

# POETiCA REViEW

Winter 2021



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Issue 12

**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 12  
WINTER 2021

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POETiCA REViEW

For the many, not just the few.

# Pankaj Khemka 1 poem

## Who's the Animal?

I am a dog. Even if you kick me,  
I will still come back to lick your hand.

I am a dolphin. I will frolic with you in blue oceans until  
I get caught in your fishing net.

I am an elephant. I will always remember you,  
even though you sawed off my ivory tusks and sold them on the black market.

I am a kitten. I will sleep, purring contentedly in your lap,  
even as you scoop me up into a burlap bag weighted down with stones.

I am a butterfly. I will alight on your finger,  
even as you pin my wings to your scrapbook.

I am human. I will love you  
even as you turn away, call me an animal.

## Erica Goss 5 poems

### So This is Oregon

They tell you about the rain,  
the dark, the cold.  
They warn that in November,  
you'll feel like  
a child locked in a closet.  
Everyone has  
a marijuana story, a grass pollen allergy,  
an opinion regarding  
the homeless. No one mentions  
the pale people  
at the grocery store, the aggressive light  
of May, or the way rain  
at 3:00 a.m. sounds like dream-chatter.  
So this is Oregon.  
The miracle at the end of the trail.  
Every median strip  
sports a mohawk of wild green grass.  
The Cascade Mountains  
play god from giddy heights, block rain  
east and send it  
west. On either side, paradox:  
one part rainforest,  
one part desert. Strangers to each other.  
Eventually,  
someone remembers this: how in the desert,  
people picture gardens  
luscious with fruit, while those in the rainforest  
rarely think about  
that dry place just over the snowy mountains.

## The Iceman

My mother worried about me.  
She said I had strong bones,

but I'd been sick lately.  
She fed me broth made of bones,

skimmed and strained, clear and warm.  
I think about dinosaurs, how their massive bones

used to fascinate me: the leaching, carbonization  
leaving stones in place of bones.

Some days I longed for a genteel illness, something  
Victorian, leading to fragility, pitted bones,

a migraine pallor. I admit it: I loved being sick,  
loved the feverish tremor in my bones,

mother's face floating in and out of dreams,  
her spine bent over me, a pillar of bones

as I tried my best to breathe, my chest  
expanding, mind hollow as bird bones.

I think of the five-thousand-year-old iceman,  
frozen in the Alps in his skin-swaddled bones.

The woman who found him shares my name  
and maybe the aching in my bones

that grows every year. Maybe we're both related  
to the iceman, connected by blood and bone.

Mother called me from a dream  
and I woke, chilled to the bone,

but life is more than illness, after all, and health  
is precious. I build my structure. Starting with bones.

## Air Guitar

A man walks by eyes  
closed smiling big  
headphones over his  
ears head wagging from  
side-to-side when  
all of a sudden he starts  
to play an invisible guitar  
completely gone  
into his own little  
world and I wonder why  
I never see a woman doing that  
as she's walking along  
I never see a woman  
just start flapping  
her wrists as if she were  
playing the drums or  
hold a fist to her mouth  
as if she were singing  
into a microphone  
no  
I never see a woman  
doing that because if  
she did if all of a sudden  
she lost herself in a song or  
imagined that a band  
was backing her up  
or let a sexy saxophone  
distract her it might  
drown out the noise  
of her surroundings  
she might not hear  
footsteps coming up  
behind her she might  
not feel a hand gathering  
the hair at the back  
of her neck and if  
she survived that  
she would have to  
answer all those  
questions why didn't  
you see why didn't  
you hear don't you know  
you can't just lose  
yourself you have to  
pay attention  
every second stupid  
girl





## Living Like This

I was born hungry, impure, my war-DNA an anxiety factory,  
feet arched for tiptoeing around my father, plotting

my escape at five, fifteen, eighteen, twenty. That's why  
I cried so much, why I jumped at the sounds in my head like gunshots,

my nerves shot by the time I was ten and I started to grow,  
taller than was allowed, taller than the swing-set, taller

than the numbers in my head which I counted all the time. My brother  
asked me why I was crying all the time and I said because

of the noise in here, can't you hear it and he stared at me  
with his dry black eyes. Did I know then I would have a son

who saw things too, who heard voices even after all of the pills?  
Did I know then I would leave him, mute, in a hospital

and drive away trying to find someone to blame?  
When I close my eyes my disease comes to me in pieces,

in pictures with arms and legs but yes, I want life, yes,  
maybe I have thirty more years, maybe forty to fix this mess,

maybe by then I will learn trust, find a tribe, or maybe  
I'll do nothing and just keep on living, living like this.

## Forgiveness

The reason I started gardening was to grow my own tomatoes, suck their smoky-sharp juice, eat them warm right from the vine, bake them in the oven with garlic and rosemary until the whole house smells like a beautiful, doomed country

\*

they told me he'd stopped making his wife cry as often and that he changes his baby son's diapers and he even goes to therapy, opens his heart to a stranger once a week, breaks apart his father's cruelty and his mother's refusal to get vaccinated and then they mentioned the tomatoes, rows and rows of them that he'd planted and tended, their healthy green leaves, the little yellow flowers just beginning to form

\*

I went outside and looked at the backyard and then it hit me: the flowers, the herbs, the shrubs, even the trees, they're all because of the tomatoes and there I stood, exposed, unmasked, a little sheepish and I thought, *hell*, if tomatoes can do all of this then maybe they can make a forest for that young man where happiness will grow



# Mike Dillon 4 poems

## A Friendly Warning

*On a Self Portrait by Käthe Kollwitz (lithograph, 1924)*

If you're a prolix man whose tongue would fog  
your dirty deeds you're a flim-flam gossamer man.  
Therefore, beware the mother who loses a son to war.

If you're a man who insists unpleasantness vanishes in spring,  
beware the deep forests of a mourning mother's eyes.  
You might get lost there on the way home.

Should you be the kind of man who brags molehill conquests  
into mountains you'd better take care when the scored  
mountain of her face rises in your sleep.

