

Poetry section

Edited by **Victor Postnikov**

Victor is a poet, essayist and translator based in Kiev, Ukraine.

Life far exceeds humans. For millennia, eco-poets have understood it as a far greater enterprise. In their poetry, we can hear the voices of those who came before us and those who live alongside us. Now, however, they face extinction and die in silence, deafened by the roar of civilization. The time has come to renew the old understanding that all life, including humanity, speaks a common language. Thus, the mission of ecocentric poetry, or ecopoetry, is to help us empathize with non-human entities, be they a whale, a tree or a mountain. For we are all kin. Through metaphor and imagery, it speaks directly to our hearts and genes. We begin to realize that we have evolved together and share a common fate.

CLASSIC

A haiku

Matzuo Bashō

*Tell me, for what reason,
O Raven, you fly to the noisy city
From here?*

CLASSIC

Good-bye

Ralph Waldo Emerson

*Good-bye, proud world! I'm going home:
Thou art not my friend, and I'm not thine.
Long through thy weary crowds I roam;
A river-ark on the ocean brine,
Long I've been tossed like the driven foam:
But now, proud world! I'm going home.*

*Good-bye to Flattery's fawning face;
To Grandeur with his wise grimace;
To upstart Wealth's averted eye;
To supple Office, low and high;
To crowded halls, to court and street;
To frozen hearts and hasting feet;
To those who go, and those who come;
Good-bye, proud world! I'm going home.*

*I am going to my own hearth-stone,
 Bosomed in yon green hills alone,—
 secret nook in a pleasant land,
 Whose groves the frolic fairies planned;
 Where arches green, the livelong day,
 Echo the blackbird's roundelay,
 And vulgar feet have never trod
 A spot that is sacred to thought and God.*

*O, when I am safe in my sylvan home,
 I tread on the pride of Greece and Rome;
 And when I am stretched beneath the pines,
 Where the evening star so holy shines,
 I laugh at the lore and the pride of man,
 At the sophist schools and the learned clan;
 For what are they all, in their high conceit,
 When man in the bush with God may meet?*

CLASSIC

To one who has been long in city pent

John Keats

*To one who has been long in city pent,
 Tis very sweet to look into the fair
 And open face of heaven,—to breathe a prayer
 Full in the smile of the blue firmament.
 Who is more happy, when, with heart's content,
 Fatigued he sinks into some pleasant lair
 Of wavy grass, and reads a debonair
 And gentle tale of love and languishment?
 Returning home at evening, with an ear
 Catching the notes of Philomel,—an eye
 Watching the sailing cloudlet's bright career,
 He mourns that day so soon has glided by:
 E'en like the passage of an angel's tear
 That falls through the clear ether silently.*

CLASSIC

Hell of a City

Vladimir Mayakovsky

*Helluva city windows burst split
 Into the tiny, light-sucking bits.
 Rusty demons, cars jerk and jeer,
 Their honks blast into the ear.*

*And there, under a sign "Herrings from Kerch" —
 A busted old chap for glasses searched*

*And wept when in the evening storm
Tram's pupils hurriedly perched.*

*And in skyscrapers' holes where the ore burned
And the iron trains heaped –
An airplane wailed and dipped
Where the wounded Sun's eye leaked.*

*And lastly – having folded lamp blankets –
Night's f...ked, obscene and drunk,
While somewhere behind the sunny shacks
Useless, flaccid Moon dragged.*

Translated by VI Postnikov.

Note: Kerch is a city in the Eastern Crimea.

CLASSIC

Excerpt from *The Book of Urizen* (Chapter IX)

William Blake

*Then the Inhabitants of those Cities
Felt their Nerves change into Marrow,
And hardening Bones began
In swift diseases and torments,
In throbbing and shootings and grindings,
Thro' all the coasts; till weaken'd
The Senses inward rush'd, shrinking
Beneath the dark Net of infections.*

CONTEMPORARY

Let the dark in

Abi Loughnane

*You have sailed the plastic tapestry sewn up the Mekong,
tasted the pesticides greasing the grass leaves,
do you see
from the cosmos, the Bortle scale,
clusters like melanoma igniting the city next door?
Halogen orange, fluorescent yellow,
blue, white, bright
light.*

*Over here!
Demand skyscrapers, polluting black air with
messages and marketing alight, moon
swimming bats lost hungry in San José,
breeding Khartoum croaks call unanswered,
hedgehogs in Putney bewildered by Toyota eyes brace,*

*five-inch turtle hatchlings crawl to the city, not the moon,
to a car and a crack.*

