

Spring 2021 Issue 9



Featuring over 20 top notch poets, including, 2 Puschcart Nominees, and prospective Best of the Net poets (**Zack Rogrow** and **Lauren Sharbag**) for their poems, *Running through History* and *The Real Meaning of Inferno*, which you can read, laugh and weep at, in our current edition.

As always, keep submitting, and spread the word that **POETiCA REVIEW** is back from the dead, after being hacked and almost completely destroyed. We thank you **ALL**, for your continuing support, and wish you **ALL** only good things, in these dark days of Global Pandemics, and the **Fifth Great Extinction Event**, unfolding as we write our laments, and fight the good fight.

Featured Authors:

Vera Gan
Christine Tabaka
Mukand Gnanadesikan
Abigail Baker
Tom Montag
Emilisa Rose
Stephen Page
Thomas M. McDade
Aido Quagliotti
Kami Westhoff
Catherine Karnitis
Keith Welch
Giovanni Mangiante
Linnet Phoenix
John Grey
Gonzalino de Costa
Kyle Mendelsohn
Zack Rogrow
Lauren Scharhag
Geoffrey Heptonstall
DaH
Pawel Markiewicz

POETiCA REViEW is a quarterly literary journal of poetry. We aim to give voice to the many disparate and marginalised voices within the artistic community, locally, and internationally, regardless of notoriety or who is currently favored by this or that magazine. Our mission is to inject new blood into the poetry scene.

ISSUE 9
DECEMBER 2021

Chief Editor: Mark A. Murphy
Asst. Editor: Kieran Conway

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Artwork

Cover design by M.A.M www.poeticareview.com

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[Submissions and Guidelines](#)

POETiCA REViEW

For the many, not just the few.

Vera Gan 1 poem

Moscow Rhapsody

Buried in far-ocean thoughts
Sitting in her prison-like garden

The moon pouring lurid light
Over the weeping willow

No quarrel, no squabble
Her soul-boat softly sliding

On the memory-flow
To what was expunged long-ago

From the book of her life
The aquatic bounty of the earth

The moment they were
Approaching the station

Facing the icy air of winter
The sea-surge train

Imminent as scissors spiriting him away

Christine Tabaka 1 poem

A Father Who Never Was

Born of war and hunger -
a stolen youth
ripped from earth.

Lost within a vanquished spring
as winter counted days.

Black eyes - a raven's call
follow what cannot be seen,
vagrant visions, dark to light.

Tortured flesh, his inheritance
passed on to each of us, in turn.

A buried past - sunken deep,
the depths of which
are unknown.

We played with death
as little toy soldiers marched.

In fear
we hid ourselves from him.

Asking for more than he could give,
a pathway to the sun.

His childhood our childhood,
repeating the mantra
never love.

Not knowing how to be a father, husband, son, brother ...
he only knew how to die.

He was war and hunger,
writing his own epilog.

Mukund Gnanadesikan 2 poems

Hope

Hope is a four-letter word
obscene in its audacity

An iron-jawed challenge
to authority's clenched fist,

she lobs olive branches
over hands that toss flash-bang grenades.

As despots growl their dark appeal to fear
her short, sweet arrow

shall pierce oppression's shield
bidding masses rise.

United voices build to a crescendo.
Powers on the balcony above

will use all forces,
seek to stain the streets a morbid red,

but though they try
it is no simple matter,

to bury blinding light where none may see it.
Thus, future dreams spring forth, resist restraints, unbox.

Run through the meadow, friends.
Let us sing this opus, this unfinished symphony of dreams.

World Sickness

Empathy's failure
strands children at water's edge
allows them to expire from thirst

How dare we practice ignorance,
eyes perceiving mocha shadows
then glancing sideways?

Thus, we become
ossified souls, hardened,
anesthetized flesh, nerveless

A holiday's uplifting paeans
raise disillusioned spirits
lighting hope's holographic candle

I look west to boastful peaks;
Under a salmon sky

Rushmore's idols crumble.

Abigail Baker 2 poems

São Bento Station

As if the world had been wheel rotated,
an ocean placed where heaven resides,
the cobalt mural muses a blur of steam.

Butterfly leaves trembling in departure
on iron aerial platform arches for angels,
sunlight a drifter seasonal ticket holder.

The ghost passengers of hallowed days
mind the gap between slant step histories,
stoking the fires in timetabled language.

A lit stop lamp person has disembarked
leaving daubed echo of Schindler's coat,
an acrid smoke puff blown in God's eye.

The pilgrimage begins in mind's stumble,
a rail ticket journey for a self-rediscovery.
I smile in this pixel painted waiting room.

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Title: Azulejo

Artist: Peter Wilkin

Medium: mixed (photography/mobile art)

Created 17 February 2020

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Foxtrot

She whispers promise
to a summer breeze.
Skirt hem lifting dance,
clad in thigh-high boots.
She writes follow me
on a kissed envelope.

Fragrance of night jasmine
lingers on skin beckoning
to he who hesitates,
waiting see if she truly
meant to call his name.
He follows up heel line,
her breath a quick foxtrot.

In darkened room, door shut,
she turns to show him,
hands on, lips move tenderly
then drawing him close,
curls in tight this warmth,
her den of earth
in which she made him.

Tom Montag 5 poems

The Woman in an Imaginary Painting

Tell the woman
in the painting
what you know

of imagination.
She has been
shaped by it

and cannot
escape. We are
all more than

anyone can
dream. She is
no different.

If nothing
escapes a

black hole,
what of

this woman's
shadow?

Something
as heavy

as God pulls,
keeps pulling.

In this
moment

she has
every-

thing she
might want,

except
movement --

free will
is not

something
art can

offer.