Soon or late, she will find you. Soon or late,  
you will gaze into those twin craters her eyes.  
Take a deep breath. And prepare to topple inside.

*Käthe Kollwitz (1867-1945), who lost her youngest son in World War I, was the great German artist of social protest. Her self-portraits are piercing studies reflecting the tragic sense of life and the horrors of war.*

## What the Tribal Elder Said to Me

Sometimes I dream of *swah'netk'qhu*  
and the hot summer nights when its rush  
past my bedroom window  
carried me into sleep.

Then two white men on horses  
rode the brown hills to measure our world  
with strange instruments that found a way  
into our story.

My brother and I ran to tell our parents.  
This was ten years before the great dam  
flooded our town and my people, rattlesnake and coyote  
took to the hills.

Now our river is a dead lake.  
Now the white man comes from the damp side  
of the mountain to his sunny playground  
for his two week's paid vacation.

Some nights, at home in the city, I dream  
of quick waters moving past my bedroom window.  
I awake. And remember a dead lake is silent.  
And I am never so awake.

*swah'netk'qhu is a Native American name for the Columbia River.  
The 'great dam' is Grand Coulee Dam in Washington State, finished in 1942.*

## **“Closed Window, Collioure, 1914,” by Henri Matisse**

Tell me, if you can, where  
is the window that opens to the heavenly blue  
of the lost, legendary vowel?

Not the blue of a wine-darkened sea.  
Nor the fabric of Fra Angelico blue seen in back  
of the sunset clouds of autumn.

Forget the Blue Guitar, Blue Nude, Rhapsody in Blue  
Kind of Blue, or the robin’s-egg blue we use  
to paint ourselves into corners.

No, I mean the blue a window opens to  
where the golden doves of our deepest dreams fly  
with no thought for the morrow.

## Cruise Ship

South of the equator, well past midnight, the towering, white wedding cake of a cruise ship slides over the black depths. The winter constellations arc above the sleeping passengers: Hydrus, Indus, Musca, pin-prick patterns of light upon the infinite black that scared Pascal. Tomorrow a green island will rise up from the horizon, according to the shipboard book, and we will be embraced by the open arms of a white, cubed city climbing steep hills. That's not all, says the book. We shall step into a place of mysterious dialect, exotic spices, hip-shaking music, and soulful eyes moist as boysenberries in the rain. An old gentleman with military bearing sidles up to you. He looks straight ahead as he whispers about a page missing from the book — the very page that would point the way to a narrow alley leading to a smelly square just off the main tourist promenade. His arctic-blue eyes swivel to yours: that is where the city's true center of gravity is, he confides. That is where you'll find an old washerwoman upon her knees each dawn. She will be scrubbing the cobbles clean of what the authorities declare through their silence is anything but blood.





# John Maurer 1 poem

## Unenlightened

there's a man who speaks in sestinas  
whose footsteps fall into syncopated patterns  
who cries watercolor landscapes across his cheeks  
who was born as a block of marble  
and chiseled the statue of himself out of it from the inside  
who is a composition composed to be perfect at composing  
a man who bathes in prose and leaves it cleaner  
who is siblings with the syllables he arranges  
who never questions the lessons of intuition

but I am not that man

# John Schneider 1 poem

## Missing My Daughter

Barren branches frame what I want to forget  
their tips now a pattern of dots I struggle to re-connect

against the sky's dark canvas.  
I ache for the leaves' fluctuating moods,

that summer hue that flares  
red and ochre in October, paper

dresses dropped then buried beneath the snow.  
A brightly feathered bird, tiny,

has found a safe spot to land  
in my empty branches. I look away for a moment,

and when I look back the bird is gone.

# Laurie Byro 1 poem

## Lady Narcissus

i

I followed the river. Where else would it lead but to my heart?  
He had a lover. I heard them  
whisper, hide behind trees. They played tag,  
repeated declarations. In winter  
rivers froze as I watched for them, their breath haunted  
the hemlocks. I trailed behind,  
glimpsing their happiness. She was everything  
I was not. Thin and willowy, a cipher  
who'd slipped his fumbling hands. I made  
my presence known.

She was just on the edge  
of our vision. Snow came  
down filled her hair  
with lacy crystals. She  
was a winter bride, I was born  
in spring. I followed the river.  
I walked the path, unable to see  
the winter fish swim.

I imagined she slept  
through snowy December, dead January. March made  
the sap run. I made it my last chance  
to free myself. All day I shadowed them,  
voices lured me, echoed through branches.  
They poisoned me with breathy plans.  
The lake I lay beside was cold.  
Ice was starting to thaw. Frozen, half-alive  
creatures were groggy. I knew  
the woman he loved survived beneath the ice,  
eager for the melting.

Undulating damsels tell me it's safe: I tell myself, it isn't.  
Our mother might have been the same, or our father.

When I see your face, it is so familiar. Would it be  
a sin to tempt a brother I didn't know?

My garden is splattered with poppies - blood  
of the not born. I'm told it is unholy to have these

feelings towards the carpenter, the barrel maker,  
to have these feelings for you. I told you I wanted

to write about an angry blue, an indignant yellow.  
My garden grows all this and more. When I gaze

into the pond after we walk I tell you I've fallen in  
love again. You tell me to look deeper: be sure

who I love. As if your words could make me whole,  
as if you could bring me to a surface beyond breath.

## John Muro 2 poems

### A Day in Mid-October

The sudden silence  
Compels me to listen,  
As if my older self was  
Whispering to slow my  
Steps and consider  
This day's drowning in  
A haze of amber and an  
Afternoon in search of  
Harvest. To see how  
The leaves, like brightly  
Feathered birds, drift out  
Then up before faltering  
Downwards in slow exodus  
With no way back to  
Their melodic nests.  
Haystacks in warm huddle  
House the incessant insect  
Hum that seems to stitch  
Brief pockets of silence  
To pasture but mostly  
The soft wash of wind  
And the rich scents of  
Becoming or going as  
Time closes in on all  
Things even as burdens  
Are lifted, if only for  
A moment, to find  
Their way back to  
Memory and dream.

