

POETiCA REViEW Issue 1

Ibrahim Honjo 1 poem

THE STONE

They never asked me
For my name
They wanted my identity card
Or its number

I did not have one

I said Stone

They laughed
Asked me where I was from

From the stone - I said

They asked for my age

Twenty pebbles – I answered
And showed them gray spotted pebbles

They are opening their hearts to me
I am closing the doorway on the invisible wall
Which divides us
And I am going away

Ibrahim Honjo is a poet-writer, sculptor, painter, photographer, former journalist and property manager who write in his native language and in English. His work has appeared in many magazines, newspapers, and on radio stations in Yugoslavia, Canada and US. He is the author of 29 published books and 2 books with another authors. His work is represented in more than 30 anthologies. His poetry has been translated into: Italian, Korean, Spanish, Bahasa (Malaysia), Mongolian, Slovenian and German. He received several poetry awards.

Angela M. Carter 2 poems

To Tell the Secret

Why hadn't *this* come *first*, to teach me?

It was the second time I'd been hurt, simply

from being in the wrong place at the wrong time.
When it feared my hand, the Honey Bee knew what it had to do;
I've always admired its decisiveness.

A hurting human stings themselves,
stays with what harms, beyond memory.
I daydream of a sting only allowed to touch those it should.

A hurting human is forced to carry tainted pollen.
This pollen--on my feet, in my hair, stamped into the future;
only dead flowers would dare take it.

I imagine the elation of that bee's abdomen, as it presses into skin,
how in that moment, in all its pride--
oh, *the fire, the fire!*

Did it die pleased,
in the same way I am when I tell the secret
(gifted untouched pollen,
with the need to sting never known)?

THE HOUR, LAST SEEN

I am a replica of broken stars tonight.
Thoughts of you have burned out into their final evening:
I added skin onto you,
tripled your bones,
gave deeper rhythm to your heart, it
didn't request or
deserve.

I arrived with intentions--
how wrong of me,
to whisper my longings into life's ear,
to tell it when to wake
(when to wake another)
within its own
mastery.

I begged you were a friend of the stars
the same constellations I'd lifted my chin to as a child,
and that you knew secrets of me I'd
yet to tell myself,
but the secret is
that secrets are what they've done, not what they didn't say.

The reverie is dimming, dimming,
shooting into a thinning dust along the nightfall--

departed.

Angela M. Carter is an author, poet, novelist, motivational speaker, spoken word performer, visual artist and an advocate/activist. *Memory Chose a Woman's Body* (unbound CONTENT, 2014) is a poetry memoir, which spotlights the effects of the silences endured after abuse, neglect, and depression. Angela is a 2014 Pushcart Prize nominee, nominee for the 2015 Virginia Library Literary Award (poetry), and has been featured in a multitude of venues, including The KGB Club in Manhattan and Busboys and Poets in Washington DC.

Bruce McRae 1 poem

To Rest Softly

Never wake a sleepwalker,
my parents warned me,
their eyes clenched like fists,
like blackout drapes drawn in the Blitz.
Their eyes closed like mouths
of condemned prisoners.
Their eyes shut like locked doors,
doors into rooms you've never been,
their unspeakable secrets guarded.

My poor parents, always tired.
Who claimed a dreamless sleep
was all they ever imagined.
Who woke footsore and weary,
the coming of night their flag and anthem.

Bruce McRae, a Canadian musician currently residing on Salt Spring Island BC, is a multiple Pushcart nominee with over 1,400 poems published internationally in 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).

Howie Good 2 poems

Safety Instructions for the Twenty-First Century

You probably won't look like the real you. Stay calm when you come upon it. Face it and stand upright. Speak firmly to it. Do what you can to appear larger – raise your arms or open your jacket if you're wearing one. You want to convince it

you aren't prey and may, in fact, be a danger to it. Give it a way to escape, but if it attacks, don't panic and run. People have fought it with rocks, sticks, caps or jackets, garden tools, and their bare hands. So remain standing or at least try to get back up.

Ashes Have No Memory

The man crossing the street carries a ruler in his pocket to measure the passing of time. He has nice clothes, gold chains. But even so, he may be in trouble, may be on the run, may have no future in Lithuania. All he can see is eyes. He tried to lock up time in the eyes of lovers. "It has to look easy," he said. "That feeling like it just happened." He and I lead parallel lives, one a collaborator, the other a resister, two ghosts discussing invisibility in front of a mirror, a pretty crappy way to die.

Howie Good is on the pavement, thinking about the government.