She knows: you pray your way
out of nothing you choose

to sin your way into.

The texture
of canvas
and paint is

all the soul
she has. So
light works its

magic and
she glows as
if to say

she chooses
to stay, to
be this, in

this moment --
that nothing
else will do.

Stephen Page 1 poem

Sea View

This window is my T.V.,
My seven-day a week Saturday morning show.

The neighbors in the apartment below
Have asked us to not feed the birds.

The yellow throated kiskadees,
The red-breasted robins,

The orange-crowned sparrows,
The purple feathered thrushes,

The masked Mozart mocking birds,
The cooing wood doves,

All because they sit on our railing
And shit on their awnings and deck.

A female sea lion has been visiting a shore rock,
In front of our lawn in front of our building

Every day for close to a week now.
Will she make this her home and birth pups?

Today, two snorkelers flippered by,
Spotted her, and speed-flapped toward her.

She jumped off the rock to submerge,
And disappeared for hours.

Last night, more protestors
Ran the streets of the United Colonies.

Thomas M. McDade 1 poem

Palma de Mallorca

Don Quixote statuettes
in every shop
Sancho Panza
Not forgotten
The hotels near the water
Remind me of University
Buildings in Bridgeport
On Long Island Sound
Under the Yum Yum Tree
Is playing at the English cinema
A taxi ride down a windmill lined
Road is contrasted by
A gaudy carnival
Of barrooms on
the other side
Driver has a shark tattoo
On his exposed bicep
A naked woman aboard
Only American car so far
Is a 1956 Ford I point out
To the hack who says
he's owns two
I meet a shipmate at a bus
Stop who claims
He's a Conscience Objector
He's fishing for a discharge
We hitchhike
A Russian picks us up
No Soviet he vows
As we pass a tall, beautiful
Woman I think of Quixote
And his love for Dulcinea
I recall the windmill
Street and a ray of sun
As a lance attack but
No breeze to spin its wings
And none now either
To fan her long, dark
Luxurious hair

Aldo Quagliotti 1 poem

AlfaBeta

Death might be a tableau vivant
portraying this absurd equipoise
awaiting a misstep from us
a whirlpool of surprises, sei là
a new alphabet, a simplistic rendition
maybe branded flummery
I am present now, I see
colors try to hit upon summer to outshine
I have a grudge against winter, nowadays
but I'm sealed to the *right now*
I won't be horsing around with perspectives
or improbable futures
I want to write the tattoos I get from life
to show my barcode, once I'm done
I want to chew this today
spitting the fishbone stuck in my throat
onwards I go
finché ne ho

Kami Westhoff 1 poem

Once in a Lifetime Night

What I remember most is what we did to the frogs. Not my sister and me unzipping the tent tick by tick, crouching past the camper where my mother sipped Tab and my dad, sloppy with R&R, singing “You Are Always on My Mind,” dissolving into a night so dark each inhale blackened our lungs, stars so thick they smeared the sky like scar tissue. I don't remember the boys we met behind the lodge by the pond, how the tall one with the knit cap took my sister's hand, and the other with eyes the colour of berry blue Kool-Aid, slipped first his fingers into the loops of my button fly Levi's, then his tongue into my mouth, or how he tasted like salami and cigarettes. I don't remember that the next day my mom asked if we'd seen the meteor shower from the tent's open dome, streaks of light turning sky to geometry, said it was a once in a lifetime night. I don't remember getting lost on our way back to the tent, our bodies aching in new places, our tongues sticky and thick as slugs, or how we ended up back at the pond, where the air was choked with croak-song, which brings me back to what I do remember, the sticky-cool of the frogs in my palm, how easy they were to quiet.

Catherine Karnitis 2 poems

Lovers

- *"In Love," Pierre Delattre*

in a giant eye,
the lovers lie,
to everything
that is not a daisy.

the moon watches
as pelicans rise
from the sea
like ghosts.

her delicate breast,
her uncovered chest,
he listens, draws her

to an inner
country, one
with-
out cruel borders

against the horizon
of marbled awareness
stalks of
pussy willows.

her fingers,
the curve of her foot,
rest in a field
of pink poppies.

(gaslight removed): The Splendor of Myself II, Zofia Kulik, (Poland) 1997

<https://www.moma.org/collection/works/219908>

gaslight removed

-The Splendor of Myself II, Zofia Kulik, 1997

in the archive
in the studio
what does it look like
outside the box
royal flush
see through my glass windows
prostrate men with no clothes
dried leaves of dreams
crown of paper
feathers fly to heaven
our era, an era
of banality bears
a cross and a sickle
a dandelion and a pickle

Keith Welch 3 poems

Burrs

At fifteen I did my private business down
by the creek. Back beyond the rotting
barn, past the fangs of a rusting cultivator,
behind the abandoned vine-wrapped silo.

The touch of field nettles was a sting
of hot needles against my bare forearms,
the air thickened by the scent of distant cows.

Hidden by scrub trees at the field's edge
with only slick green frogs for witness
I could be alone—I could get my sinning done.

If it wasn't sin, why was I ashamed? Burned
by summer heat or frozen by winter snows
I chased urges I barely understood.

I would return home in burr-starred blue jeans:
burrs like anemones, like arrowheads,
like the horned egg cases of sharks;

fecund with the seeds of their mother plants.
I was ashamed, they were shameless, but all
were driven by the force of undeniable nature.

History of Murder

A murder lurks in my locust tree
they croak and croak—
their speech is a roadkill
obituary.

I hear them mutter of
flattened corpses, unfortunate
bodies well-plated
on the steaming asphalt.

Startled by my attention,
they wheel and dive,
wheel and dive, shrieking
danger to the sky,
ashes lifted from a cold fire,
a stuttering storm cloud
of death's best friends.