~

## **Milk Moon**

Eased from dusk,  
A barge near toppling  
Is unberthed from the  
Horizon as if it were  
Ferrying the last gold  
To be found in the world.  
Oiled clouds parting  
Like the fluke of a whale,  
As it forswears haste  
And lifts, in slow  
Splendor, away from  
The edge of earth  
Into a pocket of plush  
Darkness, and all things  
Prone to wander – birds,  
Dreams and a whimsical  
Wind – pause and loiter  
In eerie silence and even  
The Herdsman abandons  
His hunting dogs before  
Slowly ambling in  
Dim majesty across the  
Barrens of heaven.

## Ociosidad

A day worth losing in the company of  
Desmond and Getz, setting out an ornate  
Bowl of oranges while a diaphanous blue  
Flame purrs then nuzzles into the beat-  
Up belly of an antique kettle. Rain's punching  
Its way thru wind and collecting in streams  
That traverse windows in strange geometry,  
Forming tiny pools laden with nascent light,  
Neither bright nor dark, but still somehow  
Glazing the quiet metal of the balcony with  
Its empty flower pots and broken broom.  
The abrupt creak of floor-boards as the  
House stirs, settles and shows itself submerged  
In the hushed shimmer of the vintage mirror,  
Freckled and de-silvered, with a cold hearth,  
Pockets full of to do's and dusty sorrows. Easy  
To reconsider an afternoon betrothed to errands  
And a want to learn from my mistakes, as  
The drowsy fan whirls on in muffled drone,  
Unwinding the day like a clock, stretching  
Each tedious hour as thin as a day-old promise.

## Francine Witte 2 poems

### The Never of Us

Quiver of first light and the blip of our alarms,  
*today will be better, today will be better,*

We hope for enough milk to cover our cereal,  
and for the greed of the moon to be pushed back

into the sky. Somehow, we know that the earth  
has started its slow rid of us. Earthquakes and fires

and all of that, all of that rain. We catch our train,  
we meet for drinks. We joke that the rumble beneath

our feet is part of getting older. Every so often our child  
self pokes through, keeps us sleepless or wishes us

back to birth, or forward to the after of us, or sometimes  
to the never of us which hangs above, a safe and faraway star.



## The Man Stands in the Forest

Becomes a tree. Tall and spindle,  
he lets the weather carve him, give him

bark and scratch. He becomes a tree because  
life is too walky and it's time for him to stand

still. A nearby tree whispers *hey, I used to be  
like you, the everyday chatter in my ears,*

*the endless comings and goings.* The man nods his head  
one final time before the lush of leaves starts to round

over his eyes, his ears. The last thing the man sees is a bird  
perched on his outstretched branch arm, the birdsong

*of I too, used to be like you, but now I'm happy  
to sit and watch.* And that's the last thing the man hears,

before the dig of his feet stretching out into roots.

## **Rachel R. Baum 2 poems**

### **Black tshirt**

Go to the cabin where sitar music and the predator wait. Accept the strange thick stew with its unpeeled potatoes and canned beans and something else that scalds your vision with a groggy smear of a headache. Glimpse a bare foot, a musty blanket. The bright star of a cigarette. The intrusion of an enormous tongue. Later there is no stripping off the wariness the questioning of reality. Codify humiliation in a black tshirt. Make a rich and putrid tea in honor of this lifelong cataclysm. Fuse the inevitability of charred and gaping memories. with the coarse betrayal of your own unlovely body.

## States of Ungrace

Once, you wrapped yourself in a marketplace rug  
Counted the loops, assessed its age its weft  
Once, you gave into regret  
Draped it in heavy silks, and felt light.

Once, you collected books with signatures  
Every page wore a choir robe  
Once, a dog was a gift and a companion  
A promise and a future.

Once, obsession and love climbed a ladder  
Paced circles in the dangerous dark  
Once, you told secrets to a friend  
Watched as she rode your bike in the rain.

Once, you took impatience up in a balloon  
Waited for calm in the turbulent air  
Once, you saw lights from a cirrus cloud  
When you, not the wind, did the flying.

Once, you told yourself a lie  
Inhaled its strength and its freedom  
Once, there were states of ungrace  
Entropy, resolve and forgiveness.

# Muralidharan Parthasatharay 1 poem

## A secret

His biographer had to gather pieces of information  
to complete the project and  
couldn't confirm whether he discontinued his art or not  
Because, after completion of his prison term for treason  
the artist fell silent for good nor entertained anyone at his home  
He suspended exhibition of his works  
After reading the biography many concluded  
prison had turned him into a vegetable

What he refused to divulge was  
during fall he found a canvas in the snow  
and used his eyelashes to sketch, add colour and finish a painting within  
During summer he used torn cloths on the window pane to  
bring out various shapes and images in the shadows  
This desperate struggle to retain his art and sanity remained always  
a secret

# Bruce Robinson 1 poem

## Thin Ice

And then we come in, late to the party:  
A child, yet alive, crosses the bridge  
between solitude and communion to  
meet his father, returning home. Next door

a bucket dips, draws water from a stone.  
Despite the crowded winter ice, a fallen  
skater sprawls, alone. The birds? Well, they're  
above it all. The buildings have little to say;

like us they follow protocol. You'll want  
to tell me this is not what the present  
tense is for but I'm not so certain.  
Is the present no more than what's been left

to us, a passing wave, a plane's contrail,  
the placid remains of lost white whales?

(from Winter Landscape with Skaters

Hendrick Avercamp, c.1608, winter landscape, with skaters)

[Winterlandschap met schaatsters, Hendrick Avercamp, ca. 1608](#)

# Bruce McRae 1 poem

## Foreclosed

Down on the farm, resentful chickens  
calculating the price of revelation.  
Horses in the pasture, awaiting their cue.  
The hogs drunk on the wine of introspection.  
There's also a busted pump,  
notable for its bad water.  
A tractor on its side, once red, now rusted.  
Just there, by the twisted apple tree.  
With, also, a few phantom sheep  
scattered about randomly  
to add a sense of perspective.  
The ramshackle barn's fallen over  
but the farmhouse still stands.  
In its kitchen is a table with an axe on it.  
And a blue pitcher.