Kevin Higgins 2 poems

Prayer To The Absolute Dark

Forget, if you can,
most ungracious mind of burning hydrogen
never has it been known
that anyone who sought refuge in you,
implored your help down the telephone
you never answer,
or by pleading letter
sought your intervention
was ever aided.
Inspired by this matchless absenteeism,
I soar into your blackness.
Oh great impure one,
your mouth empty even of curses
before you I cower,
shamefaced and ragged
child of yours;
Mother, Father gas
made flesh,
despise my petitions,
as they should be
despised. In your
inclemency ignore
and answer me with
silent hymns
to the bacteria that must

victoriously consume
even the firmest, most perfect
belly.

The Great News

after Eugenio Montale & Karl Marx

So many mornings I woke hoping
to find you there
and when there was no sign
how many times
I clicked on that brown clock-radio
praying to hear tell of you.
The blood rising at every fuzzy mention
of your name. The thought of you
strutting into town to clean
things up with your Guillotine
wiped away crazy aunts
shouting my name over the fence,
the bastards in my Latin class,
and the girls who kept saying nyet.
So many moments you seemed about
to emerge from the crowd:
Father Burke Park, Chinatown, Trafalgar Square.
But you kept not quite making it.

In the finish I had to sit
at the desk I could by then
afford to buy myself
and sign the decree banning
utterance of your name.

Now, thirty years late
you and your shadow opposite
are both everywhere
abolishing the colour grey,
swaggering off trains,
climbing out of computers
and television sets
wearing masks I recognise.
Now to rummage in the closet
under the stairs and see where mine got to;
make it fit an altogether
fatter head than it was intended for.

Kevin Higgins was described in [The Stinging Fly](#) magazine as "[likely the most read living poet in Ireland](#)". His poems have been quoted in *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Times* (UK), *The Independent*, *The Daily Mirror*, *Hot Press* magazine, on *Tonight With Vincent Browne* and read aloud by film director [Ken Loach](#) at a political meeting in London. Kevin's eighth poetry collection, *Sex and Death at Merlin Park Hospital*, will be published by Salmon Poetry in June.

Psycho Kanev 2 poems

Every Day

All night the branches outside
are lonely without crows
moonlit patches of idle grass
blanket the earth
someone drinking a cup of tea
delicately lifting his pinky
without even thinking about
death.

Every day is the same
the dreams come and go
just like the curtains breath in and out
in the nights of our hazy lovemaking.

The Arrival of Spring

The river will come harsh on us, ready even to break eggs.

And the darkest white will melt again.

The dogs begin to bark to the shrinking moon.

Love me or hate me wherever you are; in the basement or in the sky.

All peasants prepare their torches and rusty pitchforks.

But you are still sleeping under the rising yolk of freedom.

Psycho Kanev is the author of 4 poetry collections and three chapbooks, published in the USA and Europe. His poems have appeared in many literary magazines, such as: *Rattle*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *Evergreen Review*, *Front Porch Review*, *Hawaii Review*, *Barrow Street*, *Sheepshead Review*, *Off the Coast*, *The Adirondack Review*, *Sierra Nevada Review*, *The*

Cleveland Review and many others. His new chapbook titled Under Half-Empty Heaven was published in 2018 by Grey Book Press.

James Walton 2 poems

Twelve megawatts to evening

a fox so cruel
in its beautiful unmercy
where black swans
trawl beyond mine shaft warnings
a mob of grey roos
languid as a marinade
scratch at rear thighs
old gardeners resting
on a cushioning rake
the wind turbines
obelisks in need of a Pharaoh
sift the sky for a language
only written in stone
at the end of the trail
all this thirsting water
the hospital air ambulance
skims a stitching reverberation
on the mid-winter tide
this is a place to lie down
between shaking centuries
let something run away with me
into a chiaroscuro frame

I will be your open city

a hail ashore
not a mirage of inklings
a gate always open

beneath a white pennant
surrender yourself
here the fountain knows no age

sit down by the brickwork
later I will bring out a towel
wipe away these days

I'll read your quiet palm
trace the drifting lines back
find your watermark at source

write your name by dipped finger
see how it shines then departs
from these momentary lapses

how soon the sun and moon merge
in an overlapping circumference
another day of lives waits

outside of forgotten sanctuary
above its wing beat compass
a kestrel squawks of wandering

remember the smell of bread
the tired tread to be ahead
of too many willing souls

soon a dark regretfulness
will slow to the fall of a leaf
each side in equal shadow

there are no answers
there are no secrets
we are all a passage here

James Walton was a librarian, a farm labourer, a cattle breeder, and mostly a public sector union official. He is published in many anthologies, journals, and newspapers. He has been shortlisted for the ACU National Literature Prize, the MPU International Prize, and the James Tate Prize. His poetry collections include *The Leviathan's Apprentice*, *Walking Through Fences*, and *Unstill Mosaics* (forthcoming). He is now old enough to be almost invisible. He lives in Australia.

