

POETiCA REViEW

Spring 2022



Issue 13

Featuring
the work of 32
poets.

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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.

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Chief Editor: Mark A. Murphy

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Anna Papadopoulos 3 poems

He Takes His Children To The Site of His Victim's Remains

(According to court testimony, Wayne Couzens took his children to play in the same woods where he had dumped Sarah Everard's body days earlier)

Lie here
among the stripped crocuses,
and cover yourselves with a blanket of sunbeams.

I will be right over there
gathering
a basket of frost.

Don't venture too far,
you don't know what kind of danger awaits.

And be quiet
as to not wake the blackbirds,
who, only yesterday,
were singing.

Afghani Boy Whom I Will Never Know

Footballer, son, brother, friend,
Now a speck hanging in the air like a dot.
The fuselage
an overpass for his soul,
releases him like a broken wing.

The earth
a trampoline that can't hold his dreams.

A firefly flashing in the sky.
It'll freeze in time like the stars
that we can't see.

Light and warmth deceives
with its deathly grip,
burns the heart.

Fires erupt, but not for the first time
or the last.

And where is the ocean and that which it separates?
Safe from religion, bombs, terror –
far from the fireflies, stars, and broken wings

Where we can't see the falling boy.

You'll Get The Tragic News

when you're mid-laugh,
or drinking a strawberry smoothie,
or on a hike with friends.

When the news comes,
it comes crackled like a radio transmission
from a foreign land.
At first, you look away. Glance over it
like another headline on your newsfeed.

If you're out with clients
you'll take another swig of your chardonnay.
Pop another bacon-wrapped scallop in your mouth,
glance at your red-chipped, sweaty fingers.
Inhale one last moment of oblivion
before you read the message
again, and again.

Your heart pounds like a countdown clock.

When the soul-stabbing news comes,
it'll change you forever,
it'll interrupt the mundane,
it'll knock the door down at dinner time --
startle you into consciousness.

That woman laughing a few seconds earlier,
You'll come to hate her.

Lindsay McLeod 2 poems

BATHE

My synaesthesia is playing up again
the novelty all but worn off
the colours have started humming
anthems a little off key
it's not what I thought it was
and as it turns out, neither am I
its name tasting like measles in my
mouth that make my allergies howl
the sickness itches worst when
I let it shine like fool's gold
I am trying to wash it off me but
my synaesthesia is playing up again.

MUTE

I cannot speak of it.
I have given my tongue

to risk so many times
and every time it has bit.

And after it all I still
have not learned which

wine pairs best with loss.
Perhaps all.

Barbara Tylor 3 poems

Ultramarine

From my last gynecologist appointment, I kept
the disposable gown I wore during the exam.
Quickly I had folded and stashed it in my purse
before walking out, only a little worried
what the nurse charged with tidying the room
would think upon finding the article's absence.

Once home, I removed the soft, synthetic fabric,
unfolded and laid it out on the floor. Such a peaceful
shade of classic French ultramarine—which is why
I took it—too beautiful to leave behind,
the blue rectangle floating my aging body into
menopause—a violent storm within a woman.

We find our calm in the strangest things.

All the Photos I Didn't Take

It was late afternoon when I left my father's house in central Texas and headed south on 206, a copy of Larry McMurtry's *Roads* on the passenger seat.

I wanted to make San Antonio before dark to avoid entanglements with deer who prefer shoulder grasses at dusk.

In some small towns I missed turns, quickly correcting my mistakes to get back on track. It should have been fun, adventure—like I used to have.

But with age comes the fear of traveling solo, a woman on her own, afraid of getting lost, having car trouble or flat tires,

passing semi-trucks and RVs, hitting deer or other wildlife trying to cross the narrow road stretched out before me,

too afraid to stop and take pictures of a cobalt blue storm positioned perfectly over the San Saba River,

the illuminated whitewashed boards of a Bible Baptist church, several courthouses—each the architectural pride of a county seat,

the repeated curves of prickly pear cactus against old telephone poles holding up dipping power lines,

and a white-tail buck grazing in shoulder grass, his velvety antlers glowing in evening's golden hour.

Now, if I close my eyes, I can still count his eight points, the image of him forever latent in my mind.

Line Drawing

If a line is drawn down the center of the country,
I live on the Eastern side of it. I used to live in the West,
and before that I lived on the line itself.

Where I now live, I draw lines of my own to make a sense of place,
where oak becomes pine and Spanish moss begins to drip
toward bayous that pool outside their so-called banks,

and the knobby offspring of bald cypresses grow up
from placid pools to meet their mother trees.
How can I write such beautiful words

about the verdant humidity of the East while missing
the dry-desert West so much? I am a fool. The West
has forgotten my name by now. If ever I travel to see it again,
I will erase my lines as I go.

Larry Kerschner 3 poems

hearts

the giant Pacific octopus has three hearts
nine brains and royal blue blood

common earthworms have five hearts
slime-producing hagfish have four hearts

cockroaches manage with thirteen hearts
while men with no hearts to offer you

threaten to set nuclear fire
to the earth and the sky

the light will not be cold
the final silence will be articulate

--- for Grace Cavalieri

Lexi

when my granddaughter was diagnosed
with leukemia at age three

I thought of broken children
I had seen in Vietnam
and other dark-haired children dying
of depleted uranium induced leukemia
in a dusty hospital in Basrah

love and memory and mortality
can easily tie you into knots

now she is five years cancer free
her full healthy face is
becoming that of a young woman

she is one of the children who gets to live

when my daughter came out to me

you were the first of my children
to find your way to who you are
I know you were unsure
about what my response would be
since I also was coming slowly
out of my pentecostal wander
but love of you clearly
outweighed any lifeless dogma

I have loved the women
who you have loved
even though some of them
didn't deserve you

I have gained another daughter
through you
even though you and she
have gone separate ways

you once pointed out to me
that life is just a bowl of Larrys
I have learned that to know poetry
I must write poems
you seem to have learned that to know love
you must love

--for Karen

Christine Tabaka 1 poem

Rain will Never be my Friend Again

I cannot see - I cannot feel.
The rain has blinded me - paralyzed me with its chill.