Do crows remember the days
of rich battlefields where
they gorged on the sun-softened flesh
of once-proud warriors?

For a crow, it must be
a tale told in the treetops;
a tale of a golden age.

Graveyard Tree

Lightning-struck—
the silent oak
has found
its voice
in fire.

All around it lie
the discarded dead
in their sacred holes.

The dead don't care
about the tree.

The tree? Never cared
about the dead,

although

beneath the soil,
Its threading roots
embrace their
deep unlit houses.

The living gather
to watch the tree burn
from the inside out,
a majestic torch.

They feel
the sight is tragic

and beautiful.

When people are struck
some believe
it a judgement
of heaven.

No one thinks
that about the
graveyard tree.

Keith Welch lives in Bloomington, Indiana where he works at the Indiana University Herman B Wells library. He has poems published in 8 Poems, The Tipton Poetry Journal, Open: Journal of Arts & Letters, Dime Show Review, and Literary Orphans, among others. He enjoys complicated board games, baking, talking to his cat, Alice C. Toklas, and meeting other poets. His website is keithwelchpoetry.com. On Twitter: [@TheBloomington1](https://twitter.com/TheBloomington1).

Giovanni Mangiante 2 poems

god-clipped wings

I'm 24 years' worth of hollowed eyes
and a noose-shaped shadow
that forces me to live in the darkness
in which I've thrived for years
like a deep sea undiscovered
atrocities.

because because because because

relapsing is such an easy feat,
and I'm an overindulgent
scar-skinned downtown cat
toppling down a mouse at midnight
with Lucifer at my back.

Trash-fiction mental patient

In the hotel of my mind,
every hallway is covered in missed-opportunity doors,
and in every turn, there's a shadow of unsolicited pain
creeping from its splintered walls.

I am a vagabond in my own home
unsuccessfully trying to smash open doors to the past,
running up and down broken stairs
while some cosmic creature watches from the outside,
and places a new shadow in the next hall.

Emalisa Rose 3 poems

the better batch

they'll get the polite poems but you're
getting the better batch. the ones you
can't show to your mother

they'll get the ones with the editing
edited, all proper noun certified, muse
approved topics with a drone on of quaint
puffy clouds, that conjure up rain words
in an array of word quips, seen best on
travelogues from a tight thesaurus

you'll get the ones with the wife who went
rogue and strutted her stuff, her blondes
around town, her eyes on the headboards
and tailgating parties in motels with letters
long lost on their road sign that nobody
cares about...anyhow

the snooty with syntax will suck on their
proper poised poems. But you'll get the
better batch...ya just gotta know it.

last train to ronkonkama

you're a tambourine trilogy in a
halo of heresy, a riddle, a ruse, a
cross-referenced window seat rail
rider

pinstriping grey with your nose
in the Wall street. i was the butter
blonde free styling floozy type,
clocking your time sheet doing that
shuffle downtown on you

that eye batting thing of who undressed
who as you're stirring the sauce of
my woozy words

no need for hello or even the vertical

i just want to write poems to you
with red cursive swirl words in bold
face italic themed girly words

as this choo-choo train tunnels moans
groans and mystifies miles from the
midtowning marathon and the nine
to five park and ride

and you're spinning me dizzy in this
theatre of thrill ride obsession on this
furlough of fabricate fantasy.

Linnet Phoenix 2 poems

São Bento Station

As if the world had been wheel rotated,
an ocean placed where heaven resides,
the cobalt mural muses a blur of steam.

Butterfly leaves trembling in departure
on iron aerial platform arches for angels,
sunlight a drifter seasonal ticket holder.

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mind the gap between slant step histories,
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to a summer breeze.
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Fragrance of night jasmine
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waiting see if she truly
meant to call his name.
He follows up heel line,
her breath a quick foxtrot.

In darkened room, door shut,
she turns to show him,
hands on, lips move tenderly
then drawing him close,
curls in tight this warmth,
her den of earth
in which she made him.

John Grey 3 poems

BRIAN AND DAVE TO THE RESCUE

Brian and Dave are on their way to a picnic,
but not to chomp down on hotdogs,
not to splash in the lake.
Someone's lying on the ground unconscious.
And the drinking's barely begun.

A teenage girl is being comforted by cousins.
The older crowd look on in disbelief.
Tricia's only in her thirties.
But she's been looking ten years older of late.
Maybe fifteen when the paramedics
are bending over her limp body,
shouting, "Wake up! Wake up!"

They know the symptoms.
Even better, they know the town.
Twenty years since the sock factory closed.
Last night, they dragged a guy out
of a gas station bathroom.
A week ago, it was a woman
slumped over the wheel of her car
in a strip-mall parking lot.
So many don't seem to want to live
and Brian and Dave are charged with
going against the victim's wishes.

Brian injects Narcan in Tricia's dull flesh.
He does it slowly.
Reality's best in small bursts.
The woman's eyes open.
"Where am I? Where's Amy?"
Her words roll out like baby's dribble.
"You have to go to the hospital."
Her boyfriend, Carl,
wanders off into the nearby woods.
Tricia's mother appears, takes Amy away.

People drop anytime, anyplace,
as if shot by invisible, noiseless rifles.

Brian and Dave do their best to pick them up,
get them on their feet
so they can fall down the next time.
Folks say it's a crisis.

It's also an interruption to a breakfast
in a local diner.
It's a callout when Brian's playing with his kids
or Dave is captaining the Head-Hunters bowling team.

In a gutted old industrial town,
life just seems no more than a rehearsal for death.
Folks organize picnics
so they can forget for a while.
And yet down goes Tricia,
more of everything they know.

