.

Grace Note

I find it hard to believe that
Survival of the Most Aggressive
is a prime law of the universe.
Just because we are stuck in that loop
doesn't mean that other entities
haven't seen its foolishness.

If I could look into life elsewhere
I believe I would see mutual regard as basic,
where minds intertwine with that which is.

Are we really taking our show to outer space?
Our current capabilities keep us from inflicting
our thinking on swirling wonders
we barely comprehend.

My Grief Grows Thin and Useless

Flies buzz the swollen bodies
landing here and there,
amber eyes and little tongues,
war not being necessary
but a nice addition
to everyday putrescence.

The six-year-old who played ball in the street,
half a squad in the field that used to grow poppies,
best of all the old woman behind the wall
who won't be found for a weeks.

Andrew McBride 2 poems

Cityscape After Rain

after Into Thee by Susy Kamber

Eyes surround her, objectify her, try to hold her gaze,
try to possess her. A woman with resolve, insistent
on walking in the light-suffused day, refuses to be held
back or possessed, to be broken or heartbroken.

My horror at the nearly four thousand racist attacks
on Asian Americans over the past year isn't enough.
I see a banner on the deck of a condo overlooking
the bay: Am I Next? Stop Asian Hate. I take off my hat
and show the peace symbol; it isn't enough. I'm sorry.
I can't know the depth of your fear and weariness.

I mourn y/our sisters and brothers, insist they be remembered.
Trees shake off harm. Petrichor rises from redeeming earth.
A spell for your protection: you belong, you belong, you belong.

In the Reliquary of Immortals

after Blue Bowl by Liz Magee

Gaia returns often to the reliquary of immortals
to gaze upon a cracked blue bowl. Though relic

or simulacra, it reminds her of her beloved earth.
The blue marble planet was a vessel to name and know

herself by till her banishment. As ancestral mother
of life on earth, Gaia is fond of all life-forms.

Even humans, joy and bane of her existence,
agents of her exile. Gaia is proudest of tardigrades,

her adorable water bears tardigrading
all over the blue bowl of earth, from tallest peaks

to deepest ocean trenches. Deep ocean trenches
remind Gaia of cracks. The bowl, the planet

are in need of repair. Are there kintsugi artists
of such stature to repair earth, our cracked blue bowl?

Colleen Kam Siu 1 poem

THE NEW BLACK HOLE

Did you know,
thirty-four million
light years away
burns a pint-sized
galaxy:
a simple starburst
0.006
times smaller
than our Milky Way, and in
its button of a heart
a black hole
is blazing
to the beat
of its own
damn drum?

This
absent-colored spark, this
carnivore of suns,
isn't just gorging on celestial bodies
like its cousins,
it's belching out
compliments to the chef
at one million miles per hour,
gas and heat and breath
riding a black horse
expected to wrought
equal-opportunity obliteration!

But, in actuality,
this
assumed warden of light, this
caldera of de-creation,
is using
its cataclysmic, unstoppable breath
to conceive a
new cosmos,

scarring the dark sky
with kintsugi stars.

D.S. Maolalai 1 poem

We came to the hills to get drunk

cheeks pink as an apple and the east-
facing sky. eyes dark as plums
and the west. and now early morning –
we are camping in wicklow.

I come out of the tent like a chickenbone
breaking to marrow. I am delicate, meat-pure
and first to arise. inhale – smelling bogwater,
the birthing of heather and earth.

last night we tore night up with yells
about everything. we are all young men still –
we came to the hills to get drunk as we might
have done anywhere. a down
of unshaven 18 year old chins in a howl
pointed up at the evening. and then distant
gunshots – someone out killing deer.
a swandive so beautifully backwards.

Sophia Butler 2 poems

The Halcyon Bird

Mom's birthday reignites loss, as grief lingers like her favourite perfume, long after she has gone, the day dedicated to Sinatra and songs that touched her heart.

Like a laser through an open door, chaos comes, green opal sweeps a flash of light, displaying feathery turquoise top and tails of electric blue, the

frantic fluttering of a visitor unused to glass panes and walls persists, until perched high on a sill, hunched up, the kingfisher surveys the room with onyx, pin top eyes.

A morphing form, compact pompom body, balayage, yellow and white with long black bill like a workman's tool, streamlined for craft.

Windows and doors unlocked, flung like arms wide open, allowing easy exit into vast bush and warm blue sky. The 'halcyon bird' ascends bestowing peace.

- 'halcyon bird' Greek name for a Kingfisher.

The One-Drop Rule

Pretense was a tool to erase the other self,
new life remodeled with
carefully covered tracks,
and ‘white lies.’

Semi-truths sacrificed family,
and love, hiding the invisible half
bringing sleepless nights,
and self-loathing.

Opting for a fighting chance of success,
in a monstrous world where a drop of
‘black blood’ sealed
a person’s fate.

Genetic tests reveal tragic tales, digging up
buried secrets in white family plots,
taken to the grave,
in fear of ‘One- Drop Rule.’

- The one- drop rule was a social and legal classification that was prominent in the 20th century in the US. It asserted that any person with even one ancestor of black ancestry is considered black.

David Capps 2 poems

Girl with a Pearl Earring

I had practiced a look
of longing in the mirror—

you focus your eyes
on a poise of dust (not

argumentative)

and let it expand until
it becomes whoever

you desire. This was before
he came to paint me

that shining pearl that
concentrates itself. How

he babbled about finding
the right shades: lapis

lazuli, indigo and weld,
spouting his theory,

*if objects partake of colors
of their neighbors...* He looked

tired when I asked him
about Da Vinci, Mona Lisa.

Why is my background so
dark? Why not add hills

and fantasy, why not Ionic
columns? Why all the pouring

milk and weighing jewels, why
the reading and quills

and letters in your work?

The Terracotta Army of Qin Shi Huang Di

Officials in the shade of persimmon trees,
faded malachite, acrobats and chariots,

pikemen on horses rearing elastic, alive.
As if all the soldiers who will ever be had been

buried in that dark earth. It was the dream
of Qin Shi Huang Di, who wanted the kind

of immortality you live through, beaming
with wooden teeth, clay-eye dark, innumerable

clay quivers of his army's archers. Our own
generals are close-minded, disrespect their

forbearers, overlook the potential energy
of the dead; their mobility over present earth

is made ridiculous. But this ruler whose sculptors
stole men from the country to use as live models,

to mold eyes of arches, while others came to paint
lilac dimples on their terra cotta cheeks, knew

what our politicians only *wish* they could feel,
though their hearts have "hardened". A soldier is

a sculpture, immaterial. Whether one lives or dies,
they are a number. If there are enough lives, lives

become meaningless, scatter amid elephant herds
unfired. Goodness, righteousness, selflessness

are elephants of war marshaled to burial grounds
of Mt. Li. A channel of mercury flowed through

the red soil, forming a trench gleaming with sickness.
Sometimes a pallor is an outward sign of what is

inwardly known: he who welcomes war welcomes
chaos.