There was a time when rain was my playmate,
my companion;
when it frolicked and splashed in my youth.

It washed away my tears - and refreshed my fatigue.
Now it depletes me of all joy.

It reminds me of the day you left.
The rain fell so hard that day.

Sorry, is all the doctor said,
as the sheet became your shroud.

The rain never stopped.
The angels cried - lowering you into the earth.

The covering of umbrellas dispersed,
but I remained – unsheltered,
slowly dissolving in the downpour.

Water holds memories, it is told.
It will not let go.

Rain may dilute my tears,
but rain will never be my friend again.

Patrice M. Wilson 1 poem

How to Write a Peace Poem

Grasp loaded pen
write *joy*
write *goodness*
write *life*

let teardrops stain
paper until paper
becomes tears

let paper dry
in false air
then tear
into tiny pieces
that will blow
into careening winds
into all four
hungry directions
until they are gone
from you
until they
become motes
in the sky's eye

weeping
for all the ready
men and women
who tote weapons
to rip into flesh
filling the
sky's eye with
new holes

then never write again
unless you can hide
your poem up your sleeve
deliver it
as a lover to one who
will never love you back
who will take from you
turn
and walk away

Carl Scharwath 1 poem

Rapture

I am waiting for you.

On this evening, cold as adoring snow

Daring to question the stars

As they fall like raindrops of memory.

anguishing incarnation-

Flooding my soul with

Fragments of us, together in a

Life we both knew had a

Termination wired into our destiny.

martyrs rejoice-

Alone, left to witness the end.

As the world gyrates

Towards a glorious rebirth

Knowing I missed the rapture.

Maryam 1 poem

Stones

Aunt Rose never kept a tidy home
and she told lies.
Her mind was like a castle.
She was many people--all one, all different, kept apart,
by stones.

Empty rooms, rooms full of memories, rooms full of stories, hidden rooms and secret
rooms,
all locked.
She was somewhere, but we couldn't find her.

"Aunt Rose??" I'd call out.
Perfect darkness.

"Everything is in the past," she'd say,
and hoard old books and empty calendars.
They rose in stacks and piles, uneven and dusty,
like old buildings.

"Want to see the ruins of Pompeii?" she once asked.
She knew the truth after all:
a collapsed city--all useless information and frozen time--
never dies.
"You've lost my time," she wept and hid behind a door.

So when they later asked: "Is your aunt here?"
I had to admit--I didn't know.
Like I said:
She didn't keep a tidy home.

We lived in ruins,
all locked away,
separated
by stones.

Oisín Breen 3 poems

Bitter Eggs

I gather roses, with wan howls of touch.

And although my faith is without condition.

It exists in order to privilege the remembrance of my own mistakes.

Now, as I walk along the granite pier, with the sea flat,

The levee of the basket breaks, and I do not know what this means.

Here, with a churning melody,

Comes the blow:

a spinning plume of thirst:

a gloaming,

The hunter's bow

has snapped.

We must, therefore, keep moving,

lest these new pigments in our make-believe

leave us elegantly gleeful, cracking thrushes' necks, and cooing, lovingly,

salivating over the blood-swells of syringe stuffed fruit.

Even then, you will not judge us, nor I you.

And that which passes

Often lays bitter eggs,

Gradually confounding

The distinctions made by time.

The Stones of Damascus

Death

Is the only god
in town.

Her autumnal crop:
Vice.

Her spring yield:
Late sewed virtue.

Yet I can not bear the burden
Of my actions, and so it is
That I lie here,
Watching the stones
Crumble.

The Yellow Book of Lecan

This then is the mulch,
The one true elegy
To the halter
And the hare.

This is the silence of cacophony:
The threnody to a saturated life,
Where Eochu Airem was forced
To choose his wife from fifty.

This is where – ignorant of her,
After decades long spent wanting
The sight of her
– with her plump with child –
Where he chose, instead,
His own daughter as his bride.
And where she bore his last son,
Before watching her husband-father burn,

She was the Mess Búachalla,
The cow herder's foundling,
As is writ
In the yellow book of Lecan.

And here then the beast is holy,
The haar is holy, and holy too, the red honey,
Lips, each other's, and yours,
For which I have such a thirst.

Marianne Hales Harding 1 poem

Pandemic Epiphragm, Spring 2020

When you go outside
at the same time as your neighbors
nod to acknowledge

your common humanity and pretend
your box kingdom
is self-contained and self-sustaining

not one in a row of square-foot human gardens
connected at the seam and color-coordinated
walls and carpets and windows that see

the sun high and low and gone
grass that must be wrangled
two bright green rocking chairs

with pink flamingo cushions
sidewalk cracks painted with weeds
your neighbor's daughter's boyfriend's truck

walk around the block, spend the days
calming your panic
move from the back yard to the front

with the sun, close your eyes
for a few minutes when the sky is navy
push down the dread of light blue

you have your box kingdom

a snail has crawled up
the foundation and closed over
its opening with a mucus epiphragm



Gregg Shapiro 3 poems

Novena of the North End

She knows you are pressing your nosy neighbor
ear to the solid, bolted door. Holding your breath
and listening as she climbs the warped, laughing
stairs in her dangerous high heels, and bleached,
lacquered, swirled hair. You can hear her tell-tale

lizard's tongue clacking against her Formica
teeth, her raspy breathing. She grips the splintered,
paint-peeled, banister with her gnarled talons,

propelling herself upward. When she reaches
the third-floor landing she knocks once, twice
and her half-dead daughter opens the door.
They gossip and pray the rosary. They drink
black coffee until their lips are as blue as tar.