Vivian Wagner 3 poems

Seussian

I walked through the
woods this morning
and saw not the Lorax
but ground made of
diamondfrost, two
cardinals darting
through branches,
deer tracks, frozen.
And I realized all of
these were him,
speaking in slow motion,
pleading to be saved.

Gravity

The cemetery out my
window is steady,
not unchanging, exactly,
but not moving as quickly
as the coal trucks passing
on the road between us.
We all need a cemetery to
gaze upon, the gray
stones reminding us of
the joy to be found in fealty,
the stillness giving us pause.

Staying Put

I'd like to travel
through time right
at this point,
this place I sit,
back through seas
and dinosaur lairs,
around ancient villages
and smoking camp fires.
And I'd love to
spend a few
fallen moments

exploring the
apple orchard that
was my backyard.

Vivian Wagner lives in New Concord, Ohio, where she's an associate professor of English at Muskingum University. She's the author of a memoir, *Fiddle: One Woman, Four Strings, and 8,000 Miles of Music* (Citadel-Kensington); a full-length poetry collection, *Raising* (Clare Songbirds Publishing House); and three chapbooks, *The Village* (Aldrich Press-Kelsay Books), *Making* (Origami Poems Project), and *Curiosities* (Unsolicited Press). Visit her website at www.vivianwagner.net.

Laurie Byro

Shadows

I sit in thy shadow but not alone. Elizabeth Siddal

In my other life, I am the painter and not the model. I am not draped
in weeds with a crown of clover, there is no romance in frogs or fish,

no beauty in freezing on a bed of stones and snails. The men
who create know God. In my other life, I know the love of a few good

women. I chortle sonnets as easy as I guzzle porridge. No lectures of
“Eat, you are too skinny, remember if i must I can paint your body thin.”

It is my face they wanted, they want. Sad that beauty weeps kingdoms
from my own eyes. I will admit I pinched this life from the street like Gabriel

clasped a phrase to his bosom. But you will have the truth,
my pleasure is no match for them. Night after night, my lover cloaks

me in a gauzy-grey gown of mist, am I not beautiful when you know me
like this? I grow cold and ugly in this Hamlet bath water. I am more than

the dripping paint off a stiff bristle brush. Night after night, I dream
of my other life as a mother. This child sleeps inside me and together we

float as on lilies towards the smooth stones of the river. No, I see
they are white stars peering at us through the dark eyes of God.

Rose La Touche

You can only possess beauty through understanding it. John Ruskin

Presently, the drawing room opened, and Rosie came in. Rosie or Rose, Lily or Fawn. She was not tall, nor short. She was perfect but alas a ten year old girl. I could smell her before I saw her, the tresses on her

neck. She was Rose and I was ivy as I imagined us lying in a bed of petals. She was a Rose with no thorns, a star gazer lily and me, her new Master.

I owned her. She owned me. Living is short, remembering these moments is long. When she died horribly in love with Jesus and not me, madness turning her china blue eyes into an empty glass, I felt like a broken winged

dove, no longer afloat in her eyes. I died with her. When my pet left, my innocent fawn, my heart failed to summon a correct beat, I was pebbles

of rain pouring over barren soil. My Rose did have a thorn after all, the brutal piercing of my heart. I was forbidden marriage, and always her teacher. Rose, Rose, her curled petals closed forever to me, I swear I never touched her.

Day of the Dead

To honor him, to honor my general,
I draw a skull and crossbones
on each knee, wear my ribboned dress,
turquoise like my eyes, to the parade.

My name is Luz Corral de Villa.
My husband has been dead a long time.
He came into my mother's store
when I was sixteen and a beauty.
He demanded blankets, bags of flour.
He told my mother he would have me too,
when his revolution was over.

He kept his promise and returned,
eyes flashing fire, pockets bulging silver.
He was shy when he took down my hair,
less so when he broke me like a bottle
of his clearest tequila.
How love stings.

You will think me a romantic.
There was no time for that. I cooked
for him, I fought those who called him
bandito.

Once, a bastard patriot tried
to slit my husband's throat. It was after

a night of wild stars, too much drink.
The assassin held the same knife
held under my breast during love-play.
I took the closest pistol I could find
and shot off his left ear, half his cheek,
splattering bits of teeth.

He howled under a coyote-moon, rode
his horse clear to Texas, died (I prayed)
along the way. What good is a man
with half a face?

Children rush at me as I walk the parade,
Pick at my ribbons with their grubby fingers.
They shake gourds painted with red devils,
black cats to scare away evil.

They should not fear me,
an old woman, a heroine—
married to a hero. I am
Luz Corral de Villa.