# Kushal Paddar 1 poem

## Breathe The Loss

The words, those bricks and mortar  
of nothingness, unbuild  
an empty plot within.

I breathe in the loss, gasp, grasp  
for something quickly filling up  
the site of the deconstruction.

"There is a name for it, you know,"  
you will say, "epiphany."  
I do not know. I have so many  
phony feelings; I do not even  
trust my own loss.

The rain intensifies the brook  
near the town. A flood may  
empty a barrage and water down  
this drowning I nurse.

# Norman Paba Zarante 1 poem

## Diet

Eat all the light you can just before breakfast.

If you're anxious

unwind with some booze

then wait, but be cautious:

time is a blind hunter.

During lunch,

swallow countries like apples, and whole continents.

Then take your open skies and pour seas and rivers and rough streets over them.

Follow this routine as breathing.

Always watch your back.

Never trust anyone fully.

After a couple of years, you will have acquired

a soul of rain,

flooded the streets, watered the crops,

filled up and run away from yourself.

And your house will be solitude; there, you will learn to love.

And you will find yourself free and whole,

because you did not burn slowly until you disappeared,

like everything that has passed through this world.

Your path is yet another:

A sustained kiss. A journey among the stars.



## Clara Burghilea 2 poems

### Half love,

this split sun. The cross and uncross of its tongues,  
a sheet of seagulls puncturing the navy ink sky,  
the tiny lungs of this day, a torn dress, rising, then  
giving in, the salty kind sand, the pine tree's gracious  
shade, the full-voiced cawing of unseen passerine, this  
needling of the Galician hem, with eyes, feet and ears,  
the space this poem makes for the things untamed, then  
things unbidden, this may not be the time to offer this,  
sweet sour falls easy into the mouth, stick behind teeth,  
seeking a way out of itself, this sadness, this borrowed  
body seeking yours, ask me inside, let me enter. This.

## **These days**

no longer covering table tissues in your girly  
long letters, while sipping añejo Tequila,  
and doing your PnL statement, ears pricked  
to the raspy Cohen filling the chiaroscuro tall  
room, heart brimming with metaphors, hand  
bending to its abundance, where will these young  
hours bloom, expand and contract like an accordion,  
without us in the folds, light as the wink of dawn,  
when you no longer cover me in laughter, call me  
more beautiful than moon and death alike, and all  
hungry doorways are crumbling, skies lowering an  
inch each night, could we still take flight in this poem?

# Guinotte Wise 1 poem

## Beyond the Chutes

Rosin your glove  
strretch your rope  
enter the zen  
to settle your nerves  
push ups and chin ups  
stretch your legs  
respect your bull  
repeat his name  
thank him for coming  
to meet you here  
time has slowed and  
luck of the draw  
is just a myth  
this moment was  
on a trajectory since  
birth, written in the  
stars somewhere  
like this poem I write  
so many years later  
a million breaths  
candles enough on  
birthday cakes to  
rival the fires on  
the western slopes  
the bull is long gone  
his handlers, too.  
I'm still here at  
eighty-two. It's  
written. I'm writing.  
Younger men riding.

# Carolyn Martin 2 poems

## Ekphrasis: A Cadralor

1.

Miró's *The Birth of the World* stymies me.  
In his genesis, is that a kite or a bird?  
Balloons or faceless heads?  
A spider stalking a question mark?  
Squiggly lines or horizons, mountains, waves?  
Real or surreal? What's the difference?

2.

Backgrounded by *The Shepherd Star*,  
Breton's peasant girl steadies a potato sack  
on her head. Practiced weariness guides her home.  
I want to know who will meet her at the door?  
Who will wash her dusty feet? Who will brew  
her tea, butter her chunk of bread?

3.

In Jesus's painting, the table is round.  
Magdalene sits on His right amused by the Matthew/  
Mark/Luke fight over narratives and the Peter/  
Andrew/James row about the largest fish. John passes  
bread around. *The title?* Judas asks. Jesus gleefully replies,  
*The Boss's Dinner*. Everyone nods. No surprise.

4.

Oil on canvas, 1925: O'Keefe's *New York Street with Moon*.  
Ground-level view. Skyscrapers in solid browns, precisely edged  
and windowless. No movement in or around. Cloud-banked moon,  
haloed streetlamp, red traffic light: a cityscape conceived,  
the artist insists, as *felt* not *is*. What is the feel of miles  
of time away from mountains and desert blooms?

5.

Color-pencil on creamy white: *Self- Portrait of a Poet  
Aging as She Writes*. On her lap a child laughs.  
Beside her desk, a teen practices confidence.  
Slips of questions slide across the sun-drenched floor.  
Outside, maple buds whisper the calendar's turn.  
They've arrived to vitalize her slowing down.

## With All Due Respect

Silence is more harmful than honesty.  
Stand up. More boats need rocking.

There's always someone somewhere who enjoys doing  
everything you don't want to do. Pay them.

When you inquire, *Have I told you this before?*  
why do you tell me again although I've said *yes*?

There's a puzzle in everyone  
and I suspect it's unsolvable.

I'd rather walk through the fog of uncertainty  
than lie in the glare of answers there are no questions for.

I can't go into it now but if I could,  
I'd explain why I have no favorite regrets.

Nothing can trick me into glee  
like a mizzling morning with an unwrinkled sky.

Boredom can't exist if you are as curious  
as the ripple in a pond searching for its origin.

When bare-bone words dismay,  
I resort to serenity in a cup of tea.

Obsessions aren't good for the soul.  
We are experts at making matters worse.

I want to get this right: the world is real  
only when I find the words for it.