The Fog That Ate Chicago

This is what it must look like
inside my head. The architecture
of thoughts, tall as cathedrals and
skyscrapers. Engulfed, possessed,
surrounded by blinding grey mist.
Unsteadily crossing a bridge, I am

certain I will plunge, face first, into
the dirty green river, disappear
beneath the thinnest layer of ice
and debris. Determined not to get
on the wrong el-train, lost forever
like Boston's Charlie on the MTA.

Doomed to ride eternally above,
below the traffic, never get where
I'm going. Wind up on the south side,
with a north side accent. This is not
the first time I am riding the up elevator,
going down. If you see me in the dime

store, stuffing my pockets with candy,
trinkets, souvenirs, meet me at the metal
detector. Flash me a badge, polished
pair of handcuffs, read me my rights.
Rest assured it won't be the last time.
I'm just trying to see my way clear.

Elephants of Love

A herd of pachyderms plays hopscotch
on my chest. One giant foot up, another
one down. I think of sky blue and butter

fingers. I think of stones skipping across
a sidewalk, hands and arms and trunks.
Am I the only one who smells fresh-roasted
peanuts? Does anyone else hear the cracking
of shells, like so many small bones? They are

chasing the butterflies in my stomach, catching
them, letting them go, leaving traces of wing
dust and chalk everywhere. I wiggle my ears,

run my tongue over my teeth expecting tusks.
Soon, the poachers will come, with big guns
and tools for ivory removal. Circus music
and cotton candy, cavities the size of a cage
at the zoo. One minute I'm on the trapeze,

the next swinging from a vine. I wonder if
Jane felt this way when Tarzan first appeared,
riding side-saddle and bare-chested into her life.

Ben Nardolilli 1 poem

In Mushrooms or on a Feather

The root of the problem
may be that we can't even agree
on which past moments
to use as a metaphor
in order to explore the present

Half the country
is talking about barbarians
overrunning borders
and decadence in the cities
that will lead to an Empire's fall

Meanwhile, the other half
talks about a Republic crumbling
into the beginning
of an empire, thanks
to the dirty work of drones

No partisan to these demes,
I am on the sides, but not silent,
complaining that things
in the capital city
have grown too Byzantine

Grove Koger 2 poems

Now

It is what it is,
your doctor says,
and you nod. And
before long
it was what it was,
whatever it was.
Or maybe not.

Time passes and now
something else is
what it is, whatever that is.
Don't ask.

Stuff happens and
we shake our heads.
Huh!

There are bigger words,
I know. Better words,
more precise—but

none good enough to
paper over this crack in
the world.

Scape

River knows

the way, run

away, don't

stay.

Rock knows

the way. Come

what may, stay.

Stay.

Rod Drought 1 poem

Lifetime

Lately
I think about my time
In terms of
A train on a finite track
Drip of stalactites
Feeding stalagmites
The way rivers and streams
Mold land, smooth stones

Futilely measured
By illusionary clocks
Dali melting in significance
Unlike palpable measurements

My brother will turn seventy
He developed gout
I lost my prostate to cancer
Metaphors pale in comparison

Does lifetime make you wiser?
No
Repeated failure
Brings a wisdom of survival
I am old
I know not what to do
(mostly)

The constant drip
The relentless track
Pushes and reshapes
Seeks a path of least resistance
Like a childhood friend
I outgrew but sticks around

Then I realize
Life has always been there
Like a good love
That after all the pratfalls
And derailments,
Never gave up

I wait for it

Like a passenger at a station
Listen for its' long, low whistle
Signaling me:

“Come on,
You’ve had enough.
Let’s go home.”

Rose Mary Boehm 2 poems

After the Storm

They hadn't exchanged words in years. Not even angry ones,
had sat brooding in their homes. Those insults... They didn't even remember
what had been said, but kept the hurt, and the accusation.
And, of course, it had all been the other's fault.

That storm changed things. Not how they felt exactly, but when they thought
they may not live, they remembered the good times, the moments
of light and laughter, when they were young, expecting the world
to come to them when they dangled their tanned nine-year-old legs
over the grassy knoll into the rushing waters of the village brook.

Remembered when they exchanged secrets, when Zoltan had magicked
a frog into Nora's apron pocket, when Lena had bled for the first time
and they'd thought she'd die. Yes, how could they forget?

So when the storm clouds lifted, when most trees were still standing, some roofs
had been taken, the chicken hutches had made it through, only two windows
in the whole village had been broken, they gave thanks. Still unsure
of the 'why' of their feud, when they passed each other on the way
to and from church they called a truce. With their eyes only for now.
But they had learned that they may not be immortal.

Another Famous Actor Story

She didn't know big cities,
didn't know many men.
When he made his first move,
she didn't know how much she wanted him,
or how to play it cool,
or how to play the mating game.
She didn't know that she was beautiful.
She didn't know he was *that* famous,
or that he was one of the guys who hurt girls,
his arrogance born from insecurity.
She didn't know how small a penis could be,
or that she had a hymen,
and had no idea that bedding him
would keep it intact for a better day.

Vivien Jones 1 poem

He Loves Me, Really

This warm bath is a comfort
though it raises the bruises.
Perhaps if he has to look at them
he will feel just a little ashamed.
Then he will curl at my feet
and pour apologies like treacle.

He loves me, really.

I cannot guess which things
will upset him, dinner too cool,
shirt mis-ironed, letter unposted.
I know the tension before
the tennis back-hand,
the hardened edge of his hand,

He loves me, really.

It wasn't always like this,
It used to be flowers, chocolates,
the ring, the wedding, the kids,
but I just wasn't good enough,
so he gets frustrated,
understandably - it's my fault,

He loves me, really.

He is looking at me now,
brown eyes impenetrable,
I cannot read his smile,
whether he intends a caress,
or a punch, a single word
from me will trigger his undying....