I may no longer
smell like daffodils or wet earth.
But with my general walking beside me,
I am not quite living, not quite among
the shadows.

He lives inside me and soon when
I am no longer waking, I will join him—
to sleep inside a mercenary's mansion.

Laurie Byro has had 5 collections of poetry published, most recently *La Dogaressa* (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.

Neil Clarkson 1 poem

In the Library

(for Bruno Ganz 1948 – 2019)

I love talking to myself in libraries
where the books wait to be chosen,

talk back to me.

On pods of PC's people come to connect
to where they came from
to forget that it's cold
to rack up the numbers
for the work coach.

As I glance over a shoulder
the scrolling pauses.
I think of you in 'Wings of Desire'
your kind eyes, cool shin-length overcoat,
an angel, a cocooning Berlin ghost.

I stroll round the library talking to myself,
no lone looks up from book or screen.
I too am a ghost.
I realise that.

Neil Clarkson had his first poetry collection published by Calder Valley Poetry in February 2017, called *Build You Again from Wood*, see www.caldervalleypoetry.com His work has been published in magazines such as Pennine Platform, Honest Ulsterman and Obsessed by Pipework. He has won or been a prize-winner in competitions such as the Adoption Matters North West poetry competition and Didsbury Arts Festival competition.

Phillip O'Neil

HOSTAGE

One night I watched from your penthouse garden
The silver hairs of railway tracks
Shining like hairpins under the moon
Weaving an almanac of travellers' tales:
Drifting to fabulous Meccas
Expressing passengers to oriental bazaars
And green tea flowing from samovars
Leaving their wistful passengers dreaming
Of the ends of the earth and beyond -
Names hung with incense and coral.

In the morning I stare at the tangle of iron
Wet in drizzle and mist,
Heard local routes barked in dialect
Reducing the traffic to regular rides
Packed with commuters bound for the city
Red-eyed, hungover remains of the night

Rattled irreverently, rudely to work.
Will I have the courage to escape on the night-train,
Quit this tower, your spirit, your dreams,
Or delay my trip again?

STONE

There's horror in dem dribblin' stones
but lovers lap up
drop by drop from gargoyles
what devils do best on cathedrals
golden showerin' sweeties
buttressed in their tight gothic clinch
lickin' the spit off the god-house
built by the man who speaks stone.

Philip O'Neil is an English writer living in Prague who worked as a journalist for over two decades in various parts of the globe. His poetry has been published in *Ygdrasil*, *Wilderness House Literary Review*, *Suisun Valley Review*, *Mad Swirl* among others. His first novel 'Mental Shrapnel' is due to be published later this year.

Reuben Wolley

my desert song she sang

see

comes it a storm

flying i said

shrieking

another breath.dusk
is a wily
thing this
misfortune my lease
of sorry / a last
disable

& do you want
this shining / a strained

reflection say it's
nothing not this simple

listen

my refuge

a wind this is a wind
if ever there is

& catch
the old game can you catch
a cold laugh trembling

& let the wind bleed.i will not
cry again & not for lacking.we're
still playing cowboys & injuns
in the hurtling sand

consequences & other undesirables

empty signs wherever
a dirge

a wake

a wedding song

& how do you step
& lively / a fit
/ & figure

me this you stringless
play a sweeping run / a
slide through dumb

i hear

bluesman
blue man

crying a lyric.oh
fill a loose

dance a fool's
polka.you'll
see me bent

& withering.it is my

autumn

transfer a body
to this my own
cracked carapace
& let the gulls feed

let your numbered mass & flow

i don't speak &
so many words
they're only
accidental
descriptions / a coded
sequence /
/ all
unordered

123 see

gates

this unfound land of

stupid

secrets & try a lie a
sickly gradient my black
diana just as likely
wisdom & wrinkled aren't we all & dolls

dying on beds of paper this
world will tell & spend the wake
an older priest his dull recitals

Reuben Woolley has been published in quite a few magazines such as *Tears in the Fence*, *Lighthouse*, *The Interpreter's House*, the anthology, *The Dizziness of Freedom*, *Ink Sweat & Tears*, *Proletarian Poetry*, *And Other Poems* and *The Poet's Shed*. He has five books to his name, the latest being *some time we are heroes*, published by The Corrupt Press (2018). He has a book forthcoming, *this hall of several tortures*, to be published by Knives Forks and Spoons Press (September 2019). He edits the online magazines, *I am not a silent poet* and *The Curly Mind*.

Mark Mayes 2 poems

(Editor's note: We don't generally publish rhyme, but we have made an exception here...)