BAR ON 10th STREET

jukebox speaks for another life,
a quartet picks up the tune,
there's more pink
skin and gender related
breathing
like a butterfly in a storm,
candle-flame wishes,
cigarette puffs,
everything out in place
except for gravity,
fear of unrelated happenings.
sludge reeking with
glimpses of ghosts,
acid-rain-filled day,
toxins filling every cavity,
calendar nailed in place,
big-toothed bugs
chomping on virgin arms,
mother's grave – a necessary prop –
night is still but enticing
like alcohol.
thoughts set aside,
nothing felt but thirst,
woman with blue hair and fingernails,
rouged cheeks –
please handle roughly –
beaten to a pulp
regardless -
another's slippery slender,
in service to her own dreams,
and soundtrack
mostly played on a piano –
her moods, Persian silk,
her props, the stars –

SORRY BUT...

You wonder why I'm this way.
It's not just because of the way you are.
It's bad programming, flat tires,
my family, my job,
body hair, and boring sex,
cracked mirrors, plastic straws, Trump –
and there's more –
lids that refuse to unscrew,
songs on the radio,
loud neon scenery,
the unsuspected sharpness of some blades,
spam and junk-mail,
the bus system, the crappy Wi-Fi,
the pain I have to overcome,
Kardashians, heavy traffic,
tasteless fast food, aggressive panhandlers,
food coloring, superhero movies,
the siren eyes of alcohol,
busted guitar strings, empty ink cartridges,
lines of reasoning, rusty pipes.
humidity, bills, neighbors,
the borrowed book that's never returned,
the never again good times,
Fox news, a friend's divorce,
religions that kill,
that render their believers brain dead,
the cost of replenishing those ink cartridges,
dentists, big game hunters, Brad Pitt,
the worn-out soles of my shoes,
cigarette butts strewn across the lawn,
dog shit on the sidewalk,
some long-ago incident that
occupies the space between us.
It won't leave,
would rather stay,
be more annoying than the competition.

Gonzalinho da Costa 5 poems

THE LAKE

In autumn chill I sat at the edge of a deep blue lake.
It was placid as the moon in solitary space.
Silently as if stirred by the slightest briefest breath,
Perfect circles in a series broke the surface, moving outward.
I watched the widening whorl travel to the edge then bounce back.
Something—someone—had touched the water.

Maybe it was a bird dipping down...fish twitching its tail...
Dry leaf riding a draught making a splash landing.
When the waves had spent their energy, the lake becalmed again.
It shone purely, a polished mirror of the sky: blue to blue.
I felt the cold wet air rise but did not hear the wind swirl.
One hour lapsed, the surface blankly serene, whispering along the marge.

IRONY

Darkness is luminous:
It bends as light.
Day is over:
It rises with night.

A clock is a statue;
A desert, a lake.
Sorrow is joy;
A festival, a wake.

The moon is the sun;
The universe, a box;
Truth, appearance;
Reality, paradox.

RAGNAROK

When Ragnarök comes, it will be bleakest winter.
The moon will turn black on black.
Petroleum clouds, writhing, will deform into chimeras.
The sun, reduced to a shadow, will darken the sky.
Memory of light will be forgotten.
Snow will fall, gray porridge burying the world.
Treetop brambles will spike through ash heaps
As rivers clot into mud, and lakes,
Thickening volcanic soup, pop bubbles, sullenly.
Oceans will degrade into slurry.
The wind will whistle between broken teeth.
Bags of dust will fill the air.
Harkening to the long horn, warriors will grasp their hilts.
Full well, without seeing, they will know its meaning:
Fenrir has broken his chains, he is vaulting towards Asgard.
Once formidable, barriers between the worlds will disintegrate.
Earth will shake at the approach of giants.
Monsters will battle the gods.
Father of all the gods, Odin will push with his mighty arm Fenrir's snout backwards
As his boot pins the animal's lower jaw to the ground.
And then in one overpowering motion the wolf's mouth will slam shut,
Breaking Odin's back like a stick.
Of what use will it be to be all-seeing if you cannot escape your fate?
Beyond the horizon, the Midgard Serpent will rouse, thrashing about.
The seas will churn in turmoil, frothy egg batter, water not boiling.
Tidal waves taller than fortresses will collide against the coastlines.
Cliff walls will slough off, sliding, as rocks, debris, and sand,
Sucked into the ocean by retreating vortices, excavate cavernous holes.
At the outmost perimeter of the farthest waters, Thor will swing downwardly
His impetuous hammer, striking at the very apex of the Midgard Serpent's head, bulbous.
Suddenly going limp, the worm will blast hot venom in spurts,
Bathing the hero, unvanquished heretofore, in poison, head-to-toe.
Nine steps, he will fall dead.
Gloating over slain Frey, now bedimmed, a lump of cold slag,
Cackling Loki will turn to face Heimdall, striding.
Evenly matched, they will destroy each other, passionate in their excess.
Roaring Surtr will raise his flaming sword, igniting the universe.
The world will end to recreate itself anew.

MODERN HISTORY

Shakespeare's plays describe about 155 deaths, less than half onstage, involving 13 suicides, 33 stabbings, seven poisonings, five beheadings, three dismemberments, a host of gruesome ends, including two men baked into a pie and fed to their mother, all told in plots involving jealousy, greed, fighting for power, vanity, dishonesty, cruelty, arrogance, vengefulness, delusion, rage, hypocrisy, and paranoia—the entire range of human iniquity. The Bard is celebrated today as one of the foremost exponents of Renaissance humanism, and we are right to wonder why.

Coming across Martin Luther eating a hearty breakfast of two sausages, five barley loaves, three scrambled eggs, and a pitcher of milk, John Calvin quoted Philippians 3:19, “Their god is their stomach.” Luther responded with Proverbs 13:4, “The diligent soul is amply satisfied,” adding that it was the Doctrine of Justification.