J.D. Isip 2 poems

There Are No Good Answers

He says, the Numbers Guy on the Iraq War,
As if the question were about what to wear
To the Oscars dinner he's attending tonight
When he is the Numbers Guy on the Movies of 2009

4,280 have died – but he never gets to that.

“They say we shouldn't talk about the past
But that's all we have to talk about
And I blame it all on...”

And that's how it goes, “I blame it all on...”
*In all my years – all seventeen before this year –
I've never seen a sunset like...*
How could he know it wasn't his to see?
Found dead from a gunshot wound in Camp Victory, Kuwait –
Pfc. Matthew G. Milczark

“I blame it all on...”
They say the sand comes up in cones like you're off to Oz
And visibility is a bitch, not to mention the jackoff playing
Country music full blast so the turbans know
After this one, I'm on my way home, son –
The hummer caught the lip of the ditch
And everything was silence and sand.
It was an accident –
Spc. Luke C. Williams

4,282 have died – but he never gets to that.

“I blame it all on...”
Jonathan Keefe and Julio Huertas, Navy SEALs, heroes –
In surer times –
Begin to plead their case for saving
Four US contractors from mutilation, but
They punched the perpetrator

And the Numbers Guy is sensitive about rights
“There is just no excuse...” he writes
While previewing *Avatar* –
*I wonder who I will sit next to tonight –
Some movie star, a director
Someone who matters*

Like Roman Polanski

4, 282 have died, two are incarcerated – but he never gets to that.

“Look, it doesn’t matter if we stay or if we go –
But I think we should stay”

The interviewer goes flat, gives a cough
Like he has swallowed some sand –
Keefe and Huertas are off the table,
As is PTSD and any other questions
About war...

“So, you’re going to be at the Oscars tonight?”
The question comes weakly
As if he is looking for life
In a boneyard

And, as they do, the bones answer –

“Yes, and it will be *Avatar* for sure –
The Hurt Locker is just not
Sensational enough.”

Leaving Krypton

for Anne

It is better you had not stayed long enough to know
what alchemy binds us to a place, how extracting
yourself begins a dissolution, the cloud-capped
towers, the cracked cement slab you'd jump every
day on your way to school, the band you worshipped,
a dog you pet in your sleep, friends, parents, all

melt away before you think to look back, you think
turning around, just a glance, will be too much for you
and you are right, some ancient knowledge forces
your stare forward, drowns out the chain reacting
atoms, the splitting crust of a world where once you
were essential as its gravity, its rotation, its sun—

But, O! What crests into view? A light you never felt
pulls you closer, a strength you've never had takes over,
and you are flying this foreign galaxy, feeling yourself
for the first time yourself, arms outstretched, open
to embrace a brand-new atmosphere, the sweet air,
a woman you kiss to sleep, adopted parents, friends, all

will need your new powers to survive this new adventure:
x-ray vision to see the imposters; piercing heat to bore
deep into layers of tradition, stubbornness, scars; a cold
breath for those who call you a false god; and the wisdom
to keep that shrunken city from this place as a reminder
we never fully lose the past, but what we knew is gone

the instant that we leave it.

Adepojo Isaiah Gbenga 3 poems

January Children

Waltzing cold, January child—is that you? Coccinellidae?
The curtain parts, moonlight coming in, Ophelia, you build
a taciturn garden of alyssum—these past few days, you learn
new things in lullabies: that stones are similar to children,
except that they do not want & do not admire the flight of
things: do not lay in the open orchard, not-talking, (a body
balancing the weight of everything), not even to you, & this
time wanting to be left alone. You have her portrait painted
beside her father's in the parlor. Side by side, you know their
combination is bad: she can fall asleep: the hand I hold when
I visit is only hers: only they feel the weight of absence:
 the ground fascinates,
 an art she knows too well
— like how she says people bury other people without
Death certificates, how'd the necropolis keep record,
How'd the watchman not forget body-counts? To her, July is the
dying year, & I cannot disagree. She likes her father too much you
want to die too. You lay beside, half-dead. She pokes you, begins to cry.
She cannot differentiate; does it matter how dead we become when
we share certain amount of immobility? Morning. You arise from the
stench of urine. Last week, a somnambulist knocks at your door & says
you smell. The sycamore halfpines— a miracle it breathes just fine—
at night along the lakeline, two bodies secede. Your garden
is in full even bloom—

Fa—da

how many times have I watched my father die this year
& how many times have I been visited in grieving.
I six-feet under Gilead. The road gives way. Skinrafts
At the bend of road.

What will I do this June—it is supposed to be my birth-
month, but it is debt-repayment; like August; like March:
like all the months I spent recluse & used.

That is, freedom is a death poem that ends abruptly—

Alloy be the name of Elymas—

That is, happiness in this coffin is real: the hymnmaster-of-the-parting
is also real— glory of July relinquish, flight this year. Fuchsia
alone at wakekeep, the sexton whiles away time—at the compound
front, a riverbird intoxicates, grief waterlogged in its body—
outside: a whole world thrown on the moon, on the leaf fragments
like independent ministers— & am I absolved from iniquity this year...
from my soul's aviary.

Art

grey, water,
art: then a
god-bit...
fairshare of all dying people, wanting separate canvasses; isn't
it out of place for an art to transcend the confines of forgetfulness...
I instigate a new kind of violence every dead man can access. No
Interlocutor, no Nexus, a sordid gaze at life-essence. Spirit radicals
In sunspots; June 9th, I'm overwhelmed; the forewent are overwhelmed too;
All-waiting at resurrection, I know why the walls of our life-essences went up.

i can paint a violent art of a violent insurrection:
oil, then blood, very essential for the most perfect
place of violence: passive dying: then silence—

Louis Efron

A New Home

Unbreathable air, spoiled soil, cancerous streams
A death march of lambs to yet another slaughter

Carelessness, disease, hate, and violence
Bodies in the streets, crimson rose stained pavement

Turning away from indiscretions, mistakes
A merry-go-round of toxic horses, civil unrest

The simplest empathy like misplaced keys
A home with locked doors, window slivers void of light

A white robed preacher, a sold-out sermon with a pulpit queue
Flailing and accusatory hands, dark eyes piercing pews of repentant souls

A failed Earth, a time to discard
Another world, our new home

Your golden lottery ticket to escape the raped and pillaged
A stem pushing through the dirt to prove its worth

Michael Edwards 3 poems

Walking at Noontime

Oh there, look!
Strung like fairy-silk, from limb to limb:
a spider's web.
Even now, at noontime, it holds the dewdrops.
It catches the sun.
But did ever a diamond necklace
shine more brilliantly?
I ask you.