Wordless

I didn't find it in the whisky glass,
that glowing countryside of peace that stays
beyond the studied kiss, the loveless pass.
I found it in her awkwardness, her ways
of being neat, of sitting on my lap
when I would least expect, and of her back,
soft freckled, as her hands turned on the tap
in me. And now it is her girlfulness I lack.
I didn't find it in the Spanish wine
I poured into her mouth, then from my own,
stream red into her throat, the liquid line
that sought the heart of her she had not shown.
These books surround my drying skin and I
cannot find words to write upon her sky.

Nostalgia

Their names circle a hole in water,
descend to hiddenness.

A train moves against a city in the rain.
You take a photograph of a church
through a deep window,
as light fails,
as desire falls to distance.

A wedding in a forest;
the horses' feet throw
white powder behind
the frill of bells;
you clasp a gift
to a borrowed coat.

A penny bag of stale cakes
swings from your young hand;
as you tramp from Tufnell Park
through Archway, by Highgate,
and further, to find woods waiting.

Mark Mayes has had poems and stories published in various magazines and anthologies. 2017 saw the publication of his novel, *The Gift Maker*. Mark also enjoys writing songs.

Rollo Nye 2 poems

Alone

disconnected
the plug
from the socket.

then everything
bounced into the walls inside,
and against trees
and rocks,
against mountains
and stars,
and eyes and lungs
and hearts.

we are all so alone.

this poem knows, but
the brain knows
not a thing
about the poem.

failure to thrive

consider her absence
one of omission.
fear does drive some out
and into their own thicket
hidden behind stone
swallowed by the field
alone and cold
afraid of unraveling.
and like a candy wrapper
abandoned on a table
in the harshest of light
your eyes burn holes in the air
around her until the membrane is
reduced to memory
of carnivorous truths,
held in check with the might of regret.
consider these failures to thrive
a withering of the flesh
wounds in progress

the withdrawing into an in-between
a becoming of emptiness
a hollow ring.
deafening really -
just listen.

Rollo Nye is a poet and yoga teacher who lives with his wife, Amy, in New York. His poetry has appeared in various journals and reviews, including: *Subterranean Blue Poetry*, *Mud Season Review*, and *The Red River Review*.

Andrew Shields 1 poem

September Street

The days are walking down to the equinox.
This is no pilgrimage; this is no cross.
The crescent moon is just a trick of the light,
a reflection of the day to fill the night.

The trees aren't yet talking to the street.
For now, they're keeping their secrets from my feet.
They'll tell the pigeons first, who nobody believes;
we'll only listen to the muttering of the leaves.

They say,
"This is no pilgrimage.
This is no cross.
Count the days to the equinox."

Andrew Shields lives in Basel, Switzerland. His collection of poems "Thomas Hardy Listens to Louis Armstrong" was published by Eyewear in June 2015. His band Human Shields released the album "Somebody's Hometown" in 2015 and the EP "Défense de jouer" in 2016.

Catherine Zickgraf 1 poem

Tall Tale of a Meltdown

Crows step through the wreckage
in a land where dark clouds
forced the inhabitants away.

A regular day lies frozen in fear
from thirty-some years ago.

Rusted cribs stand against peeling paint.
Stirrups of birthing chairs sprawl on the street.
A doll missing legs lost its fleeing child,
and weeds are consuming the buildings.

So the town escaped this Soviet bastion,
where brush grows over a meltdown in time.
The reactor even scared off their ghosts
when they fled from the acid rain.

Catherine Zickgraf main jobs are to hang out with her family and write poetry. Her work has appeared in the Journal of the American Medical Association, Pank, Victorian Violet Press and The Grief Diaries. Her recent chapbook, Soul Full of Eye, is published through Aldrich Press.

Read and watch her at caththegreat.blogspot.com

Patrick Williamson 2 poems

The itinerary

They promised salvation after death to those
who completed all these steps and trials,
to be admitted, it was severely forbidden to speak
so the little we know, as outsiders, depends
on fragments, buried after closure, invisible images
certainly not meant for us who attempt
to decipher their meaning, the question remains then,
what did they mean, a reminder of the joy of life,
hope, maybe just a life that is very brief and troubled
that, busied in doing nothing, the poor wretches
perceived too late, because they sometimes invoked death
as proof that they were living a long time, being
an example of our own weakness while we risk
rendering the everyday merely the work of talented painters

why can we not manage to
handle these findings properly.

Migrants beaching

The first sea any of us had seen
winched from water to land
to shed, the grey clouds are danger
the bell tower is on fire,

the black beach is hot, the bridges
collapse oh god oh god oh god
don't leave me hanging on, my brain
is built of brick that erodes to sand

and you've no reason to think
this is any proof we are living long
all the intervening while is irksome
we await the appointed hour

the time which we enjoy is short
and swift, it is not made shorter
by our own fault; we flee from
one thought to none, from distant

past to a present we forget
confused and hateful, we lose
the day in expectation of night,
and night in fear of the dawn.