He loves me, really.

Ed Krizek 1 poem

Wisdom

1

We carry the burden
of memory
like a bag full
of heavy branches.
It is said that alzheimer's
patients only have the present.
Some are happy that way.

2

There is a storm brewing.
Black clouds. Lightning. Pounding rain.
Memories can be like that.
A flood of disasters
can supplant the joy
of living.

3

I vow to be joyful
in life. All around
there are trees, birds,
grass, insects. All beings
seek happiness. There is joy
in breathing. Joy
in the pulsing of blood
through arteries and veins.
There is happiness in awareness.

4

Let me speak of the white peonies
in the glass vase on the mantel.
Their blooms are perfect!
Yet soon they will die.
I do not have a remedy for death.
So I am joyful in the moment
as the storm passes.

Carol Edwards 1 poem

Depth

for Ashlee

Somehow I can't write the words
the right way or the right order
to convey the depth of sadness
I feel over losing you to Death.

The waves of the sea are ever
changing, but there's always
the one that yanks you under
crushes you flat, like an avalanche.

The heaviness of water is forgotten
except by those most often
immersed in it, its power enough
to terrify them their whole lives.

Those buried in dirt or ash bury likewise
in memories and grief the people
who loved them most but not best,
regret a most effective thorn.

I can't think of you even now
being weighed down by anything
here you left behind, and if joy
is so easily found over there, stay.

Jim Murdoch 2 poems

Wordless

I am hungry.

I am not hungry
but I don't have a

word for what I am.
Hunger is the best fit

and so hunger will do. I
eat because that's what you

do when you are hungry
Yet I'm still empty.

I am not empty.
I don't have a word

for what I am.

Body of Work

This is a naked poem
so try not to stare.

There are no meanings
for the words to hide behind.

Just let your eye brush
over them and don't ogle;
I know that it's hard.

You can't touch them and
they're not allowed to touch you.

Think of it as art

Ed Ahern 1 poem

The Missings

The disappearing is gentle, at first.
A forgotten name, a missed appointment,
then a trickle of problems about focus.
But the core, the essence holds true.

The erosion feeds on itself, cutting away
remembered passwords and directions
and backfilling with panic and fear,
but the love, the caring stays firm

Sentences are filled with silences
echoing with the lost names of things.
Days are squandered on chores done badly,
but the intentions, if anything, are purer.

We live for now, for we know
that tomorrow will be less
and tomorrows will be fewer,
but hold each other more tightly

John Johnson 1 poem

Of Daughters and Elephants, Chiang Rai, Thailand

If the phone
rings at four a.m. and if your teen daughter
is traveling in Thailand and if you had never flown on an airplane when you were
seventeen never mind traveled abroad in Asia and if you were already nervous about this
whole expedition and now if you are certain that something must be wrong and if you hear your
wife say "are you ok?" as you try to interpret the half of the conversation that you can hear
and if you piece together that there was an "incident" with an elephant and if you know
they are gentle sometimes they can get spooked and if her elephant got scared
while she was riding him and if she went down in a big thump when
he threw her off his back and if you accept that as a parent that
to honor your child she must see the world and if

the	doctor says that	she
is	going to be	ok
just	a bit sore	in
this	morning	so
a	little that is left	to
do	tonight	to

is to roll
over and
go back
to sleep
wonder
ing if
this is
what it
means
to do
your job
as a
Dad

Trish Hopkins 2 poems

Couples Therapy: Duncan Yo-yo Speaks to its String

I love how you twist and twirl
me with intention. I've learned

to hold on with every spin
to not entangle you

with flips and loops that turn
to knots, making it impossible

to ride the elevator
or walk the dog. It's true

sometimes you move so quick
I can't balance

as you wrap 'round me recklessly.

I tell myself it's the quality

of the cotton—the way you're made
—threads doubled over and wound tight.

I know this love can't be healthy.

But if I let go, you'll curl

into a jumble of useless strands.

And me? Flat as a plastic plate or a coin

rattling out of a spin

to a sudden, shuddering stop.

Scale of Life

I'm here for you every morning.

Yet, you glare down at me

with contempt, curse me, even worse

sometimes ignore me for months.

Still, I support you when you step up

onto me, your toes curling as if

some slight impact might change

the digital results.

I wonder if you read my instructions?

There's more I can do for you . . .

measure the mass—both bone and muscle,

remind you of your humanity

your ability to lift each foot.

If you give me your feet bare

I can measure your contents

assign numerical amounts

to your softness—the blood and cells
that curve you into living.

I only want to remind you
how much I love every part—

the formed and solid, the fluid and supple
but mostly, the three pounds of brain

the eleven ounces of drumming heart.

Yash Seyedbagheri 2 poems

Shame

we hunch over oak tables that smell of Camels and stale feet
jukeboxes play two chords, *death, divorce, death, divorce*
our heads sink into Coors-filled dreams
at 1:30 pm or at Miller time
Fat Tire's out of our reach
while time waits for us in a black truck with a broken ATV on the roof
drumming with impatience and

we slumber without judgment
this is our tribe
shame is a forbidden word; awake, we talk of homes that never were
downsized cabins, trailers with beaten-up roofs
and we cuss our sons and daughters who call us cocksucking motherfuckers,
cavemen, fossils, antiques at their most generous
they can't even slip in an I-love-you, a sir, a murmured Papa or Daddy,
soft with smiles, sweat, and hugs

we talk of wanting to be country singers, construction barons, even kings
confess and grunt, nod,
until words dry up
we dream away, no boss telling us to hurry the drywall, pick up the pace
build that new McMansion pronto. if we lose a toe, a hand,
a whole foot, or even an eye or two
we can be replaced like an Amazon order
by younger grunts working for less and kissing more ass

a toe is an inconvenience, but profit is forever

Monocle Man

the monocle man
stares at me with his pince-nez
over the cacophony of yellow cabs
and the peeling permutations of church bells and Wall Street clickety-clack footsteps
and he pronounces me----a philistine, per his favorite author Nabokov
you are a philistine, he pronounces, who still writes poems about the moon
and dusk's lavender shadows
the world wants fantastic malcontents, he says in a mid-Atlantic accent, written in
special New Yorker font
Irvin, naturally, and Adobe Caselon Pro, with just enough curve showing.