Volcano

Red. Molten. Rock.

Let it erupt through the spine,
exploding into streams of living liquid fire
all around my head and shoulders.

And now, visibly, a halo of light
surrounding my head and even my shoulders.

My heart, glowing like a furnace within me: rose-red.
(Feel the heat of it!)

Behind the navel, my belly, too, ravening for a taste of the truth.

And here, down below, my genitalia, distilling the essence of love.

Love divine. Love eternal. Love ecstatic.

And now, eyes closed in bliss, in bliss I tell you,

I see in one glance

the worlds without end—magnificent!—created by God:
created in an explosion of light.

Volcano it was.

Even then.

This Dark Winter Morning

Before me,
this dark winter morning,
a stand of pine trees:
tall as a shout,
thin as a whisper,
and rising from the earth
so close together
they look like the strings of a harp.

But they breathe forth only a cold gray mist,
like the music of death.

And when it flows over you slowly,
that mist,
touching your brow, then touching your breast,
you too will be inspired
to sing a song of death.

So breathe it in and sing out loud
a song in celebration of death,
yes death,
which brings comfort to those in pain.

For soon enough
the sun will glance downward again,
dispersing the mist,
and lifting it to the heavens, as if by miracle.

But then —
you will forget

So here today,
this dark winter morning,
oh rouse your voice and sing:

if only to wake the sun.

Mark Flekenstein 2 poems

PAIRED ASSUMPTIONS THAT DON'T KNOW EACH OTHER

Paint is dusty with historical residue,
not reasonably a neighbor of language.

A stickler for nuance, like a younger 3rd cousin.
In the quest for color, think cave paintings

like notes left on the refrigerator for the family,
traveling close to home. Europe

wasn't quite Europe, a continent,
an imitation? Drawing breath,

seeking color, how to replace and explain
what was seen, a preamble to thought.

The very genesis, starting to smell like language.

LAMENT

Again, not wanting loss, to lose all – a smile,
mountains, a memory-shroud voice

Beginning again to hope for a little more:
sun, maybe stars, scavenged light,

undisappointed weather And how you made a shadow

Oindri Sengupta 2 poems

SEPIA LIGHTS

The walls are almost covered with mirrors.
When daylight creeps through the curtains,
the sun looks like a disdainful fellow
looking for an excuse to run into arguments
at the slightest possibility of a blank space.
Few open spots are there on the walls.
But those are for the moon to rest
before slowly fading into someone's dreams.

I've come here to sleep.
Every night when my head rests on the pillow,
the western sky takes the shape of a pear
and floats on those mirrors
like an unfinished conversation.
I cover my face
to avoid multiple encounters with myself.
Rivers flow under my feet,
and the world shrinks
like a moth's territory-
insipid and drastic like the opening of a canyon.

I take a slice of the previous night's love bites,
place it under my pillow
and drink all my pain
till the light creeps in my nerves again.

LANGUAGE OF SURRENDER

To learn the language of surrender
one has to stand face to face with the sea,
and watch how the fist of day opens.
Nothing can be more beautiful than a broken heart,
that rose from its thorns and turned red again.
And nothing more intense than the darkness
that lost the night to the stars.

When the tree is young,
find its roots.
When the roots wilt and die,
find the water that wrote its name on them.
Only then you can find me.
Only then I can carve the path in me,
and reach your hands.

To learn the language of surrender
only once stand face to face with the sea

Nolcha Fox 2 poems

Someone Is Leaving

Hunger for new is the opposite of a lilac tree.
Bags and suitcases are a kiss goodbye.
The mother sobs, a rainbow of fear.
Shadows enclose her glistening raincoat.
The windows behind her are shut to revelation.
The sweep of her hair is a trail of birdseed.
Someone is leaving. Adieu.

Night at the Bar

I don't see me in the mirror
when I order me a drink.
I see a skeleton sloshing suds and sobs.
The teddy bear you won for me
drowns in beer and water,
as it joins its fishy friends
in the tank next to the door.
Frank, the guy behind the bar,
doesn't ask what's wrong.
He simply pours another,
and says it's on the house.
My soul a voided landscape,
the victim of a bait and switch.
When I've had enough to drink,
I won't keep any secrets.
Soon you will be infamous
for what you didn't do.

Kayla Knight 2 poems

The Family Curse

I wish the stairs didn't creak so loud
when I creep down to seek you out.
You all line up neatly on the cupboard
singing a siren song--one that's called
to my very blood for generations.
You soothe and you burn,
you cloud and you clear.

When you course through my veins
and touch all I'm sure you find familiar,
cleaning me out to the marrow
until my head pounds and my body shakes,
I curse the sky and you--
and myself.
I have no memory, ever, of how we got here.

The Forge

A table built for my sister, plank
by plank, by her own family
the same family built by the forge
the table became. Sometimes we gather,

pouring our daily ores
into the crucible, warmth
and heat melting together
a new alloy, shaped, forming
a tool bearing the touchmark
of that table. I myself hammered

out my rough ore, moments spent
at that table—fire forming formless
parts of me. This table, my family.

My sister is guardian and forge-
master. She leads us all to finding
our own shape and way. Somehow,
we never stray very far from this harbor

I ask my sister for her favorite
part, this forge of so many moments.
She runs her hands lovingly around, the
hands lingering over nicks, rounded
worn edges, every piece made,
spent in moments being shaped,
quenched and tempered, gifted
by those most loved. When finished,
carried—hardened, and solid we gather-
Armored all against the world.

Charlie Brice 3 poems

All in a Dream

Last night I visited our cabin on Walloon again,
in a dream, of course. I sat in the living room
gazing at the lake. Water seeped over the dream floor
and I hoped the new owners would let me stay if I
cleaned it up for them, but I couldn't find a mop.
They'd moved the mop from where I always stored it
next to the water softener in the laundry room.

Why did they do that?

I miss the piliated woodpecker's sweep into our yard,
how he used his tail to grip the suet cage to have his meal.
We'd gazed in wonder at this feathered dinosaur who
trusted us, over the years, with his grandeur and glory.

I miss the walk up Townsend Road to Keeble. When
the wind blew across Keeble Road, across the plot of land
we knew as Thomas' Farm, it was if some god turned
the pages of a grassy tome that chronicled the dives
of red-tailed hawks and the fables of how sandhill
cranes earned their rusty hues and primitive cries.

I loved every weed and anthill that adorned the brown earth,
even the occasional dead bee amid tall grass. I found a wallet
in a culvert there once—no money or credit cards, only a photo
of a woman, a child, and a card from Alcoholics Anonymous.

Dear Winter

What is it about your icy countenance
that enacts endurance, that compels
survival, that blasts a blizzard across
a bridge or gray overpass and closes
a gap in my soul, allows my heart
to heat up, my eyelids to blanket
a world of woe or bliss?