Patrick Williamson lives near Paris. Recent poems in *And Other Poems*, Blue Nib Press, Paris LitUp, and *Mediterranean Poetry*. Latest collection is *Traversi* (English-Italian, Samuele Editore), and, previously, note *Gifted* (Corrupt Press), and *Locked in, or out?* (The Red Ceilings Press). He is the editor and translator of *The Parley Tree, An Anthology of Poets from French-speaking Africa and the Arab World* (Arc Publications). Founding member of transnational literary agency *Linguafranca*.

Margo Jodyne Dills 1 poem

Détente

there was no bloodletting; only sorrow
the will to have a hollow heart ...
yet all the tears that once filled an ocean
turned to salt and stood like a pillar in the land of Lot.
we stood akimbo from one another
chins of steel
elbows piercing
all the directions of earth

I write you stones
you send boulders

Margo Jodyne Dills is an active member of Seattle's Hugo House, and other writing venues in the Seattle area. Her writing life includes guest blogging on sites in Mexico and Latin America, writing poetry, and publishing her novel, *Sparrow*. She is very excited about recently being accepted with a scholarship to Hedgebrook Vortex.

Lucy Newlyn 1 poem

Words

I have spent the morning among words.
They sprout, with dark blue florets;
they bend their yellow faces on tall stems;
they hide, pale and low, behind uncut grass;
they climb grey-grainy bark towards the sky.

There are too many words coming between me
and the pool of hyacinths, daffodils, primroses
under the wrinkled apple-tree.
I will spend the afternoon discarding
all the words I know for Spring.

Lucy Newlyn, a retired academic, is the author of two collections of poetry: *Ginnel* (Oxford Poets/Carcanet, 2005) and *Earth's Almanac* (Enitharmon, 2015). A third collection, *Vital Stream*, is forthcoming with Carcanet in November 2019. She has recently published *Diary of a Bipolar Explorer* (Signal, 2018), a fifteen-year memoir describing her experience of the connection between Bipolar Disorder and creative process.

R. T. Castleberry 2 poems

THIS TRACE OF SERENITY

I've spent the hours
watching overflights of airliners,
choppers bank low, in line
with hospital spires.
Blue jay and robin dart
from oaks to feeding field.
A grey calico cat makes
his run across cracked tarmac,
tail flicking through a broken fence.
A spoiling cloud builds to the west.
The day seems a haiku
of mechanics and the wild.

AMERICAN MERCY

I sit on the edge of war, thirsty for release.
Wearing the white of mourning surrender,
I stack my rifle outside the harbor chapel,
march in queue for a meal.
The vagabond legions merit all respect
as they disappear into the city,
busk on streetlight corners,
take their turn as teacher's aide, Kwik Copy clerk.
Co-conspirators at large, their ringtones sing:
"Give me Christ or give me Hiroshima."

In visits overnight, I find friends
dead by protest beatings,
deaf with bleatings of family scorn.
Shattered, ill, they are ranking
clinics, hospice care, the mercy in
morphine over prayer miracles.
I sit with their dying, wince
at my needs, my loss in their leaving.
I wish them recovered.
I wish them no more pain.

Some mornings I'm called to waking
by a wicked piper, black dog at his feet.
He disturbs, discerns nothing save
grievance blare, ways of discontent.
I haul myself through a failure
that is cursing weariness,
a beggar's snarl at bitter news,
Red Wing boots broken through to mud.
Eyes down, I revise my wolf pack memoir,
strike off another day in this sordid country.

S. T. Castleberry's work has appeared in Roanoke Review, Santa Fe Literary Review, Pedestal Magazine, Green Mountains Review, The Alembic and Comstock Review. Internationally, it has been published in Canada, Wales, Ireland, Scotland, New Zealand and Antarctica. I've had poetry in the anthologies: Travois-An Anthology of Texas Poetry, TimeSlice, The Weight of Addition, Anthem: A Tribute to Leonard Cohen, Kind Of A Hurricane: Without Words and Blue Milk's anthology, Dawn. My chapbook, Arriving At The Riverside, was published by Finishing Line Press in January, 2010. An e-book, Dialogue and Appetite, was published by Right Hand Pointing in May, 2011.

Dah 1 poem

Equinox

To say that this wind
is a hurricane's embryo
or these blades of grass
are hung-over from dew ...