The Spanish conquest of the Americas led to the fusion of cultures and in many ways to the mutual enrichment of disparate peoples. Mixed populations of the Spanish and Portuguese empires adopted the dominant religion of the Europeans—Christianity?—no, soccer.

Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, who published his calculus in 1684, claimed that Isaac Newton's calculus was *derivative*, based on their exchange of letters and notes. Newton retorted that he started working on his calculus in 1666, that is, it had long been *integral* to his physics.

James Watt made groundbreaking improvements to the steam engine in 1776, and for the first time, in contrast to the politics of the preceding centuries, the inventor put hot air to good use. He jumpstarted the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain so that the world was changed forever—harnessing cheap, plentiful power, factories output buttons, pins, textiles, and all sorts of products in huge volumes, with the side effect that human beings in assembly lines were transformed into robots in almost the same quantities.

The French Revolutionary calendar divided the year into four seasons of three months each and the months into three weeks of ten days each, which proved to be too revolutionary for the hardworking French. It reduced weekends from four to three per month, inciting Napoleon Bonaparte to execute the calendar by guillotine on January 1, 1806, to the cheers of millions.

Abraham Lincoln, the architect of the abolition of slavery in the U.S., had a difficult relationship with his wife, Mary Todd. Historians agree that he showed himself to be a steadfast man of principle—when he signed the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, he did not include his marriage.

The advent of photography coincided with the rise of Impressionism, not only in the visual arts, but in all aspects of Western culture. Claude Debussy, who led this trend in music, displayed the proverbial artistic temperament—he flitted between women, some married, in relationships that were temperamental, dissonant, experimental, unpredictable, emotional, moody, and free-spirited—interestingly, just like his music itself.

When Lenin attacked the Winter Palace at St. Petersburg on October 25, 1917, ousting the Provisional Government of Kerensky, he promised the Russian people, “Peace, Land, and Bread.” What they got was Stalin.

Medical records from 1923 confirm that Adolph Hitler had only one descended testicle. Widely attested, what has not been verified is that he had only half a brain.

In August 1946 the Americans dropped atomic bombs on a wartime enemy for the first and only time in history. Massively destructive blue-white flashes exploded over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, giving unexpected new meaning to the Japanese term *Shōwa* or the era of “Radiant Japan.”

During the late forties, a struggling American artist refurbishing his New York City apartment spilled yellow paint on a large canvas he had laid out on the floor—liking what he saw, he decided to do it again, this time with red paint. Thus was born the legend of Jackson Pollock, master of Abstract Expressionism.

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, hero of Indian independence, switched to wearing a poor man’s clothes and often walked barefoot. He came to be known as “Great Sole.”

Communist China hailed Mao Zedong as “The Great Helmsman” of what at times appeared to be a sinking ship. History revised his revolutionary slogans—“Great Leap Forward” became “Great Leap Forward into the Pit of Famine,” and “Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom” turned into “Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom and Rot in Jail Afterwards.”

The Cold War saw the success of spy novels like Graham Greene’s *Our Man in Havana* (1958), Ian Fleming’s *The Spy Who Loved Me* (1962), and Tom Clancy’s *The Hunt for Red October* (1984). Ghost writers in the former Soviet Union sought to cash in with knockoffs—*Our Hottie in Havana*, *The Spy Who Loved McDonald’s*, *The Hunt for Red Borscht*—for some reason, they didn’t catch on.

SAILING

Swiftly I sail the perfect blue water, slicing through the sea.
Clouds charged with electricity fill broad sky vistas.
At night I am guided by the geometry of the stars.

Kyle Mendelsohn 3 poems

Phone Call to the Kids Who Killed Themselves

We placed our hearts in mason jars
To replace the dead leaves falling
Off the trees. Swaying our bodies like they're just
Fragments waiting to be struck through by light.
Snow and hardened ground are on the horizon
So, I'm not sure we'll be able to reach each other
For a while. We're all just a blip: a flame
Fighting through for oxygen, an intangible static
That doesn't always interact. When it does, find me
Underneath the same oak tree beneath a sky
With its mouth held open trying to say
I love you. Goodnight.
See you someday.

Somnambulist's Soliloquy

Wake up. Come back I promise it won't be like last time. I will change everything. I'll paint the house seven different colors and eat your name seeped in rain if it means resurrection. Sometimes I find ways to become more like the dead. Cut my body off from rest and dream with my head under blankets of bright light. Can you see me now? I can't remember what happened yesterday or even last month. My lungs ache the way that November feels like one last labored breath. I've taken all the steps to get closest to the edge of nonexistence. I spend all day asking my skin if the mole on my thigh will melanoma me into nothing or if my heart is its own time bomb because this is all very precarious. To me autonomy is crawling out of another man's stomach and directing his hollow body toward the door. But then, I worry if an explosion goes off inside my ribcage and no one is there to hear it will I greet a death wagon casting red and blue projections? I'll never forget the night I learned how to conduct a call for help, a blind dirge directed at probability running through the telephone wires. In my dream, I am lying next to a corpse. There are red and blue veins pulling us apart and everything fades back out of focus, back into a frostbitten world. I start today by rewriting the name on my birth certificate. The brain is its own time machine, yes, but memory only feels like sleepwalking back into the sky still like nothing. Never mind. It's probably just another day with grief or something else that I can't let go of, but if you must know I'd like to call myself, a moving target.

Recovery

Learning how to say
No.

Sheets stained
With ink and ash

Tattoo your wicked name
On my throat

So that I can get it removed
and sport the scar

Like the avalanche
I survived.

I learned how to drive
This year

Without throwing myself
Over the wheel.