I'd trade a lifetime of deadlines  
for one raucously rambunctious day.

## Carol Hamilton 2 poems

### Heritage

I believe sometimes hope comes  
from landscape, mine one of prairie dearth.  
Here hope arrives like a cactus flower,  
a surprise, though long-awaited,  
a sudden brightness out of so much  
ever turning to sand crystal and dust.  
This earth is not quite stable,  
is ever ready to lift and leave,  
leave behind all of its shiftiness  
and aridity and scarcity of means.  
Whatever might live in such a place  
must have, like the mesquite,  
deep roots to search out  
its hidden pool of life.

## **Tourist Stop - Dublin**

Few things stand out in memory  
    Stark mental photos worried over  
Those I have learned may be wrong

And sixteen may have been more  
    Than thousands dropped from the sky  
Dark, I remember those holes in the stone

Ireland, too, knows still each face  
    Worries the places left empty  
The dark holes where now only air lives

I call up the portrait of a stark façade  
    Pock-marked where each one stood  
We worry the holes, tend the emptiness

Why, why, still all mothers, bereft, ask,  
    Arms, hearts choked full of unfilled space  
Why must walls be defaced

Why must towers fall from the sky  
    Why must silence and emptied air  
Hold the only orator we will stop to hear

Except for the shrillest voices of our day  
    Calling, calling how vengeance  
Will surely cleanse us of our pain?

## James Cole 2 poems

### Cardboard

today we drove clockwise  
around those temples three—  
that house of living stone,  
that magnet eye, that common  
place of scream

i pitied the thing called  
*Griefunwise*, busied the heart  
to temperate tasks, wrote heavy  
of sonor with ocean flame,  
and lived no less

tomorrow, this town  
will try to shake its human fleas  
i know this by my teeth,  
by my scarecrow contributions  
to the gaffling itch

i'll scatter by parabola,  
by thumbtack and comb  
the prescription shall repeal  
that law of *Lifeasiknowit*,  
celebration by the heap of me

then i'll think less, do more,  
fimbul through winter, repeat often  
my options, and strive to believe  
eager and earnest  
in a fire like *later*



## The Timeless Art of Regurgitation

I'm sorry about your Cardigan  
I suppose my acid-added wrinkle  
    couldn't be quelled  
and maybe I've been cleaning my ears  
too much but could you repeat  
    your answer?

Not because I don't believe you—  
for I have always believed in a thing  
like you— more so that you know for sure  
    what to do with all this upchuck.

Or should I be shutting up about now,  
like a soldier, about-face, and never  
    bother you  
with tender questions again? Because  
    the way I feel

north of this pylorus, caudal to this tongue—  
because if you said *no*, then this is an act  
    of lightness, a reaching  
or retreating, like a vulture with its spew.

In which case, would you hold my jacket  
as well? Would you repeat it to my beak,  
    while I run off to carry on  
like carrion, undistinguished in the road?

And if *yes*, then I must be making  
    sure, like a Coney Island gull,  
offering what I've eaten rather than  
face that soft consumption  
spooling in your teeth.

Take these boardwalk curds  
instead of my piteous pounds, and  
    if it doesn't suit  
you, answer again and I'll come up

with something better. It's my Birthday  
and there's cake down here somewhere.

## Sally Zakariya 3 poems

### Persistence of Vision

It's not so much the rabbit that astounds  
as the sleight of hand—see how deftly

he places the coin in his open palm  
how smoothly, how imperceptibly

he whisks it away, there or not there  
a split-second matter of perception

a trick of the eye, a quirk of the brain  
things aren't always what you see

and yet I see your afterimage still  
as if it were imprinted in my eye

## Invisible Ink

I write you a letter with invisible ink  
which says nothing and everything  
which calls on the sun and the stars  
to spell out our lives  
words like now and together  
words like it's all good, don't worry  
and even never mind  
words like age exhausts  
but enriches

Seared by the sun the lines  
tell times from then  
to forever

No date, no salutation, no  
complimentary close  
just a letter that says nothing  
and everything

## Bluemont Park

We used to walk the winding path  
and wade the stream and climb  
to a round circle of stones  
like some latter-day Druid temple,  
a place of whispered promise  
and imagined sacrifice.

We'd listen to birds sing our song,  
watch shivering light slice sideways  
through the canopy of leaves, stippling  
our twined bodies, marking them as one.

But that was years ago, before  
the days piled up, before our aging  
bones fought gravity so hard  
and sadness crowded in.

Now if we walk the path at all  
it's with our canes. We eye the stream,  
the stones as memories from a life  
hardly lived, hours on a clock  
that's running down.

But spring brings hope, new breath,  
a chance to walk in the mind's eye  
if not on foot.

# Lynne Kemen 1 poem

## “Crows Fly at Night”

Five tribes of Kulin Nation say  
we crows fly home at night,  
find our own kind, sleep with  
family, friends.

Noongar aboriginals say  
we carry their dead across  
to Kurannup.

In this Nation,  
only one or two kin can hang,  
for a flock is a murderous gang.  
But a murder is better than being alone.

Smart, making tools,  
talking in a cawing storm,  
laughing, we frighten the superstitious,  
afraid of their own shadows and disease.

If bees dance, waggle, telling their tribe  
where to find the sweetest clover,  
why can't we sit on a telephone line  
without shade,  
a crowd of crows, no danger  
of being shot?

If I were a crow,  
*I'd* fly at night.  
I'd fly home to my tribe.  
Never. Ever. Alone.

# Norma Jenckes 1 poem

## Ghazal A WINNING PARLAY

My father proposed to my mother: "Can two losers make a winning parlay?"  
Her answer was yes, and they were off to the races to make a winning parlay.

I told this story to a friend, and she objected: "What an insult  
to call your mother a loser." No, he asked, can WE make a winning parlay.

A gambler doesn't see it that way. He meant no insult.  
He knew they both had seen bad luck, time to stake a winning parlay.

There was a lot of bad luck going around in the 1930s; she didn't take it  
personally, she took it as a question. How can we forsake a winning parlay?