I lean against this early light
/my winter veins
chilled / to the cold embers
of a dying season

Dah's seventh poetry collection is *Something Else's Thoughts* (Transcendent Zero Press) and his poems have been published by editors from the US, UK, Ireland, Canada, Spain, Singapore, Philippines, Poland, Australia, Africa, and India. He is a Pushcart Prize and Best Of The Net nominee and the lead editor of the poetry critique group, The Lounge. Dah lives in Berkeley, California, where he is working on his eighth book of poetry.

Kymerlee della Luce 1 poem

sweet

i know that you
like me better
when I'm sweet
(sweet like candy
from an uncle)
acid burns
like on the face of a womxn
whose lover feels spurned
or
like when pink petals
are torn
from sex
or childbirth
or
when it spills out
of my pink mouth
because acid is all
i have left
inside
i want to be better
i know you like me
sweet that way

Kymerlee della Luce is an interdisciplinary artist, educator, creative catalyst, and glitter pony currently living in Seattle in the US. They tell stories and help others discover their voice and honor their own story. Their life is dedicated to liberating the wild, untamable heart. Learn more about them at kymerleedellaluce.com

Pam Thompson 2 poems

The Memory Theatre

(after *Self-Portrait* by Carmen Calvo)

I am the doll in the stiff lace ballgown
holding props: a tiny axe, fishing flies.
The horseshoe, I nail upside down in the Green Room.

After you left, these are the things I gathered
from our old white bedspread
and took them to the memory theatre—

tossed the red paper roses onto the proscenium—
I heard the ones you gave her were white, and real—
kicked off each black high-heeled shoe,

set the Venetian mask spinning from the gantry.
It twists its sad glitter face, this way,
that, as if it is looking for someone in the audience.

The elephant tusk nestling in the wings.
reminds me of your penis.
How insignificant, out of the spotlight.

My lines are written on my hand
in case the lead is indisposed. You'll wink
from the front row. That will be my cue.

Late August, Antrim Coast

I walk out of my hotel and across to the harbour
catching the smell of brambles, of autumn, and the North Sea
shifts and turns, showing its silver belly, like the salmon
shift and turn in cages offshore, and waves roll in from
the Western Isles, bringing the grey horizon closer.
An Irish flag on a small mound is unhindered by a slight breeze.
I'm just passing through but every summer as a boy
my father left the city to holiday in these seaside towns.

Near where my grandfather's cobbler's shop used to be
in Sandy Row, kerbstones painted red, white and blue.

These borders, their perpetual trip-wires and snares.

Pam Thompson is a poet and educator based in Leicester, UK. Her publications include *The Japan Quiz* (Redbeck Press, 2009) and *Show Date and Time*, (Smith | Doorstop, 2006). Pam's second collection, *Strange Fashion*, was published by Pindrop Press in 2017. She is a 2019 Hawthornden Fellow. Web-site pamthompsonpoetry@wordpress.com

Bruce McRae 1 poem

Going Through The Motions

It's very quiet in the School of Mime.
Even the mice pretend to be sleeping.
Even the ghosts tiptoe up the stairs –
which are not stairs, but appear to be so,
the students' adlibs less than whispers.

Apprentice, close your eyes and notice
the dark is in a box and can't escape itself.
Imagine a flower that won't be plucked out
or you're walking against a headwind.
Imagine leaning on the invisible
and you're not even there.

Bruce McRae, a Canadian musician currently residing on Salt Spring Island BC, is a multiple Pushcart nominee with over 1,400 poems published internationally in 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).

Yuan Changming 1 poem

Sonneting in Infinitives

To be (a matter when there's no question)
Or not to be (a question when nothing really matters)

To sing with a frog squatting straight
On a lotus leaf in the Honghu Lake near Jingzhou

To recollect all the pasts, and mix them
Together like a glass of cocktail

To build a nest of meaning
Between two broken branches on Ygdrasil

To strive for deity
Longevity & even happiness

To come on and off line every other while

To compress consciousness into a file, and upload it
Onto a nomochip. To meditate among loud vowels

To be daying, to die

Yuan Changming published monographs on translation before leaving China. Currently, Yuan lives in Vancouver, where he edits *Poetry Pacific* with Allen Qing Yuan. Credits include ten Pushcart nominations, *Best of the Best Canadian Poetry (2008-17)* and *BestNewPoemsOnline*, among others.

Phil Kirby 1 poem

Stela

The night was no longer defined
by prospects of the Northern Lights
straying so far south. Instead,
it was a white-peach moon
slowly rising in the birdless dark;
the lovers' car coming down off the hill
while someone's distant party rhythms
lifted from the valley, faded, came again.
Heaven held nothing but stars, until
an aft light plotted its curve across them
and, in one small arc of the horizon,
some closing celebration sprayed
silent bursts of firework red and green
above the landscape's silhouette,
all other reference points obscured
but these quotidian things, these
signs of earthly dreams fulfilled
which, just this once, fell into place.