Tomorrow
I'll take

This vulgar shadow
And hit it

A deer
In the road.

Fracture
My front headlight

So, I can drink
From the stars

And pluck matted fur
From the glass.

Remove my depression
Like an unnamed tumor

Even if
My fingers bleed.

Throw my grief
In the goddamn ocean.

Zack Rogow 3 poems

Soggy Jazz

Drizzling in San Francisco
and I'm listening to a quartet with a voice
travel along "On Green Dolphin Street"
in this store with walls of books

The singer glides between the notes
teasing the melody
And through these moments apart
Mem'ries live in my heart

My thoughts glissando back an hour
when not even a sheet could
fit between us

The baritone sax with its extra-terrestrial architecture
picks up the melody

Your tongue
a dolphin in an underwater cavern

I can't help weaving to the music
inside the clockworks of this song

the window looked out on a bridge across a California freeway
its old-fashioned lamps surprisingly Parisian

The band starts to gather the fringes of the melody
saxophone notes shaping the air
Green Dolphin Street supplied the setting
The setting for nights beyond forgetting

and hours later
when I get home
and take off my meadow-coloured pullover
its arms
still hold your perfume

“It’s Not You, It’s Me”

A lifetime later,
the turns of phrase stay with me:
“You’re a wonderful person, but...”
“This is more of a friendship for me.”
“I know you’ll find someone
who’s more right for you.”
“Je ne veux pas, je ne peux pas.”
The last, at least,
in French, and rhymed:
“I don’t want to, I can’t.”

They still slap, those words.
I keep waiting for the rejecters
to phone me out of the blue,
to explain it was all a Godzilla of a mistake,
their life has gone off the rails
since refusing me—but
not a chance.

All those words of rejection
remain absolutely intolerable
but what other phrases can I use
now that I’m the one
who has to deliver the bad news?

Running through History

3:37

3:52

I realise

the treadmill's blinking

rectangles of light

counting minutes and seconds

could be years of history

4:10 I jog through the sack of Rome

6:18 the Tang Dynasty rises

The angel Gabriel whispers to Mohammed to write the Qu 'ran

7:11 I turn up the pace as the Moors pour into Al-Andalus

Troubadour Arnaud Daniel rides toward a Provençal hill town playing air-lute

12:38 the Alhambra's delicate fortress rises above Granada

A puzzled Geoffrey Chaucer glances up from his writing desk

I sprint right through the Great Vowel Shift

Into the greenery of Botticelli's Primavera

Deftly I step over the Black Plague

14:53 Ottoman cannons breech Constantinople

Columbus sets sail I race him to Hispaniola

The French Revolution breaks out to my left

18:21 Bolívar wins the Battle of Carabobo the Spanish Empire cracks apart

19:19 My parents are born and plenipotentiaries sign the Treaty of Versailles

19:44 D-Day and then the year of my own birth almost before I see it

I slow dance to "Mister Moonlight"

My first kiss

Crowds unbuild the Berlin Wall as I become a father

South Africans wave hats and hankies for President Mandela

20:12 the Mars Rover cuts me off

The present-day rushes by

Then the years I hope I'll live to count

My daughter stands beneath the chuppah

My unconceived grandchild laughs for the first time

I slow the treadmill

step off

and even though I'm not moving

I'm still running

Lauren Scharhag 1 poem

The Real Meaning of Inferno

Four winters on the transplant list,
and you are always cold. We bundle you
in long johns and sweatshirts, blankets
and stocking caps, and park you next to
a space heater, and still, you shiver, while
I sweat. I sweat the medical bills and the
regular bills and whether you have a fever
again, and if you are eating enough and how
we will ever pay for more medicine and
I'm going to have to get a second job. I burn
crimson like my grandmother's red Depression
glass oil lamp. I burn blue-white like the
rings on a gas stove. I burn like the gold
and orange flames on the cast-iron furnace where
we used to heat our clothes on winter mornings,
and still got dressed under the quilt. *Inferno*
is a word that's synonymous with hellfire,
but originally, it had nothing to do with heat. It
meant *the lower regions*. I think of this as I go
down into the basement of our sixty-year-old house,
past the cracked walls where slugs and spiders
and snakes slither in, past the exposed foundation
stones and the water stains where it's flooded
each spring, past the shelf where we store
your dialysis supplies, to examine our own
beast of a unit. I've always thought it looked like
Doc Ock if Doc Ock had sprouted a few more arms,
if he'd grown feeble and rickety and might,
at any moment, give up the ghost. If it goes out on us,
no second or even a third job will be enough to help me
replace it. I come back upstairs and make us cups of cocoa.
You tell me how you dream of the sea, of sun-warmed
sand, of tropical paradises. I do not tell you that I dream,
too: nightmares of a furnace-less house in January
and frozen pipes bursting in the walls. Hell isn't hot,
but it's real, and it's here. I crack open a window
away from you and try to breathe. I'm hotter than
particles smashing around the Large Hadron Collider.
I'm hotter than the torch Prometheus saw fit to pilfer.
I'm hotter than molting phoenix feathers, than

a morning-star supernova. If the furnace goes out,
split me like heartwood. I will be your hearth
and your kindling. Cook a meal over my radiance.
Bask in me. I will see you through to summer.

Geoffrey Heptonstall 2 poems

STATE OF PLAGUE

What if by a lightning strike
the tree is turned to stone,
soundlessly moving in moonlight?
We must feel an ending begin.

Another time we are released,
never to be heard again
through such restful sleep
if what happens is no more.

And wild, pale horses ride
when the day rises.
Things are not as they seem.
The world is not at peace.

The hand that grasps the nettle
from the blessing of certainty
takes the sting into its flesh
so close to the bone.