but I can only say

give me the moon
luminous under lush lavender skies
even while body parts and clapping herds atrophy or shrivel, if you will in common
parlance
in the stillness of winter
you are jesting, he ejaculates and exclaims and utters with suddenness,
no, sir, give me the long shadows spilling over country roads, I say (for there is no
need for ejaculating or exclamation)
the sight of trucks ambling with no particular place to go
at 15 miles per hour. Monocle man, I tell you, give me a friendly wave, a flesh-worn
smile
a store that closes at five pm, the smell of cigarettes, tar, the warm dirt on your feet
a nickname, a dreamscape of stars, mixed with a side of The Eagles beneath the
Ponderosas

and give me the moon----half, full, in between it all

Carolyn Adams 1 poem

Forecast

I've started to think in weather,
to measure time that way.

I don't know what you're saying
if you don't tell me
it's raining,
or there's snow coming,
or give me the percentage
of sunshine to expect.

My friends tell me
the frost is gone in Galway.
Late-winter
is moving through.

These and other forecasts,
accumulate
all the news I need.

Snow has softened
everything
in Santa Fe.
Cold ventures
in from the wilderness.

Gusts roll in the Cascades,
transient clouds obscure
the summit of Mt. Hood.

Rain is expected in Borneo.
A heat wave in Sydney.
Extremes mark every hour.

Hello and goodbye
are steeped in tempests.

George Freek 2 poems

I STARE INO THE DARKNESS (After Mei Yao Chen)

This fact is understood.
When we're dead,
we're dead for good.
Another day disappears,
blown away by a sultry wind.
Like a dramatic curtain,
darkness descends with its
nightly cast of creatures.
I stare at the moon.
It knows no one.
Stars have closed eyes.
They barely light the sky.
My wife was once here.
Now she is gone.
I am only sixty.
But I wonder why
I've been here so long.

I SIT IN MY GARDEN (After Tu Fu)

I watch the moon unravel
until it becomes a long
silver thread, which glows
like a spider's web.

I'm sure the stars
stretch to infinity.

But the sky is a place
I'll never know.

I only know life
as it appears to me.

My face in the mirror
grows older by the day.

I once wanted good looks.

It's too late for me.

I'm fifty-three. Now
when I pray,

I pray for sagacity.

Kierstin B Bridger 3 poems

Me too, Sweet Aunt Suze

“after such a one takes no more food or drink, only bathing and eating a little honey, till after a month his excreta are nothing but honey; then death ensues.”

[*Bencao Gangmu*](#) (section 52, "[Man as medicine](#)")

They say a mellefied man becomes a confection
a macerated body dripping in honey
entombed for a century
in a stone coffin of bee business,
inscribed with the year and month of his burial.

My aunt is not some cloying, mellified sacrifice
but I tell you she is eating very little,
picking at cornbread, a crumb or two of a crouton
she is unpacking packed boxes, accumulating 2-4-1 shampoos,
she is gripping chip bags and rolling them tight
reaching in hutches, fingering all the patterns of china
she makes laps around her long, harvest-gold house.

After a hundred years will my aunt's ashes
be used for science, as treatment of wounds,
fractures of the body and limbs?
As for now, she misses the buzz, sips at her coffee mug,
blowing luke-warm dregs as though they were hot.
She is pantomiming the daily tasks of being alive,
while the names of actors slip down the tube.

Aunt Suze is drinking in the Kansas sun
she is becoming more and more the day
sinking into her collections, the groceries and the photo albums
the plastic toy detritus of moldering happy meals.
Her sarcophagus is in the making:
banker's boxes and gift wrap, cans of expired stew.

My aunt's body is shrinking, her proud cheekbone
inches ever closer to rupture her thin, spider-veined skin.
They say we are made of stardust.
Will our progeny peer someday into a microscope?
In a slide of her ashes, will they see nebula
or the rainbow slur of sugar-milk Lucky Charms?

My DNA report says I too, have inherited a gene
predisposing me to late-onset Alzheimer's disease.

After ingesting my fate, I am chewing on New York Times
pangrams to sharpen my mind, thinking of avoiding toxic fumes
I am trying not to shit myself with the news.

Flight from LA

In the reflection of my pilot's eye: the night's
sirens spin and the yellow of police tape crackles
--shots fired inside our hotel.

We wait outside a mid-rise chain called Dreams
cluster in knots to re-enter, to recover our effects
while whispers of a robbery gone wrong
white sneakers sticky with blood,
and the smoke of trigger fingers
smolder and curl under the huddle of our fear.

We are specks in the eye of a gathering storm
as these drills and flight patterns begin to play.
In the back of my pilots' eye: long ago
emergency landings and red-eyed mornings.
I remember how again and again we find escape.
I saw a way-out years ago, out of the nickering

nightmare, the dirt devil of poverty
and the workaday violence, because
in the meadow of his gaze it all fell away.
Naked in a neighboring hotel we reinvent safety
no baggage, borrowed toothbrushes and paste packets
close your eyes, I say, remember the sage inside us.

Dear pilot, fly us home to white fir forest,
to fires contained in secured boxes-
there will always be bandits and desperados
burning down the trail. Let us dream
of unrestricted air space. Tonight we are
jet-maned mustangs storming the open plain.

Florescence and Plume

Dear bow hunters, I tuck a florescent orange vest
in my back pocket to warn you I am not your prey
a signal I am not the target of your desire.