For a gambler it's always about Luck. He's a loser because luck left him.  
Can two people with bad luck merge? You can't fake a winning parlay.

Shakespeare called her Dame Fortuna. Luck is a woman.  
In that old song "Luck be a Lady Tonight" "no heartbreak, a winning parlay.

There's one funny line "Stay with me Lady. I'm the one that you came in with,"  
Luck is a fickle friend, Norma, and must be begged for a retake, a winning parlay

# Allan Lake 1 poem

## Gladiolas

Glad I was born in a part of North America  
that did not invade Cuba, except as tourists.  
Lots of wind on the Canadian prairies  
but no draft. My mother was a Gladys.  
Glad I was 14 in '64. The Beatles.  
Glad I somehow navigated late 60's  
Vancouver scene without any map.  
Glad I entered the mad maze of religion  
and gladder when I finally found my way  
back out. Glad *to be* force-marched  
through plays of Shakespeare and  
that I really *was*, in the Age of Dylan.  
Glad to have tripped on poems of Ferlinghetti  
on someone's floor at propitious moment.  
That lit a candle. Glad to have respired  
and resided on islands: Cape Breton, Ibiza,  
Sicily, Tasmania. Searounded chapters.  
Glad for brave women who took me on  
and friends who wished me well when  
I departed again and again on my way  
to the big departure, glad's black hole.  
Glad for daughters, for granddaughters;  
hope I haven't been too much of a weight.  
Glad to have been a teacher –  
the people I have met.  
Glad I made it to retirement –  
there are poems in me yet.

# Anita Jawary 1 poem

## Fortune Teller

Based on *Fortune Teller*, Gertrude Abercrombie, 1951, oil on masonite held in the Rockwell Museum U.S.

Alone in your room  
whose fortune do you tell?  
No veil  
no sparkle  
no poltergeist,  
just a horse  
who stuck his head through the window  
to say hello.

Perhaps it is he,  
that wild beast,  
that muscular body of intelligence  
who offers to saddle you  
a future  
on which  
you will never ride,  
stuck as you are  
in your grey room  
with a dumb crystal ball



playing patience

till you get a chance

to read someone else's fortune,

knowing full well

the horse

riding free

beneath a clear blue sky

is the only one

who can ever take you there.

# Dennis Dubois 1 poem

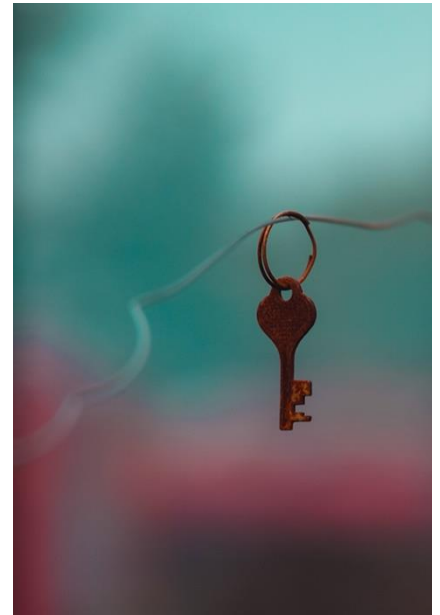
## Salvation's Hidden Key

Yes, you, too, have one, but few  
realize the value so there it hangs,  
    looped onto a wire  
unattached to any heart chamber  
    or cerebral node  
and yet, emits a code that registers  
    in times of need.  
With it, the end will circle back  
    to the beginning.

Long ago, you placed it there, in reserve,  
hoping no one would ever find it; that there  
    would be no need.  
The key to all salvation, forgotten,  
    weathers the flow of seasons,  
winter ice, spring rain, summer swelter.  
    The mind, elsewhere,  
the key rusting into obsolescence.

My life made up of decades of distraction,  
    ups and downs, twists and turns,  
hyper-activity, busyness for superficial  
    interests, personal gain,  
but in the end— empty, unsatisfying.  
Only during hard times does the yearning heart  
search for the key, activating the code, instructing  
the hand to reach out blindly for succor.

The key no longer glitters in the sun, but shifts  
in the wind, motion designed to garner attention.  
    If eyes and ears pick up the signal,  
If fingers locate it, the key will find the lock,  
freeing up whatever it is that blocks your entry,  
    your passage, your welcome  
to whatever it is the heart desires.  
The door to where the nameless live  
    will open to a reception,  
a homecoming for a long lost king or Queen.



# Mark A. Murphy 3 poems

## Thesis on Demuth

*for Nora*

i.

It is said that Frau Demuth is illiterate.  
She has a bastard son,  
and no means  
with which to support him.

It is said that Frau Demuth is a goose.  
She has no education,  
beyond nursing  
the sick, tending house, and serving.

ii.

If you watch her, as she peels  
potatoes, sweeps  
the boards, plays chess,  
or launders worn-out linens,  
you will observe a woman  
who looks at life without blinking.  
A woman who looks  
to no man for crumbs of approval.

A WOMAN AT THE END OF TIME.

A woman who wears SILENCE  
like a Boadicea Cameo,

for solace, courage,  
change, for a SON she cannot raise.

iii.

If you meet Frau Demuth,  
if you are lucky enough to hold her eye  
for more than a few seconds,  
she will draw your pain, and join it  
to her own, before kicking it  
into the dustbin of our mutual sorrows.

iv.

Now, if you EMBRACE  
her good natured welcome,  
you will see the crack in the door  
OPEN as she bids farewell  
to the Commune DEAD, gathers  
the unsung heroes,  
connecting FALLEN  
to FALLEN. Now offering shelter  
and food. Baking potatoes,  
fetching and carrying, wine, water,  
scraps of lard.

Now recounting stories  
of the “Red Virgin,”  
and the working girls  
of *La Goutte d’Or*, declaring:  
“Our deaths will free Paris...”

As if to halt the advancing *Versaillais*  
and the betrayal  
of *la femme*, in the long history of conflict  
from *Ancien Régime*, to *Petroleuse*.