In time beyond the bounds
is the sound of birdsong
before the sun of the day.
This was not foreseen.

The darker the enchantment
the deeper down the long regret
Its light is not denied.
The circle has no ending.

WHENEVER

Of an architected ending
I see angel fingers wakening
a future in exquisite designs,
I wait for your touch on my face.
I think of conversations
where I walk down again.
A flight of birds shall pass
in my imagined sky

There are so many streets ahead.
Always the same hour chimes
the moments of thought,
knowing I am still far away.

In a desolate mansion
I find myself stumbling on stones
as sharp as the knife that slices.
My eyes do the talking
in regular rhythms
reflecting the moon rising
somewhere that is not here.

Voices whisper in my sleep,
careless in what they say.
So often the song I sing
fades like yesterday's wishes
away from varieties of whatever.
To live for all the years
where I hear no more of now,
nor of any time but then
whenever there may be time.
There are no calendars in memory.

DAH

fragmented no. 34

when winter is a string of rain
between bone and skin /

in cold rivulets / this wet in
-ventory / stops the sun fr
-om breathing

The Tick of a Broken Clock

She begins the day writing sombre poetry
but only has a short space of time, always
the solitude before storms, before the sky
returns to blue, before the mirror, empty
and cold, shatters like a map of her life

She stands near the window looking at the
dreadful countryside, the strong wind moves
trees in distress, and the wretched melancholy
reflecting from three small cracked panes
that reveal her age, the black gown in tatters

She has said, so many times, never anyone
but you for my eyes to behold, for my lips
like rope around your tongue, for my hands
in the gentle sleep of your heart, for my tears
like fragile globes of pearls, each one a fugitive

She remembers a song that died before
it could finish the story of a hard break up
lost forever in the skipping of a needle on
the vinyl, over and over, again, skipping
like the tick of a dull, broken clock

She lives forevermore in a time of mythology
bleeding the loss of age, of youth, the loss of
darkness that was her allure, the bed of lovers
now a clouded nothing, her dire loneliness, like
an old sea that never dies

Fragmented No. 21

Screwed in like a glass eye, the moon's
circular vision / a swagger of seabirds
in the air, gray apparitions / unbuttoning
the distance / the horizon's kernel un-
folding its darkness.

If there was heat then it faded to nothing
and / like the stone teeth of jagged rocks
swallowed by a liquid mouth, the sea's
hunger / spilling salt into the sky
/ like melancholic litter.

Winter's cracked jug leaks / and
spears of rain jab the sand, slanted and
tilted / the faint light, like a loose body
spreading December's shrivelling
wet skin.

Walking, but not in loneliness / like a homing
pigeon, but with more tracks / and without a
nesting place / I'm haunted by the beauty of
your legs, those magnificent wings
in dazzling flight

Memories, in which detachment destroys
their clarity / drifting and sinking / the tragic
freedom of loss, the distant emptiness / after
the moon leaves / after the tide leaves, after
... complete silence.

I did not see the imperfect reality / one must
age first / to be quick enough / Now, for a
cliché: I wrote your name in the sand / but
like an old tree in a flood / it washed away
and the nameless sand returned.

Paweł Markiewicz 1 poem

Confession of the Poetical Firefly to Muse-Butterfly of Poesy

You must excuse me. You dear dreamer!
I have overly felt my dream about the Golden Fleece.
I built my small paradise without any other ontological beings.
I based the dreamiest sempiternity on the tenderness of my wings.
Thus. I painted my wings in color of an ambrosia.
Withal: I liked the dew of dawns for the sake of elves.
I loved too much the wizardry of mayhap Erlking's.
I had to read many fairy tales of the Winter Queen.
I have enchanted your night rainbow.
I have become a magician of dawn.
I loved the Morning Starlet.
I collected all shooting stars.

Excuse me. My dear butterfly
fulfilled in the same after glow
and bewitched by lights of moon and star.
Let us dream over night
toward an epiphany of first angels
of red sky in the morning.

Contributors

Vera Terekov, currently living in France, speaks four languages in which she composes poems. She particularly enjoys penning poetry in English, for its musicality and its flexibility. During the lockdown, she wrote poems about general topics and intimate memories.

Ann Christine Tabaka was nominated for the 2017 Pushcart Prize in Poetry. She is the winner of Spillwords Press 2020 Publication of the Year. Her bio is featured in the “Who’s Who of Emerging Writers 2020,” published by Sweetycat Press. Chris has been internationally published, and won poetry awards from numerous publications. Her work has been translated into Sequoyah-Cherokee Syllabics, and into Spanish. She is the author of 11 poetry books. She has recently been published in several micro-fiction anthologies and short story publications. Christine lives in Delaware, USA. She loves gardening and cooking. Chris lives with her husband and four cats.

**(a complete list of publications is available upon request)*

Mukund Gnanadesikan was born in New Jersey, the son of two Indian immigrants. His poetry and short stories have been published in *Adelaide Literary Magazine*, *Ayaskala*, *The Bangalore Review*, *Calliope on the Web*, *The Cape Rock*, *Cathexis Northwest*, *Meniscus Literary Journal*, *Blood and Thunder*, *Poets’ Choice*, *Kreaxxxion Review*, *New Verse News*, and *Dream Noir*, among others. His first novel, *Errors of Omission*, is due out in fall of 2020 from Adelaide Books. He lives in Napa, CA, where he practices psychiatry.

Tom Montag's books of poetry include: *Making Hay & Other Poems*; *Middle Ground*; *The Big Book of Ben Zen*; *In This Place: Selected Poems 1982-2013*; *This Wrecked World*; *The Miles No One Wants*; *Imagination's Place*; *Love Poems*; and *Seventy at Seventy*. His poem 'Lecturing My Daughter in Her First Fall Rain' has been permanently incorporated into the design of the Milwaukee Convention Center. He blogs at The Middle westerner. With David Graham he recently co-edited *Local News: Poetry About Small Towns*.