Unlikely flowers, you, gathered there in the brush,
you lot in your bright caps and smudged cheeks, you
with your feather-flourished quiver of deadly sport,

your wrists are swabbed in the perfume of doe estrus
the scented urine, the liquid vessel of your brand.
You radiate seductive hints from her tarsal gland.

I am in florescence too,
I bloom on these meandering hillocks
these autumn meadows of scrolling leaves.

My plume is digital. This active mediation —step after step—
makes words erupt like petals from my mind.
I speak stories into the device in my hand,

stumbling, staring. Spoken word
set to hiking rhythm. Whistle you, sink into this soil,
this terra firma, into a wilderness tempo that lures us both.

You with your practice, your craft of reading the wind,
your slow movement, your deep patience and skill.
Squinting like an ox-eye daisy,

you, let soar the arrow that will pierce my friend the buck.
Just last summer he was in velvet, his antlers akin to
a toddler showing his age not in plump fingers but crown.

Who am I to talk like this? Me and my vine of vocabulary,
excess thought and pulsing white page? We all hunger.
Me, a perennial carnivore, prowling the inky trail for sweet balm,

the sizzle of fat, the promise of meat. I cannot propagate
without this wildness and you cannot harvest
without your artful knowledge

of field dress, your seasonal glow.
We are alike you and I who crave the hunt,
the clearing of held breath.

Charlie Brice 1 poem

Your Hand

Your fingers brought my flesh alive.

Now, even gnarled,
they sing to me.

You took my hand, led the way for me.

I could only find myself
through you.

Your touch placed me in Xanadu where,
in quiet ecstasy, I became a cloud,
a star, a figment of sun.

You touched my scars, the caesura that
could have put an end to me,
and mended my fragile places.

You have carried me for so long,
cupped me in your palm,
handed the years to me.

With a flick of your hand,

you wave me away. You never

understood you were my life.

Cat Dixon 1 poem

Mulholland Drive

Quiet. What else is there to say?
Use the margins of the page to
ask your questions. Use the shoulder to
camp by the side of the road. Lights off.
Keep all the doors locked. Be still
even though the tow truck brakes,
ready to drag you to the next junction.
Stop asking how much it will cost.
Make yourself useful tonight—
count the stars, cars, erased words
quaking on the page, bumper stickers on that
ugly Mazda you follow to the ocean.
Ask the driver if you can borrow his
cell phone. All the questions you
kept hidden emerge like worms after a rain.

Jeremy Nathan Marks 3 poems

Hen

A hen is a bird who dies every day
most people know but her breast

Her feathers could lay like salt over soil
the way wild turkey wings sprinkle the dust

Dogs sweat with their tongues and bees
sip from leaves but a hen's blood is as red

As Mars whose beak of hunger
whose gizzard of thirst
walks past the moon
pecking at the wrung neck of Earth
a flightless spirit

A font of astronauts

And tycoons who've never seen
themselves as hen's kin
her witness falling beyond
their ken.

Bird of Aplomb

On a defense budget
the Bird of Aplomb
is the H bomb

Here in my little haven
that Bird is Raven
perched on a walnut

An old woman below
says go away *Crow*
but Raven will not be mistaken
for her cross-eyed cousin

She sees the world entire
while Crow relies on one eye
followed by another

So Raven shakes her tree
thunk thunk thunk
nuts fall kerplunk
causing the woman to flee

Each day is a collision
even in places where feathers
rather than weapons
rule the roost

Fruit tastes like fire
there is thunder in the dew.

Finger speech

My fingers found an aperture
in the lake and where soil speaks
stinking at winter's end its words
are wet

Now my fingers speak
Pollywog and Spatterdock
Mayfly and several Lily
dialects

(Night and day varieties)

My wife insists
my fingerprints
stride across faucets
leaks and eaves with an ease
known to certain species
of water beetles

But what I love
about my digits
is how their words
are corms
worms stirred by warmth

You should see my water bill this month.

Ellen Reynard 1 poem

La Belle Dame Sans Merci

The lover's landscape can be
harsh and unforgiving,
littered with sharp rocks
obstructed by unscalable heights.

But he forges ahead
begging for the ungiveable,
pleading for the impossible,
demeaning himself in his anguish
to the lady who laughs in scorn.

Barbs pierce his heart,
cruel laughter and un pitying disdain
punctuate the lady's words of refusal.

The lover sinks deep into dejection,
turns his back on the lady and trudges
ahead toward the black sky of death.

The lady returns to the dance,
laughing as she snares a newly
besotted lover in her net.

The mournful poet dips pen to ink
and fashions rhymes to lament
the spurned lover of the beautiful
lady with no mercy.



Homage to la Belle Dame sans Merci, by Paul Reynard, 1986. Acrylic on canvas

Antonis Balasopoulos 2 poems

The Raven

The raven is a kind of parody;
a winged vandalism
at the expense of the letter.
Because, though we were created
in the image of a face,
we have fallen into the similitude
of a sign worn thin
by interpretations.
And so, we would have liked
to be shiny and black
and cacophonous
and to leave the traces of rakes
on the snow-covered earth.
This is what the crow is for us:
A “nevermore” darker
than the parrot’s and more decisive
than the sweet loquacity of the nightingale
a mirror we break
intentionally, despite the seven
years of bad luck. As to
what we ourselves are for the raven
I don’t know. Ask

the wires and ask the grain fields
that have gone yellow with madness
and get away, get away from
this poem.

The Birth of History in Herodotus

Onesilus taught me two things
about the nature of history: the first is a buzz,
like that between stations in A.M radio—
cries, threnodies, words
from which the articulation is missing.
The second is a bitter aftertaste in honey,
the thought, in other words, mechanically
deposited by bees as they labour
in the empty skull.
“I was aware”, this thought says,
filling the hall of the cranium
with a voice in Minor key,
“but I didn’t really know.
I looked but did not see.
And I was born too late
too late from the start.”