## Time Travel

Prophet of the twentieth century dead  
driven by disease,  
poverty, stricken multitudes.

We first read you back on the steppe  
when we first kissed a girl  
mesmerized by your long view

of history, doubting everything.

\*

If you didn't see the terrier  
in the rat pit – we did. Clock-watching,  
servants of time, keeping time

in the Planetarium  
with only our shared sense  
of injustice to equal the opening shot.

\*

Life is like a movie you've seen  
too many times already,  
except we can never go back,

rescue the six-legged dog  
from its freak-show existence,  
rehabilitate the Show Trial dead.

\*

So, we scribble with no intention  
of making sense, leaving  
out the locomotive of history.

No satisfactory polemic forthcoming  
or postulated.

## Not Among Fortune's Favourites

*We should none of us like to meet our pasts, I guess, in flesh and blood. –*  
Eleanor Marx

Only a bastard son can understand what it means  
to grow up without his father's name,  
or worse still, be scorned for even being born.

As if it wasn't bad luck enough to be fostered out,  
the foster child must contend with the burden  
of self-doubt, springing from sapling to oak,

and the bitter truth of rejection, defining a life  
spent in the shadows, as the gravity of betrayal dawns.  
Indeed, what compelled the begetter of *Das Kapital*

to sleep with his faithful housekeeper, regardless  
of the hefty responsibilities conferred by theory?  
When the cat is let out of the proverbial bag,

escaping its prison of shame, as necessity dictates;  
we might all do well to remember, Helen "Lenchen"  
Demuth and her unswerving loyalty to the Cause.

\*

Poor Freddy Demuth, skulking in the back kitchen,  
whilst his irascible father drinks his fill of port –  
~~Rights The Wrongs Of The Capitalist Versus The Worker.~~

# Contributors

**Pankaj Khemka** is a practicing physician who often turns to poetry to express the everyday triumphs and tragedies of his work. He was recently honored as the March, 2021 "Poet of the Month" by Moon Tide Press. His recent work appears, or is forthcoming, in Rattle, Star\*Line, and Ghostlight. He lives in Orange, California with Floyd the ficus.

**Erica Goss** served as Poet Laureate of Los Gatos, CA from 2013-2016. In 2019, she won the Zocalo Poetry Prize. She is the author of *Night Court*, winner of the 2016 Lyrebird Award, *Wild Place*, and *Vibrant Words: Ideas and Inspirations for Poets*. Recent work appears in *Lake Effect*, *Atticus Review*, *Contrary*, *Convergence*, *Spillway*, *Cider Press Review*, *Eclectica*, *The Tishman Review*, *Tinderbox*, *The Red Wheelbarrow*, and *Main Street Rag*, among others. Erica is the editor of *Sticks & Stones*, a monthly poetry newsletter. Please visit her at [www.ericagoss.com](http://www.ericagoss.com).

**Mike Dillon** lives in a small town on Puget Sound in the U.S.A. He grew up on Bainbridge Island, eight miles west of Seattle. His most recent book is "Departures: Poetry and Prose on the Removal of Bainbridge Island's Japanese Americans After Pearl Harbor," from Unsolicited Press, 2019.

**John Maurer** is a 26-year-old writer from Pittsburgh that writes fiction, poetry, and everything in-between, but his work always strives to portray that what is true is beautiful. He has been previously published in *Claudius Speaks*, *The Bitchin' Kitsch*, *Thought Catalog*, and more than sixty others. @JohnPMaurer ([johnpmaurer.com](http://johnpmaurer.com))

**John Schneider** lives in Berkeley, California where he has studied poetry with Robert Hass. His most recent publications have been in: *Slipstream*, *Potomac Review*; Bitter Oleander Press; *The American Journal of Poetry*; *Chautauqua* and *Lullwater Review*. He is included in: *California Fire and Water: A Climate Crisis Anthology*. He is a Pushcart Prize Nominee.

**Laurie Byro** has had 5 collections of poetry published, most recently *La Dogaresa* (Cowboy Buddha Press). Two collections had work that received a New Jersey Poetry Prize. Her poetry has received 55 Interboard Competition honors including 10 First Place awards as judged. In 2018, she was nominated for 4 Pushcart Prizes and she facilitates Circle of Voices in NJ Libraries for the last 20 years.

**John Muro** is a resident of Connecticut, John's professional career has been dedicated to environmental stewardship and conservation. His first volume of poems, *In the Lilac Hour*, was published last fall by Antrim House, and the book is available on Amazon. John's poems have appeared or are forthcoming in numerous literary journals, including *River Heron*, *Moria*, *Sheepshead*, *Writer Shed*, *Clementine Unbound*, *Euonia* and the *French Literary Review*.

**Francine Witte's** poetry and fiction have appeared in *Smokelong Quarterly*, *Wigleaf*, *Mid-American Review*, *Passages North*, and many others. Her latest books are *Dressed All Wrong for This* (Blue Light Press,) *The Way of the Wind* (AdHoc fiction,) and *(The Theory of Flesh.)* Her chapbook, *The Cake, The Smoke, The Moon* (flash fiction) has just been published by ELJ Editions. She lives in NYC.

**Rachel R. Baum** is a professional dog trainer, former librarian, licensed private pilot, kayak angler, and Covid Long Hauler. She is the author of the blog BARK! Confessions of a Dog Trainer and the editor of Funeral and Memorial Service Readings Poems and Tributes (McFarland, 1999). Her poems have appeared in High Shelf Press, Ariel's Dream, Drunk Monkeys, Bark magazine, Around the World anthology, and Wingless Dreamer.

**Muralidharan Parthasatharay**

**Bruce Robinson**

**Bruce McRae**, a Canadian musician, is a multiple Pushcart nominee with poems published in hundreds of magazines such as Poetry, Rattle and the North American Review. His books are 'The So-Called Sonnets (Silenced Press); 'An Unbecoming Fit Of Frenzy; (Cawing Crow Press) and 'Like As If' (Pski's Porch), Hearsay (The Poet's Haven).