Isn't this insanity? Shouldn't I despise
how your white carpet of grief causes
red-winged blackbirds to flee our feeder
and makes day lilies and forsythia seek
somnia in frozen loam?

What of your position in the rhythmic
purpose of it all? Grief may have
its own gravity,¹ but the death you bring
prepares the gravid possibility of spring,
the curious quiet that makes birds sing.

¹ "Grief has its own gravity" from Megan Merchant, "Letter to My Mother One Year After Her Death," *Rattle*, Poets Respond, November 26, 2019

Tetons

Leave it to a flock of Frenchmen, tired and near frozen, exploring the tundra of Wyoming in 1870, to look at those lovely peaks and think, “Breasts!” Surely those guys, after months of traversing windburned barren prairies, thought of breasts when they looked at dirt clods, grassy knolls, dung mounds, anthills, cow utters, buffalo horns and most everything their ruttish eyes spied.

Thank the Great White Father that the name stuck only to those gorgeous mountains. Otherwise, we’d have Jackson’s Boobs instead of Jackson’s Hole, Boobie rather than Cody, Chestyanne would replace Cheyenne, Laramie would become Fort Lactation, and Meeteetse would simplify to Tits, Wyoming.

The Shoshone people who lived around those peaks for 10,000 years, less deprived and depraved than those French explorers and more connected to the earth, named the range, “Teewinot,”—many pinnacles.

As for me, a brokenhearted adolescent wandering the same gorgeous ground one hundred years after the French, I looked out, one placid afternoon, from Jenny Lake Lodge onto a mother moose and her calf sipping water from a stream at the foot of that massive mountain range. I felt peace there, breasted by those lovely peaks, pinnacles of hope for the moose, her calf, the land, and for me.

Lynne Kemen 2 poems

Trees Speak

We, the silver birch.
Villagers say we are The Three Sisters.
Too shy to stand alone,
we grow close,
our arms arch, embracing.

Dresses of silver bark, but somehow
strips seem slashed.

Small minds assume we're
sullied. We keep our secrets.
Swaying, singing-psithurism.
Say it. You may listen, sure.

Hushed, we whisper secrets to
each other from the bible of birch trees.

Staring at Stars

Homely, lonely night. Venus shines against vacancy.
He doesn't paint the bars that keep him so far from starry night.
Transfixed by stars.

The tree grows, it is living. It is hopeful.
And so is he. Not always so. Seldomly like that-ever.
But, it is, in the moment, this marvelous minute.

Winking, wild, and wondrous stars shine.
Depression doesn't occlude the scene.
Haunted eyes register relief, romance, and remedy.

Gibbous moon, he the artist,
every brushstroke for the moon.
Make moments move naturally as they should.

Twinkling, tumultuous this moment.
Movement makes memories
It's Van Gogh's to do, to make, to share.

Sharon Mitchell 2 poems

Mélange Optique

“...He was fascinated by the way things distinct and different encountered each other.”

The First Moderns

I gaze at the expanse
of absinthe-green grass
under the Parisian sun.

I long to feel every dot of paint
against my palms, to transform
myself, teleporting into the scene

as though by Wonkavision,
to swim in its colors,
backstroke and butterfly

among the feet of the serene
middle-class, grass and dirt
flying, to touch bottom, flip

and reassemble, my molecules
squeezing between the dots
as I step out, flinging drops

of cobalt-blue Seine on the floor.
The docents frown, but Seurat
knew--our true nature is joy.

(In response to *A Sunday on La Grande Jatte*—1884 by Georges Seurat)

I Just Don't Feel Anything

You said, after making excuses
for not calling--you hit a deer,
your mother chose now to probate
your father's will, machines not working
on the job. "It's always something.."
you sigh, with your typical Czech gloom.

On the other end, I was frozen,
attuned to every nuance of voice.
A month you'd waited to call,
while I twisted in the wind, hoping
for an answer, a reaction, anything—
wondering if the future you'd
dangled in front of me would come.

I remained calm. My camouflage
has always been composure.
Never let them know the arrow
had reached home, I'd learned,
otherwise they'd shoot again
just for sport.

I was ambushed by your indifference,
the unexpected blow of it.

I imagined the deer, lying
broken by the road, and you,
speeding away, never looking back.

Shai Afsai 1 poem

Listening to poets talk

The problem
is that poets turn mystics
when they talk about their craft,
describing poetry as life and light,
as miles above and beyond
all other forms of artistic expression
or communication,
and as the very thing
redeeming humanity
and distinguishing it from the beasts.

And that's when I wonder
if perhaps *poet* is another word for *charlatan*.

Jim Murdoch 2 poems

Terminal Oneirataxia

There is no such thing as reality
only the perceived, conceived and deceived.
Tangible things continue to exist—
pianos and hedgerows, tin cans and tears—
but they're merely symbols, jumping-off points,
the silence before the music begins.

Too few can differentiate between
what seems real, what's unreal and the surreal.
It's a chronic medical condition
like having no sense of taste or humour;
they're blind to all the possibilities
out there. It's sad but what's really sad is

it's untreatable and incurable.

Own Goals are Still Goals

The world can live without this poem.
The world gets by fine without most things.

Some things make a difference but not
most things, certainly not this poem.

Its goal was to matter which it did
for the time it took me to write it.

Should it manage to matter past that
well whoop-de-doo. I didn't set out

to change the world or stop it changing.
I just wanted to write a poem

Madeleine French 1 poem

FRIENDS

At two-fifteen this morning
I stepped off the merry-go-round of my thoughts
Into the back yard
In the damp grass, my feet were cold
And clouds obscured the stars
So I couldn't find Orion's belt
The silence mocked me
Not one car sped by, not one light
Shone through a window
But I felt someone in the soft night
Awake, not far away
Coaxing a child back to bed, maybe
Or scrolling social media on an iPad
Or even, like me, angry and uneasy about
What has to be faced and can't be changed
This is for you, my friend
That's all I want to say

Peter Mladinic 1 poem

Rudy

As mayor I gave the city order.
You could walk down the street without
seeing a man urinating in a phone booth.
You could drive and stop for a red light
without a man in an oil-stained T shirt
coming up to your windshield with
a squeegee and his hand out for money.
You could walk through a terminal without
being bumped by a pickpocket, or ride
a subway without being crowded by a thug
with tattoos putting a knife to your throat
for your watch and your wallet. I made
the city safe, and clean. The homeless
were off the streets and out of the public
libraries. No one was shooting at cop cars
or stabbing cops who walked a beat.
No setting fire to police stations. I had their
back, the police. I gave the city order,
and peace. Then I changed. I worked to support
voter fraud. The President couldn't accept
the reality of his losing the last election.
I worked to change that reality, to make it
seem he won. When his supporters stormed
the Capitol, and attacked the capitol police
with knives and clubs, and smashed
windows, and broke through doors, and
occupied senators' offices, and sat in
chairs behind desks, and punched
and pummeled senators they found walking
through halls, I worked to make it seem
the insurrection was a mostly peaceful
protest. I changed the narrative. I brought
order to the city. To the country, with its
many cities, I brought chaos. I helped
the chaos along, I nurtured it. I who knew
the police station, the citadel of law
enforcement, symbolized order, failed to see
the Capitol building, where laws are made,
was in danger of being destroyed by thugs
similar to thugs who ripped necklaces off
throats of commuters on platforms as they
waited for subway cars. Now as then, when
I was mayor of the city, I have my work.