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

Anna Papadopoulos has been a cashier, columnist, wedding photographer, Chandler, marketing professor and corporate executive. She adores New York City's gritty beaches and littered streets and even though she knows the odds of winning the lotto are impossible, she believes that it will happen. She and her husband share their home in Staten Island, NY with their twin sons, daughter, a poodle, a Siberian cat and her mother's neglected Lenox collection.

Lindsay McLeod trips over the offing every morning. He has started messing about with words again lately. You might think he would know better by now, but oh no. His writing can most recently be found in *THIRTY WEST*, *DILLYDOWN REVIEW*, *GRAND LIL THINGS*, *DRAWN TO THE LIGHT* and *MORTALMAG*.

Barbara Tylor has been shortlisted for the 2021 *Fish Anthology* Poetry Prize and published in the online journal *Golden Walkman Magazine*. Please visit her website for more examples of her writing (and visual art)
<https://www.btylerfineart.com/poetry-1>.

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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 and 2021," published by Sweetycat Press. She is the author of 14 poetry books. She lives in Delaware, USA. She loves gardening and cooking. Chris lives with her husband and four cats. Her most recent credits are: Sparks of Calliope; The Closed Eye Open, Poetic Sun, Tangled Locks Journal, Wild Roof Journal, The American Writers Review, The Scribe Magazine, The Phoenix, Burningword Literary Journal, Muddy River Poetry Review, The Silver Blade, Pomona Valley Review, West Texas Literary Review, The Hungry Chimera, Sheila-Na-Gig, Fourth & Sycamore.

Patrice M. Wilson has lived in NC, CT, MD, DC, VA, and HI, where she now resides in Mililani on Oahu. She has one full-length poetry collection with eLectio Publishing and three chapbooks with Finishing Line Press. Her poems have been published in various journals. She has been an English professor and editor of the literary magazine at Hawaii Pacific University.

Carl Scharwath, has appeared globally with 170+ journals selecting his poetry, prose, interviews, essays, plays or art. Two poetry books *Journey to Become Forgotten* (Kind of a Hurricane Press) and *Abandoned* (Scars Tv) have been published. His new book “The Playground of Destiny” (Impspired Press) features prose, poems, and photography. His first photography book was published by Praxis in Africa. His photography was also exhibited in the Mount Dora and Leesburg Center for The Arts galleries. Carl is the art editor for Minute Magazine (USA.), a competitive runner, and a 2nd degree black- belt in Taekwondo. Carl was recently nominated for Best of the Net 2021 award.

Maryam El-Shall teaches writing and lives in Florida. Her poems have been published in a variety of online journals, including *A Beautiful Space* and *Verse Virtual*, and print texts--*Line Rider Press* and *The Commons*. Her first short story has been published in the third volume of *Writer Shed Stories*.

Oisín Breen is a poet, part-time academic in narratological complexity, and financial journalist. Dublin born, Breen’s widely reviewed debut collection, ‘Flowers, all sorts in blossom, figs, berries, and fruits, forgotten’ was released Mar. 2020. Breen has been published in a number of journals, including About Place, the Blue Nib, Books Ireland, the Seattle Star, Modern Literature, La Piccioletta Barca, the Bosphorus Review of Books, the Kleksograph, In Parentheses, the Madrigal, and Dreich magazine.

Marianne Hales Harding is a poet, essayist, and playwright from Utah. She has been published in *Dialogue*, *Segullah*, *The Hong Kong Review*, and *Helicon West*. She is honored to influence writers at Brigham Young University and Western Governors University and co-founded Provo Poetry and Speak For Yourself open mic.

Gregg Shapiro is the author of seven books including the expanded edition of his short story collection *How to Whistle* (Rattling Good Yarns Press, 2021). Recent/forthcoming lit-mag publications include *Exquisite Pandemic*, *RFD*, *Gargoyle*, *Limp Wrist*, *Mollyhouse*, *Impossible Archetype*, *Red Fern Review*, and *Dissonance Magazine*, as well as the anthologies *Moving Images: Poems Inspired by Film* (Before Your Quiet Eyes Publishing, 2021), *This Is What America Looks Like* (Washington Writers’ Publishing House, 2021) and *Sweeter Voices Still: An LGBTQ Anthology From Middle America* (Belt Publishing, 2021). An

entertainment journalist, whose interviews and reviews run in a variety of regional LGBTQ+ and mainstream publications and websites, Shapiro lives in Fort Lauderdale, Florida with his husband Rick and their dog Coco.

Ben Nardolilli currently lives in New York City. His work has appeared in Perigee Magazine, Red Fez, Danse Macabre, The 22 Magazine, Quail Bell Magazine, Elimae, The Northampton Review, Local Train Magazine, The Minetta Review, and Yes Poetry. He blogs at mirrorsponge.blogspot.com and is trying to publish his novels.

Grove Koger is the author of *When the Going Was Good: A Guide to the 99 Best Narratives of Travel, Exploration, and Adventure*, Assistant Editor of *Deus Loci: The Lawrence Durrell Journal*, and former Assistant Editor of *Art Patron* magazine.

Rod Drought moved to Arizona from South Salem, New York on a snowy New Year's Day in 1995. His poetry often reflects the two states as well as other parts of the United States. He has four books of poems which can be found on Amazon.com and his website: droughtsthirst.com. Drought has been published in numerous poetry journals and is co-administrator of the Facebook page: Port of Call Poetry, an online forum for poets around the world. He is a brother, father, grandfather, and avid New York Yankee fan.