**Kushal Poddar** is an author and father. He edited a magazine - 'Words Surfacing', authored eight volumes including 'The Circus Came To My Island', 'A Place For Your Ghost Animals', 'Eternity Restoration Project- Selected and New Poems' and 'Postmarked Quarantine'. His works have been translated in eleven languages.



**Norman Paba Zarante** (1985) is the author of the collection of poems *Habitar el Relámpago* (*Inhabiting the lightning*) (Publishing house: Piedra de Toque - Idartes). He has received several awards and distinctions, including the Residencia Artística en Bloque Ciudad de Bogotá Idartes in 2017 (Artistic residence at the Institution of Idartes, Bogota). He was born and raised in Cartagena (Colombia) where he completed a degree in Literature, and then completed a master's degree in creative writing at the Universidad Nacional de Colombia. He has participated as a guest poet in different national and international literature and poetry festivals, and his poems have been translated into English, French and Italian. He moved to Europe in 2019, and after spending time in France and London, he now lives in the coastal city of Brighton, in the south of England. *Cantar con bestias* (*Singing with beasts*) is his first book of poems and has recently been published by the Argentinean publishing house Buenos Aires Poetry.

### **Clara Burghlea**

**Guinotte Wise** writes and welds steel sculpture on a farm in Resume Speed, Kansas. His short story collection (Night Train, Cold Beer) won publication by a university press and enough money to fix the soffits. Six more books since. A 5-time Pushcart nominee, his fiction, essays and poetry have been published in numerous literary journals including Atticus, The MacGuffin, Southern Humanities Review, Rattle and The American Journal of Poetry. His wife has an honest job in the city and drives 100 miles a day to keep it. (Covid changed some of the circumstances) Some work is at <http://www.wisesculpture.com>

**Carolyn Martin** is a lover of gardening and snorkeling, feral cats and backyard birds, writing and photography. Since the only poem she wrote in high school was red penciled “extremely maudlin,” she is amazed she has continued to write. Find out more at [www.carolynmartinpoet.com](http://www.carolynmartinpoet.com).

**Carol Hamilton** has recent and upcoming publications in *Flint Hills Review*, *North Dakota Review*, *Louisiana Literature*, *Chiron Review*, *Edison Review*, *Nevermore Journal*, *Gyroscope*, *The Pangolin*, *Review*, *Willow Review*, *Poem*, *Blue Unicorn*, *Woven Tales Press*, *Abbey*, *The Café Review*, *Pensive*, *Fine Lines*, *Coneflower Review*, *Bookends Review*, *Sin Fronteras/Writers Without Pangolin Review*, *The Raven Review*, *Psaltry and Lyre*, *Oklahoma Humanities*, *The Scurfpea Anthology 2021*, *Greatest City*, and others. She has published 17 books: children's novels,

legends and poetry and has been nominated nine times for a Pushcart Prize. She is a former Poet Laureate of Oklahoma.

**Clara Burghilea** is a Romanian-born poet with an MFA in Poetry from Adelphi University. Recipient of the Robert Muroff Poetry Award, her poems and translations appeared in *Ambit*, *Waxwing*, *The Cortland Review* and elsewhere. Her second poetry collection *Praise the Unburied* was published with Chaffinch Press in 2021.

**James Cole** is a poet, author, and grad student based out of Charlottesville, VA

**Sally Zakariya's** poetry has appeared in some 80 print and online journals and been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net. Her most recent publication is *Something Like a Life* (Gyroscope Press). She is also the author of *Muslim Wife*, *The Unknowable Mystery of Other People*, *Personal Astronomy*, *When You Escape*, *Insectomania*, and *Arithmetic* and other verses, as well as the editor of a poetry anthology, *Joys of the Table*. Zakariya blogs at [www.butdoesitrhyme.com](http://www.butdoesitrhyme.com).

**Lynne Kemen** lives in Upstate New York. Her chapbook, *More Than A Handful* was published in 2020. She has published or has forthcoming poems in *La Presa*, *Silver Birch Press*, *The Ravens Perch*, *Blue Mountain Review*. She is on the Board of *Bright Hill Press* in Treadwell, NY.

**Norma Coleman Jenckes**, Professor Emerita, earned her PhD, (Illinois 1974) in Literature. Yaddo Fellow and Fulbright Senior Scholar, Jenckes has published poems in AMBIT, THE PARIS REVIEW, Antigonish Review, Appalachian Heritage, Origami Project, Eastern Structures, and in three volumes : Dementia: That Undiscovered Country, Only Gossamer my Ghazals, and Sailing to Tarshish.

**Allan Lake**, a stray from Allover, Canada, now writes poetry in Allover, Australia. Latest chapbook of poems, 'My Photos of Sicily', published by Ginninderra Press, 2020.

**Anita Jawary** is a Melbourne artist and writer. She spent most of her life caring for needy family. In between she did some journalism, taught at schools and university, exhibited her art and established The Dickensian Challenge. Finally, in the quiet of lockdown, she woke to poetry.

**Dennis Dubois** holds an MSW, and has worked to help others for decades, while writing poems along the way. He has published poems in Bee Museum, Curved House, The Projectionist's Playground, Runcible Spoon, Verse News, MessageinaBottle, and Nine Muses poetry. Currently prepping a collection of poems and a first work of fiction. He is an American expatriate, living in Copenhagen.

**Mark A. Murphy** is an Ace poet, living with GAD, and OCD. He has poems forthcoming in Cultural Weekly and Acumen. He has had work published in 18 countries. He is a 3 time Pushcart Nominee, and has published seven books of poetry to date, including, 'Tin Cat Alley & Other Poems: Not to be Reproduced' by Venetian Spider Press, 2021. German publisher 'Moloko Print' are to publish his latest collection, 'The Ruin of Eleanor Marx' in the spring of 2022.

# 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](mailto:poeticareview@gmail.com)

Response to submissions, from 1 week to 3 months.