Rp Verlaine 1 poem

Wounds Will be Left

Indifference resides
in daunting eyes
above a mystery
ever certain
of itself
calling
in whispers.

Wounds will be left.

By these fantasies
too wanton
to obfuscate the desires
upon her bed
of nails
empty until
I lay upon it
trying to remember her
with closed eyes.

Megan Wildhood 2 poems

Duties of the First Responder

To stray from the perfect, pebbled path through a wood
and still avoid a beetle underfoot.

To reach out for and button hands with another,
through rooms strange and familiar.

To set out clean water for stray dogs.
To lock eyes with the man holding the cardboard sign

and acknowledge that he looks as deranged
as you often feel on the verge of becoming.

To stand under the shrapnel of the gaudy gluttony of history,
get on your knees in the freshly gashed soil,

and strive to stand out from, push back, resist
the unrelenting disintegration.

To know that doing all of this is to say your own name
every time, as if you are introducing yourself for the first time.

Commute

Much heft to get from A to B
translated day in and day out
to significance—
at least we pray that's what our efforts mean.

And there is *plenty* of time for prayer. That's for damn sure.
Or audiobooks or music or even "me time!"
There are *endless* translations of "stuck in traffic"
with the rest of the world's workers.

Much heft to get from sanctuary—home, at least—to city,
machine and hammer translating earth
into employment.
And reroutes and traffic delays and coronaries.

You are a right revolutionary,
though you are part of the traffic,
if you are not (yet) tricked
into believing that machines could ever build a real world.

Bobbie Saunders 1 poem

TRANSFORMATION

The only
thing
to keep
me sane
is a
pink
and
purple
sunset
flashed
across
the sky

But today
a reversal,
wisps of
white
overcome
vast expanse
of the
palest
blue.

Megan Wildhood 2 poems

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Smitha Sehgal 1 poem

VERSE SKINNED

Who are my people - brown skinned, slipping into siesta after brown rice heaps on
plantain leaves have been licked and slurped

Who are my people- moon skinned grandmother touches my new born skin, wipes
away, mock anger blooms on her betel stained lips in memory of soot skinned dead
husband

Who are my people- blanch skinned lover smelt of yellow roses behind book shelves,
calling me luscious red hot poem, much before he pawned off gold anklets

‘Gently dab this on your face and make it fade away’, says the salesgirl at the chemist
When I have walked long enough in barren alleys a woman calls out – dusky beauty,
my doors are open

I learn to draw charcoal eyes with a fish tail on my face.

Over lunch conversations old Gurbachan Kaur exclaims how ‘gori’* I have become
‘It is so simple’ says my daughter, pasting strips evenly on my arms, pulling them off,
before one could bat an eyelid, ‘look’ she says, pointing to wisps of brown black
verses stuck on glue.

*gori-fair

Edward A. Dougherty 3 poems

Starlings

I pour out the seed
and the feeders empty—
grackles with their yellow eye
and starlings en mass
with what everyone calls
iridescence. The story is

starlings were brought
to this continent, to the state
of New York, so that all
the birds in Shakespeare
would populate the New World.

We don't need to repeat the same stories,
old accounts of arrivals. We need
new origins. Hungry for another,
I drift and in my sleep,
the black birds flock and land
on my naked breast, then walk
their reptilian way to my heart
and peck me red. Wings. Beaks.
Feathers. A thousand musical
shrieks and whistles carry me off, bit by bit.

All that is inward flows out
into the air. From the hole
grows a sapling, a stoutling,
a trunk then branches. Layer after layer
of fallen leaves cover me,
but when I gaze through them
with all my eyes,
the many eyes of the earth,
the green quiver above me
is my own song
feeding on the light, my own
delight and hurt and longing
my own sorrow my own praise

The Lamp (version 2)

What you want can't be had
with wanting. Measured
against all that, the world
comes out short. Even
when at first it fits,
it shrinks with having.
Poof! You've got
three wishes, probably more—
who's counting—
just look at your hands,
how empty they are.
That's a good start.

Timepiece

Where's the watch?
In the winding stem?
The crystal?

Pull out a drawer
and there's one,
stopped, band
salt-crusted.

It once was
a watch. Now,
though, call it
broken. Pull out

another drawer
and there's a hammer:
Now, it's junk
or maybe call it

parts: battery,
springs, gears...
Only temporary

in the timeless flow
of relations,
brought together
and aligned

only for a time
in this arrangement:
take any thing,

a Timex, sure,
but how about
my life?

Kim Malinowski 4 poems

I was looking for sanity & All I got was Alphabet Soup

There was one medication for the up & ups,
one that arranged the down & downs conveniently—for others.
One that pretended safety from my hidden knife.
Lastly, there was one that stole me from me.
Neuron-by-neuron, memory-by-memory, until I was nautilus.
No one pressed their ear to my chest to hear the Lithe warble.
Tricked, I drank from it. Cupped each blue pill,
tactile brain damage. My voice went first. Mute, tongue tripling
on speech, my patterns wrong, more medication prescribed,
thick words dribbled, and I painted my nails, drank the alphabet soup,
too salty, too hot, famished need.
One day, the letters did not make words. I pointed, thick “why they
wrong?” Scrambled sentences, scrambled words, cracked like scrambled eggs,
letters were big and small and most of the time I knew an A from a C, but not
a b from a d, and I slid on dramatic skirts. Expensive, dazzling,
so that no one would speak to me and would see only blaze of color.
I begged too many gods. I begged my doctors. No treatment. I did not have a stroke.
I was not bathing in alphabet soup, but my Lithe med went generic.
The Lithe took back some of its waters. Left me to scream that I had proof.
Proof and no help. Just alphabet soup.
Soggy letters. First, sopped into the alphabet song. Good. Done.
Then, a word. “A” it counts okay? Then “an” then “any” then “anything” then
“antibody”
into the dictionary, the a’s the b’s the goddamnit they told that wasn’t a word!
The magnetic words arranged on fridge, on wood, on magnetic board,
and OOMPF! Grammar babble did not phase me. I was not particular about
participles.
And now, the alphabet soup swirls, tell my story.
My dalliances with language and how if a letter is added just right, another word is
made,
and how sentences cascade, tingles are when a line flows like an alphabet soup
waterfall
over my head and I stand firm knowing this not what I remembered
and say yes, yes, this is right.