Rose Mary Boehm is a German-born British national living and writing in Lima, Peru. Her poetry has been published widely in mostly US poetry reviews (online and print). She was twice nominated for a Pushcart. Her fifth poetry collection, *DO OCEANS HAVE UNDERWATER BORDERS*, has just been snapped up by Kelsay Books for publication May/June 2022. Her website: <https://www.rose-mary-boehm-poet.com/>

Vivien Jones: She has two poetry collections and two short story collections in print, numerous inclusions in national and international anthologies, and has had work broadcast on Radio Scotland and Radio 4. She is one of three editors of *Southlight* literary magazine. She also writes award winning plays and short stories. She lives on the north (Scottish) shore of the Solway Estuary.. www.vivienjones.info

Ed Krizek holds a BA and MS from University of Pennsylvania, and an MBA and MPH from Columbia University. For over twenty years Ed has been studying and writing poetry. He is the author of six books of poetry: *Threshold*, *Longwood Poems*, *What Lies Ahead*, *Swimming With Words*, *The Pure Land*, and *This Will Pass All* are available on Amazon.com. Ed writes for the reader who is not necessarily an initiate into the poetry community. He likes to connect with his readers on a personal level.

Carol Edwards is a northern California native transplanted to southern Arizona. She lives and works in relative seclusion with her books, plants, and pets (+ husband). She enjoys a coffee addiction and raising a succulent army. Her work has recently appeared in *Open Skies Quarterly*. Follow her on Instagram @practicallypoetical.

Jim Murdoch has been writing poetry for fifty years and has graced the pages of many now-defunct literary magazines and websites and a few, like *Ink*, *Sweat and Tears*, *The Lake* and *Eclectica*, that are still hanging on in there. For ten years he ran the literary blog *The Truth About Lies* but now lives in relative obscurity in Scotland with his wife and (occasionally) next door's cat. He has published two books of poetry, a short story collection and four novels.

Ed Ahern resumed writing after forty odd years in foreign intelligence and international sales. He's had over three hundred stories and poems published so far, and six books. Ed works the other side of writing at Bewildering Stories, where he sits on the review board and manages a posse of nine review editors.

<https://www.twitter.com/bottomstripper>

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Trish Hopkinson is a poet and advocate for the literary arts. You can find her online at SelfishPoet.com and provisionally in Colorado, where she runs the regional group Rock Canyon Poets. Hopkinson happily answers to atheist, feminist, and empty nester; and enjoys traveling, live music, wine-tasting, and craft beer.

Yash Seyedbagheri is a graduate of Colorado State University's MFA fiction program. His stories, "Soon," "How To Be A Good Episcopalian," and "Tales From A Communion Line," were nominated for Pushcarts. Yash's work has been published in *SmokeLong Quarterly*, *The Journal of Compressed Creative Arts*, and *Ariel Chart*, among others.

Carolyn Adams' poetry and art have appeared in *Steam Ticket*, *Cimarron Review*, *Subjectiv*, *Dissident Voice*, and *Blueline Magazine*, among others. She is the author of four chapbooks, and a full-length volume is forthcoming from Fernwood Press. She has been nominated for Best of the Net in 2017 and 2021, as well as for a Pushcart prize.

George Freek is a poet/essaywright living in Illinois. His poems have recently appeared in "The Stockholm Review of Literature"; "Dreich Poetry"; "A New Ulster"; and "The Gentian Journal." His plays are published by *Playscripts*; *Blue Moon Plays*; and *Off The Wall Plays*.

Kierstin Bridger is a Colorado writer. She has authored two books, **All Ember** (Urban Farmhouse Press) and **Demimonde** (Lithic Press), which won the Women Writing The West's 2017 WILLA Award for poetry. Find her work at *Swim*, *Raleigh Review*, *Painted Bride Quarterly*, *December*, *Prairie Schooner* and *New York Quarterly*. kierstinbridger.com

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

Cat Dixon is a Pushcart Prize and Best of the Net nominee. She is the author of *Eva* and *Too Heavy to Carry* (Stephen F. Austin University Press, 2016, 2014) and the chapbook, *Table for Two* (Poet's Haven, 2019). Recent work published in *Sledgehammer Lit* and *Whale Road Review*. She is a poetry editor at *The Good Life Review*. Twitter: [@DixonCat](https://twitter.com/DixonCat)

Jeremy Nathan Marks lives in Canada. New and recent work appear/will appear in places like *The Wondrous Real*, *Expanded Field*, *Eastern Iowa Review*, *Microfiction*

Mondays, 365 Tomorrows, Ginosko Literary Journal, and Garfield Lake Review. His full length poetry collection, *Of Fat Dogs & Amorous Insects* is published by Alien Buddha Press (2021).

Ellen Dooling Reynard spent her childhood on a cattle ranch in Jackson, Montana. A one-time editor of *Parabola Magazine*, her poetry has been published by *Lighten Up On Line*, *The Writer's Club*, *Persimmon Tree*, *The Ekphrastic Review*, *Silver Blade*, *Poetica Review*, *Muddy River Poetry Review*, and her chapbook, *No Batteries Required*, by *Yellow Arrow Press*.

Antonis Balasopoulos lives in Cyprus. His poetry and short fiction have appeared in printed and electronic reviews in Cyprus, Greece and the UK. He has published three poetry collections (*Multiplicities of Zero*, *White on White*, *The Book of Creatures*) and a book of short stories (*The Cube and Other Stories*).

Mark A. Murphy is a low income, neurodivergent, queer poet, living with GAD, schizoaffective disorder, and OCD. He has poems forthcoming in *Cultural Weekly* and *Acumen*. He has published seven books of poetry to date, including, 'Tin Cat Alley & Other Poems: Not to be Reproduced' by Venetian Spider Press, 2021.

I have always thought that poetry can change lives, and still do. I believe artists have a responsibility to step up to the mark, and say the things, others, perhaps less privileged, would like to, or are unable to say. If humanity is to survive the current and impending ecological disaster beyond the next few generations, we must learn new ways to live together.

Mission Statement/Editor's Note

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

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

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

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

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

Submissions and Guidelines

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

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

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

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

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

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

Response to submissions, from 1 week to 3 months.