Emalisa Rose is a poet, dollmaker, animal rescue volunteer. She lives by a beach town which provides much of her inspiration. Her work has appeared in *Beatnik Cowboy*, *October*

Hill, Poettree Zine. She works as a lunch lady in a NY public school, which provides much joy and laughter too.

Stephen Page is part Native American. He was born in Detroit. He holds degrees from Palomar College, Columbia University, and Bennington College. He wears a mask and socially distances whenever he ventures outside in public. He loves his wife, long walks through woodlands, nature, solitude, peace, meditating, dog-eared pages in books, spontaneous road trips, smashing cell phones with hammers, and making noise with his electric bass.

Aldo Quagliotti, and I'm an Italian poet based in London. In 2019 I published my first collection of poems, *Japanese Tosa*, published by London Poetry Books. The anthology debuted on October 2019 at the Tea House Theatre in Vauxhall and has then been promoted throughout the London open mic nights such as *Flo vortex*, *Paper Tiger*, *Poetical Word*. My poems have also been published in Italian anthologies, such as *Il soon del selenium* 2008 and 2008, and Brazilian magazine (*Revest Torquate*). Nationally, my work has been included in English anthologies such as *Reach 253*, *Murmuration's*, *Cannon Poet Quarterly*, *Poetry in The Time of Coronavirus*, *The voices Project*, *The Writers Club*, *Fleas on the dog*, *The Materialist*, *The Essential anthology*. and *Word doodles*.

With a diploma at the London College of Media and Publishing, I also review music and write live reports on *Peek-a-boo* magazine and *Gigsoup*. I also offer review and genuine feedbacks to emerging poets/musicians on <https://quaquaversalweb.wordpress.com/>.

Kami Westhoff is the author of chapbooks *Sleepwalker*, winner of Minerva Rising's Dare to Be award, and *Your Body a Bullet*, co-written with Elizabeth Vignali. Her short story collection *The Criteria* is forthcoming from Unsolicited Press. Her poetry and prose have appeared in *Meridian*, *Hippocampus*, *Booth*, *Carve*, *Third Coast*, *Passages North*, *The Pinch*, *West Branch*, *Waxwing*, and others. She teaches creative writing at Western Washington University in Bellingham, WA.

Catherine Karnitis is an emerging poet, working on an MFA in Writing at the University of San Francisco. I serve as a Poetry Editor for Invisible City literary journal. I earned an MA in History at the University of California, Berkeley and an MA in Art History at The Ohio State University.

Giovanni Mangiante is a bi-lingual writer from Lima, Peru. He has work published in Three Rooms Press, Fearsome Critters, The Raven Review, Cajun Mutt Press, Crêpe & Penn, Impspired, Open Minds Quarterly, Necro Magazine, and more. In writing, he found a way to cope with BPD.

Linnet Phoenix is a poet who lives in North Somerset, England. She has been writing poetry for years. Her work has previously been published in Impspired, Punk Noir Magazine, Raven Cage Zine and Open Skies Quarterly. She also enjoys horse-riding.

John Grey is an Australian poet, US resident, recently published in Soundings East, Dalhousie Review and Connecticut River Review. Latest book, “Leaves on Pages” is available through Amazon.

Gonzalinho da Costa—a pen name—is a management, communication, research, statistics, and artificial intelligence consultant. A lover of world literature, he has completed graduate degrees in the humanities, management, communication, and statistics, and writes poetry as a hobby.

Kyle Mendelsohn is a poet and photographer based in Watertown, MA. He lives with his two best friends and their toothless cat, lovey. In his professional life, he works as a freelance arts manager and writer. His art focuses mostly on grief, recovery, and his experiences as a queer person.

Zack Rogow is the author, editor, or translator of more than twenty books or plays. His ninth book of poems, *Irreverent Litanies*, was issued by Regal House Publishing. He is also writing a series of plays about authors. The most recent of these, *Colette Uncensored*, had its first staged reading at the Kennedy Center in Washington DC, and ran at the Canal Café Theatre in London, and in San Francisco and Portland. His blog, [Advice for Writers](#), has more than 200 posts on topics of interest to writers. He serves as a contributing editor of [Catamaran Literary Reader](#). www.zackrogow.com

Lauren Scharhag is the author of fourteen books, including *Requiem for a Robot Dog* (Cajun Mutt Press) and *Languages, First and Last* (Cyberwit Press). Her work has appeared in over 100 literary venues around the world. Recent honors include the Seamus Burns Creative Writing Prize, two Best of the Net nominations, and acceptance into the 2021 Antarctic Poetry Exhibition. She lives in Kansas City, MO. To learn more about her work, visit: www.laurenscharhag.blogspot.com

Geoffrey Heptonstall's publications include a novel [Heaven's Invention, Black Wolf 2017] and a poetry collection, *The Rites of Paradise* [Cyberwit 2020]. A second collection is now in preparation. Recent fiction has appeared in *Pennsylvania Literary Review* and *Scarlet Leaf Review*. Six play texts have been published.

DAH is a multiple Pushcart Prize and Best Of The Net nominee, and the author of nine books of poetry. DAH lives in Berkeley, California, where he is working on his tenth poetry collection, while simultaneously working on his first collection of short fiction.

Visit: dahlusion.wordpress.com

Pawel Markiewicz was born 1983 in Siemiatycze in Poland. He is poet who lives in Bielsk Podlaski and writes tender poems, haiku as well as long poems. Paweł has published his poetries in many magazines. He writes in English and German.

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