Helpdesk Kintsugi

I got paid \$11 an hour, not full time, benefits would have been sweet sound
of not crying in the bathroom for allotted five minutes before getting fired.
His name was [redacted], my boss boss, the one who hovered, breath on neck hair,
need to break me. He swept my shards into trashcan.
His voice reverberated in closeted room. He could fire me at any time.
My parents echoed back in the bowels of my brain—money mattered the most.
[Redacted] said the Helpdesk was the single most important thing in my life.
I was to value it above my own life.
I didn't notice the scratches forming on my arms.
In my memory, it was the cat.
He yelled and I was all tears and unable to breathe, knew I was dismal failure
each paycheck, knew how damned many tears I cried for it.
I'm not a crier.
I sat in front of monitor, ordered to write grammatical emails, answer blinking red
light,
leave messages for people who couldn't afford to pay and didn't, and when I muted,
I heard my customers say I was an idiot. Just one of those. Couldn't get a decent job.
[Redacted] agreed.
The scratches became claw marks. The blood under my nails evidence.
[Redacted] fired the person hired before me in three days. I was told to never forget.
I didn't. I begged electronic deities to not be fired. Fired echoing forbidden.
Emergency psych visit, bags left at my screen, knife cuts under watch.
12 different knives didn't cut. The thirteenth scratched quick dark lines.
I never wanted to die. Escape.
I said nothing when the knives were locked up.
The one that worked safe under my bed.
When I left [Redacted] by my screen, I left society.
Three days in psych ward.
Came back to collect my bag, my mug, everything
but the dignity I left behind.
[Redacted] snide about Helpdesk, knew he broke me.
Showed me out. Told me I had been a good employee.
Had been.
I wish I knew what I tell my loves now.
You come before the company.
You can't be pieced together like a puzzle,
bits and dust get broken.
It takes a long time to be brave enough
to paint yourself with gold and become kintsugi.

Perilous Archeological Nomenclature

The archeology lab is my safe space,
space to dry brush artifacts, dirt on tongue,
tongue speckled with bone dust—I mean faunal.
No cell service, no responsibility, just me and sacred.
I sort into piles everything from jumbled plastic alphabet
to ceramic—pearlware, earthenware, carbonized by fire.
My hands sluice muddy water, brick
brick no one wants to clean, it only gets weighed
weighed in kilograms. I stare at the calculator
calculate without instruction or cell service beg

beg for help, limitations still liabilities, tried to hide
hide disabilities. Wanted genius to be different genus

genius. I am one, but they wouldn't know with their limited
limited ideas of phonics and beauty of sound on the palette
as much as thousand-year-old turtle dust. Dust
dust I can sweep and weigh and pinch and pretend I am oracle
oracle would have known I would be found out words
words traitorous. Again. Told them I did not have spellcheck
check lightly. Tittering still. Mentor busy. Then Again. Spit
spit "aphasia" like last rite, last request before execution.

No one looks up
 brain damage only tertiary
tertiary only corrected by computer and chert with an e damages

damage done by sacred vowel. I choose grit
grit over manicures and splinters, torn nails, my prize
prize—the prize is me. Immortalized. Revealed who I
I am. I am the poet and writer that can ensnare their words
and dangle them over the edge of the world or

sift them, taking only illiterate artifacts and not their vowels.

Contributors

Victoria Twomey is a poet and an artist. She has appeared as a featured poet at venues around NY, including The Poetry Barn, Barnes & Noble, and Borders Books. Her poems have been published in several anthologies, in newspapers and on the web, including *Sanctuary Magazine*, *BigCityLit*, *PoetryBay*, *Autumn Sky Poetry Daily*, *The Tipton Poetry Journal*, *Verse-Virtual*, *The Agape Review*, *The Trouvaille Review*, with many forthcoming. Her poem "Pieta" was nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

Damien O'Brien is a multi-award-winning Australian poet. Damien's prizes include the Moth Poetry Prize, the Newcastle Poetry Prize and the Peter Porter Poetry Prize. Damien's first book of poetry, *Animals With Human Voices*, was published in 2021 through Recent Work Press.

Melissa D. Burrage is the author of *The Karl Muck Scandal: Classical Music and Xenophobia in World War I America* (melissadburrage.com). She is a member of the Westwood Poetry Group, the Marge Piercy Poetry Group, and a 2022 winner of the Joe Gouveia Outermost Poetry Contest. Her work can be found in *Foyer Magazine*, *Syncopation Literary Journal*, *Sweetycat Press*, *Dashboard Horus*, *Smoky Quartz Tenth Anniversary Literary Anthology* and *Southern Arizona Press Anthology* *The Poppy: A Symbol of Remembrance*, all forthcoming.

F.I. Goldhaber's words capture people, places, and politics with a photographer's eye and a poet's soul. As a reporter, editor, business writer, and marketing communications consultant, they produced news stories, feature articles, editorial columns, and reviews for newspapers, corporations, governments, and non-profits in five states. Now paper, electronic, plastic, and audio magazines, books, newspapers, calendars, broadsides, and street signs display their poetry, fiction, and essays. More than 230 of their poems appear in almost 80 publications. Left Fork press will publish their fifth book of poetry, *What Color is Your Privilege?*, in September.

<http://www.goldhaber.net/>

Douglas Colston has travelled the world and knows there is no place like home (for him, that is the Sunshine Coast in Australia). Decades ago, he played in various Ska bands (and garnered song and lyric credits, in addition to dubious mementos in the form of screaming tinnitus and occupational hearing loss ... *c'est la vie*). He has a number of university qualifications and is now - by vocation - a Counsellor, but spends much of his time writing. His fiction, poetry and nonfiction has been published in online and traditional print journals, magazines and anthologies, including *Red Door Magazine*, *New Note Poetry*, *New World Writing*, *Inspired*, *Still I*

rise, Oxymorons and poets, Erotica of eternity, Let's begin again, Garden of poets, My Glorious Quill ... and now, POETiCA REViEW!

Gary Lark's most recent collections are "Easter Creek," Main Street Rag, "Daybreak on the Water," Flowstone Press and "Ordinary Gravity," Airlie Press. His work has appeared in *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Catamaran*, *Rattle*, *Sky Island* and others. <https://garylark.work/>

Andrew McBride grew up in Volcano, Hawai'i, six miles from the summit of Kīlauea volcano. Based now in Washington State, he is co-editor of *For Love of Orcas* (Wandering Aengus, 2019). His work appears or is forthcoming in *Black Horse Review*, *The Cabinet of Heed*, *Clockhouse*, *Crab Creek Review*, *Empty Mirror*, *Evening Street Review*, *Floating Bridge Review*, *Months to Years*, *Passager Journal*, and *The RavensPerch*.