Phil Kirby has spent most of his working life teaching English. His first collection was 'Watermarks', from Arrowhead Press (remaining copies available through philkirbypoetry@yahoo.com). His second collection, 'The Third History', from Lapwing Publications, appeared in February 2018. Writing as P.K. Kirby, his novella for young adults, 'Hidden Depths', is available on Kindle.

Edward Lee 1 Poem

REACH

He erected a scaffold
to build his house,
but after its completion
realised he did not want walls
or a roof to restrict him
from the touch of the world,
so he continued building
the scaffold
so he might touch the stars
and see the world
as a god might.

You can hear him,
night after night,
metal scraping hollow metal,
wood creaking, taking weight.

the stars above,
silent,
waiting,

waiting.

Edward Lee's poetry, short stories, non-fiction and photography have been published in magazines in Ireland, England and America, including The Stinging Fly, Skylight 47, Acumen and Smiths Knoll. His debut poetry collection "Playing Poohsticks On Ha'Penny Bridge" was published in 2010. He is currently working towards a second collection. He also makes musical noise under the names Ayahuasca Collective, Lewis Milne, Orson Carroll, Blinded Architect, Lego Figures Fighting, and Pale Blond Boy. His blog/website can be found at <https://edwardmlee.wordpress.com>

Michael Minassian 1 poem

SLEEPING SERPENT

Digging in my garden
I pull up an old paving stone
uncovering a sleeping snake

careful not to disturb it
I push dirt and a few small stones
over its winter bed—

in spring I will watch
for its thin trail
for its shedded skin—

perhaps even look for
empty beer bottles
and lip stick stained butts—

not every snake is a metaphor—
but for every pleasure
there is equal parts pain.

MICHAEL MINASSIAN is a Contributing Editor for *Verse-Virtual*, an online magazine. His chapbooks include poetry: *The Arboriculturist* (2010) and photography: *Around the Bend* (2017). For more information: <https://michaelminassian.com>

Anahit Arustamyan 1 poem

I INHERITED

I had inherited the sins from others long before I was born.
I inherited pains and sorrows heavier than ancient stones.
I was gifted with love when I felt the presence of my Lord.
I inherited my name from the Goddess whose myth is still told.
A millennium or a minute is the same for rivers in winters' cold.
Despite my Goddess's name my being is both real and phantom.
The snow's embroidery melted and gave its whiteness to the smoke.
The grey smoke doesn't know if it once shone.
I keep love in my heart but pain remains in my bones.
I inherited the sin from Eve when I was unborn.
Love will save my soul but my myth will not be told.

Anahit Arustamyan is an Armenian poetess. Her poems have appeared in different poetry magazines and anthologies both online and in print. She is the author of 5 poetry books: *The Queen Of Metaphors*, *My Intoxicated Ink*, *The Phantom's Dolphin*, *Words In Flight*, and *The Canvas Of My Soul* which are available on Amazon.

Maki Starfield 6 Haikus

“Enjoy every encounter because it may not come again.” MS

1

A clump of nettles
Bloomed above the cement—
 Glorious green!

2

My sweetheart is away,
But tonight
We watch the moon together.

3

The magic of a kiss!
Now you
Become the flame of my passion.

4

Winged words...
The peach trees are in full bloom
 In my home town.

5

a moment of yours
 a moment of mine—
 distant fireworks

6

his photo

concealed in my heart
calls forth a firefly

Maki Starfield was born in Japan, where she studied English and American literature, teaching and business, with further work in Canada. She has published poems, haikus and translations in JUNPA publications (<http://www.ama-hashii.com>).

John Bolton 1 poem

Penny Rose

i.m Bev Knutton

Angels have arrived,
one touch of thier hands diminished your pain.
Love starts this way. Fitting life should end

the same. Now the edges you smoothed
get harder everyday. The summer sky
a towering inferno, the grass all made of blades.

Love is holding the bloom, even though the flower has withered.

Your face gave me an embrace
no words could explain. For our deeds there's no song
they could sing us, but the street light still

searches for darkness. He wouldnt want to see
me weak. He wouldnt want to see me cry.
Now, like stars through the day, I know you are there -

its just when times are darkest, your presence
is more clear. You shared the cartoon of creation through
the colour of your imagination.

Your bluebird that found freedom
in our little room. Now you have stopped time
like a train. I'm a teenager whose feelings are graffiti

but all I can write is your name.
Without you music is mute,
a ballet of swans, heads bowed, moving down river.

Love is holding the bloom, even though the flower has withered.

John Bolton is a newcomer to the poetry scene. He is currently working towards his first collection, *Handcuffed to the Night*. He is a Hoist erector and would love to be a writer full time.