Colleen Kan Siu is a writer, poet, and artist exploring PTSD, grief, and shame through poetry, humor, and intuitive visual art. She's had short fiction published in the *Evening Street Review* and has written extensively on the topic of death and dying for the online magazine, *SevenPonds*. She is currently working on a chapbook of poetry and paintings to be published by the end of 2022.

DS Maolalai is an English Literature graduate from Trinity College, Dublin. He has been nominated nine times for Best of the Net and seven times for the Pushcart Prize. He has released two collections, "Love is Breaking Plates in the Garden" (Encircle Press, 2016) and "Sad Havoc Among the Birds" (Turas Press, 2019). His third collection, "Noble Rot" is scheduled for release in May 2022.

Sophia Butler is originally from the UK. She has lived in New Zealand for 19 years. She was longlisted in the UK Film Festival Script Competition 2022. Her poetry has appeared in *Driech Mag* and *London Grip*. She has work forthcoming in *Red Poets* and *The Dawntreader*.

David Capps is a philosophy professor and poet who lives in New Haven, CT. He is the author of three chapbooks: *Poems from the First Voyage* (The Nasiona Press, 2019), *A Non-Grecian Non-Urn* (Yavanika Press, 2019), and *Colossi* (Kelsay Books, 2020).

J.D. Isip (he/him) published his first collection of poetry, *Pocketing Feathers*, with Sadie Girl Press (2015). His second collection, *Number Our Days*, is forthcoming from Moon Tide Press (2023). His works—including poetry, nonfiction, fiction, and plays—have appeared in many magazines and journals including *Ethel Zine*, *Borderlands*, *Pilgrimage Press*, *Poetry Quarterly*, and *Sandpiper*. He is a full-time English professor in Plano, Texas.

Isaiah Adepoju, 18, studies Literature in English at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife (Nigeria), and is a reader/contributor for *Literature Voices Journal* (Nig.), *Adroit Journal* UK, *Patchwork Mag* US, etc., and serves as the Deputy Editor in Chief of *The Nigeria Review*, and a correspondent of *Yedote Review*. He has his works in the Institute of African Studies NSUKKA, *Fortunate Travelers Mag*, *Starlit mag*, and elsewhere. You can reach him via adepojuisaiahgbenga@gmail.com

Louis Efron...

Michael Edwards teaches English at Santa Fe College, in Florida. My most recent publication is a story entitled "A Rhetoric For All Times," at *The Dillydoun Review*.

Mark Fleckenstein lives in Massachusetts. Twice nominated for a Pushcart Prize, he's published four books of poetry: *Making Up The World* (Editions Dedicaces, 2018), *God Box* (Clare Songbird Publishing, 2019), *A Name for Everything* (Cervena Barva Press, 2020) and *Lowercase God* (Unsolicited Press, 2022) and five chapbooks: *The Memory of Stars*, (Sticks Press, 1995), *I Was I, Drowning Knee Deep*, (Sticks Press, 2007), *Memoir as Conversation* (Unsolicited Press, 2019), *A Library of Things* (Origami Poetry Project, 2020), and *Small Poems* (Origami Poetry Project, 2021).

Oindri Sengupta is an Assistant Teacher at a Govt School in Kolkata, West Bengal, India. Her works have appeared in numerous journals and in a few anthologies. Her debut collection of poetry 'After the Fall of a Cloud', Hawakal Publishers, New Delhi, has recently been published this year.

Nolcha Fox has written all her life, starting with poop and crayons on the walls. Her poems have been published in *Lothlorien Poetry Journal*, *The Red Lemon Review*, *Dark Entries*, *Duck Head Journal* and others. Her chapbook, "My Father's Ghost Hates Cats," is available on Amazon.

Kayla Knight (she/her) is a writer/teacher whose work has previously appeared in *Torrid Literary Journal*. An English teacher and Composition professor, she was born and currently lives in Florida. When not wound up in high school essays, she can be found tangled in her latest knitting project.

Charlie Brice won the 2020 Field Guide Poetry Magazine Poetry Contest and placed third in the 2021 Allen Ginsberg Poetry Prize. His chapbook, *All the Songs Sung* (Angel Flight Press), and his fourth poetry collection, *The Broad Grin of Eternity* (WordTech Editions) arrived in 2021. His poetry has been nominated twice for the Best of Net Anthology and three times for a Pushcart Prize and has appeared in *Atlanta Review*, *The Honest Ulsterman*, *Ibbetson Street*, *The Paterson Literary Review*, *Impspired Magazine*, *Muddy River Poetry Review*, and elsewhere.

Lynne Kemen lives in Upstate New York. Her chapbook, *More Than a Handful*, was published in 2020. She is published in Silver Birch Press, The Ravens Perch, Poetica Review, Spillwords, Topical Poetry, and Blue Mountain Review. She is an Editor for Blue Mountain Review & The Southern Collective Experience.

Sharon Wright Mitchell is a neurodivergent teacher, poet, and MFA dropout. She has been published in *Independent Variable*, *The American Journal of Poetry*, and *The Wild Word*, among others. She is a Georgia native, where she enjoys hiking the Appalachian foothills. For poetry and adventures, follow her on Instagram: @apoetseyeview

Shai Afsai lives and writes in Providence, Rhode Island. His work may be found at shaiafsai.com.

Jim Murdoch Murdoch lives down the road from where they filmed *Gregory's Girl* which, for some odd reason, pleases him no end. He's been writing poetry for fifty years for which he blames Larkin. Who probably blamed Hardy. He's published two books of poetry, a short story collection and four novels.

Madeleine French has been telling stories since she was a girl. A dedicated sewist and ardent Janeite, she once dated a law student who approached her at a party in Ann Arbor and asked, "Do I know you?" They're still married. She and Mr. Madeleine divide their time between Florida and Virginia.

Peter Mladinic's poems have recently appeared in *Alchemy Spoon*, *Neologism*, *Mad Swirl* and other online journals. An animal rights advocate, he lives in Hobbs, New Mexico, USA.

Rp Verlaine lives in New York City. He has an MFA in creative writing from City College. He taught in New York Public schools for many years. His first volume of poetry- *Damaged by Dames & Drinking* was published in 2017 and another – *Femme FatalesMovie Starlets & Rockers* in 2018. A set of three e-books titled *Lies From The Autobiography* vol 1-3 were published from 2018 to 2020. His newest book, *Imagined Indecencies*, was published in February of 2022.

Megan Wildhood Megan Wildhood is a neurodiverse writer, editor and writing coach who thrives helping entrepreneurs and small business owners create authentic copy to reach the people they feel called to serve. She helps her readers feel seen in her poetry chapbook *Long Division* (Finishing Line Press, 2017) as well as *Yes!* Magazine, *Mad in America*, *The Sun* and elsewhere. You can learn more about her writing and working with her at meganwildhood.com.

Bobbie Saunders is a graduate of Emory University, B.A. in Psychology and Rocky Mountain College of Art & Design, B.F.A. in Painting & Drawing. Her interests include running, baseball, swimming, playing with dogs. Her poems have appeared in *HAIGHT ASHBURY LITERARY JOURNAL*, *TALKING RIVER REVIEW*, *WESTWARD QUARTERLY* and others. *ILLUSIONS* is her collection of poems.

Smitha Sehgal is a Delhi based legal professional with a Govt of India CPSE. She writes poetry in two languages- English and Malayalam. Her poems, fiction and book reviews have featured in contemporary literary publications as *Reading Hour*, *Brown Critique*, *Kritya*, *Muse India*, *The Wagon Magazine*, *Usawa Literary Review*, *Parcham*, *The Criterion*, *Kalakaumudi*, *Samakalika Malayalam*, *Kalapoorana*, *ShadowKraft*, *Da Cheung* (Korean Literary Journal) and anthologies including “40 Under 40: An Anthology of Post-Globalisation Poetry”, “Witness -Red River Book of Poetry of Dissent. Links to two previous publications are -

<https://www.usawa.in/issue-6/poetry/smitha-sehgal.html>
<https://parchamonline.in/2022/06/26/spring-issue-poems/2/>

Edward A. Dougherty's most recent book is *Journey Work: Crafting a Life of Poetry & Spirit*, essays that trace peacemaking, Quakerism & Buddhism, and the making

and meaning of poetry. He is also the author of 11 poetry collections, including *Grace Street* (Cayuga Lake Books) and *10048 Finishing Line*).

Kim Malinowski is a lover of words. Her collection *Home* was published by Keslasy Books. Her verse novel *Clutching Narcissus* was published by Twelve House Books and her verse novel *Phantom Reflection* was published by Silver Bow Publishing. She has full-length collections forthcoming from Vraeyda Literary and Nightingale & Sparrow Press. Her chapbook *Death: A Love Story* was published by Flutter Press. She was nominated for the 2022 Rhysling Award. She writes because the alternative is unthinkable.

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

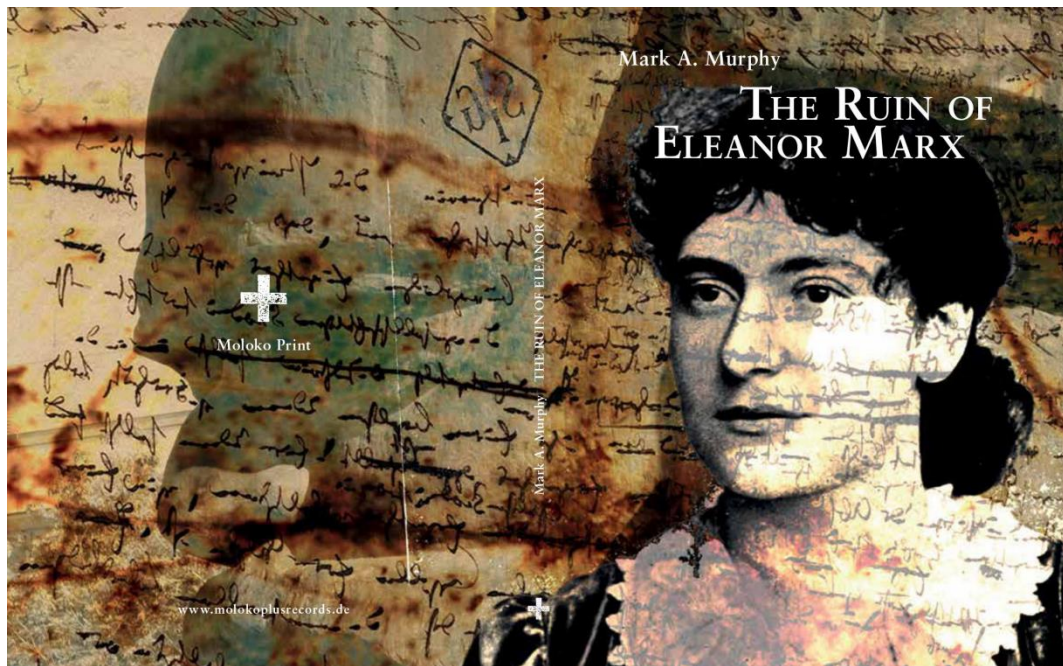
Response to submissions, from 1 week to 3 months.

‘The Ruin of Eleanor Marx’

by Mark A. Murphy

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‘The Ruin of Eleanor Marx’ is absolutely riveting.

I doubt that if I were to read a standard biography of Eleanor Marx, I would experience the depth of emotional resonance that I have felt with this book. I also doubt I would come away from such a biography with the degree of understanding and empathy for the subject, as I have with this extraordinary collection.

Mark A. Murphy’s evocative, and compassionate telling of Eleanor Marx’s life and final ‘ruin’, has produced a poetry collection that is of historic, artistic, and philosophical significance. This book deserves to go viral.

Paul Dononhoe

Mark A. Murphy has written, with deep empathy, a moving collection of poetry illuminating Eleanor Marx’s life.

These daring poems could be the early women's movement writ small—a trailblazer who defiantly announces: "I am a Jewess" in solidarity with striking factory workers, a published author, teacher, and well-known Socialist activist in her own right.

Karl Marx's youngest daughter, "Tussy" emerges in poems that are pitch-perfect/ devastatingly told, wry, witty and tender. Yet, Eleanor Marx relentlessly subjugated her own needs, first to her ailing mother, then to her father, and finally to a caddish married lover. We race with her through the calamitous late 1800s; we see her in thrall and in disillusionment.

The Ruin of Eleanor Marx is a visionary work from one of the finest poets writing today.

Trish Saunders

'The Ruin of Eleanor Marx' is a poetry collection whose greatest quality is that it knows there is more to the world than poetry, and more to poetry than the mere arrangement of words. Mark Murphy is, however, a poet who both has a story to tell – and what a tale it is! – and the language to make that story come alive.

But fear not if you aren't an expert on the ups and downs of the Marx family. Murphy's poems open a welcoming door through which the non-specialist reader can easily walk.

Kevin Higgins

Mark Murphy tells an engaging and compelling story in masterful verse. I was sucked into *The Ruin of Eleanor Marx*, couldn't put it down, and then hastened to re-read it, only to find myself even more impressed. Highly recommended!

John Burroughs, 2019-2021 Ohio Beat Poet Laureate and author of 'Rattle and Numb.'

**Purchase 'The Ruin of Eleanor Marx'
by Mark A. Murphy at the link below...**

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Or contact author below for a signed copy...

editorpoeticareview@gmail.com