*We are always open!
Vows dome of amber
suffocating the city the system with
high-rise window and empty desk light, overlooking,
staring, wasting,
as four thousand stars evaporate.
Did you see the confused swallow thud into exhaustion?
Its bloodied, plump breast at your feet opal neck crooked?*

*Leave the kitchen lamp on!
In case you need a drink in the night,
keep the tree flashing as sleep arrives,
forget those milky fairies threaded through the hallway,
ignore the crisp moth shells in the bathroom ceiling,
blackout that infinite insect glow of end less porchlight,
Let's suppress your divine melatonin to the artificial Gods,
the synthetic.*

*Light in a
switch
bulb
button,
instant disposable,
cheap, with a
tock-tock-tock,
rhythms tampered,
as we overeat electricity, hindered
by the family with four children,
five televisions and curtains open, when we are already beyond
Help.
Light
igniting the writing above as we ignore the meteor,
dim the bulb or turn off the plug and
let the dark in.*

CONTEMPORARY

Mônadenok

David Crews

*Words like rocks
in Abenaki say, kisos*

*sun, moon, and month
together*

*kzelômsen, both
the wind
and how it blows*

*the night
a place of here
and thereness
pôguasek, moonlight*

*the many sounds
of water*

* * *

*I am no mapmaker
and this warbler song
I cannot place
to name
it has been a year
since I heard him sing*

*what care
can I give his solitude
little messenger
untranslatable*

*make me
silent as the page
aperture of light
for the bedrock
sees us, hears us*

*fills fissure
with earth, sheep laurel
microscopic life*

Note: Mônadenok – or, in Abenakis, “silver mountain” – is in New Hampshire, USA.

CONTEMPORARY

Connections

Christine Hallmann

*Encircled by protective giants filling the air with sweet pine and ancient ways of
knowing*

She sits in the warm grass

Watching the wildflowers sway in the breeze

*With closed eyes focusing on her other senses
She feels the warm midday sun on her face
Wind gently playing with her hair
Solidness of smooth gray rocks beneath her
Hearing the water move over, around, and through rocks as it flows beside her
Carrying with it all her troubles
Feeling that all is right; all is good
Calling her
Her mind moves back to the water
Do you remember
Do you remember who you are
Do you remember your relations
Do you remember
In a moment of primordial remembrance
A woven strand of blue-green energy connects her
She is connected to Earth
She is connected to self
She is connected to all her relations
Ultimate peace
Ultimate knowing
Ultimate dreaming
Ultimate ceremony
Her eyes open and she understands*

Note: The poem describes an experience Christine had while doing tree-ring fieldwork in Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks in 2000.

CONTEMPORARY

Unprecedented

Pete Mullineaux

*In the living fields –
three cow generations: calf
mother, grandmother.*

CONTEMPORARY

Summer Time

Pete Mullineaux

*When the living sometimes isn't so
straightforward as we take a retreating
step into darkness – delaying progress
before the coming again of light...*

*Then running the dial ahead to an hour
of reckoning, dire forecasts coming true –
ice gone, sea lapping at our throats, thinking
back, did we gain or lose that hour?*

CONTEMPORARY

Earthstars

Pete Mullineaux

Geastrum triplex

*Comets shooting from below, spores appearing
on Earth even before plants; closer to us than
to flowers – fungi breathe the same oxygen
and likewise suffer bacterial infections
although, even as they rot, microscopic
threads entangle, spreading
new life to their loam-home...*

*Stars of wonder, stars of darkness!
Spinners of an underworld-wide-web,
feeling our tread on their topsoil ceiling
moving like avatars on a screen –
how they must pity these poor relations
stumbling along, blinded by the light.*

CONTEMPORARY

We are the Walrus

Pete Mullineaux

*Harbinger or in search of safe harbour –
a young pup swept up on our shore,
straight out of a folk tale – enchanting
us with its whiskers and two-pronged
smile, all shimmering blubber – for a
while it took centre stage and like a
rock star drew the crowds.*

*Returned now to its proper home
where walruses loll in the surf
exchanging their own stories, one
about a human child that came
to play one day on the rocks,
making patterns with all the
discarded oyster shells.*

CONTEMPORARY

A Bullfinch

Pete Mullineaux

*is perched on the garden hose reel
pecking seeds from a dandelion –
I could watch all day – one, two, three o'clock...*

CONTEMPORARY

Lambs

Pete Mullineaux

*Jaunty jumpers
on their grass
trampoline*

*woolly clouds
in a green sky –
an upside down*

*picture-book image...
likewise, lets reverse
the usual adage –*

*judge this book
only by its cover
keep x ray eyes*

*and greedy fingers
from delving
around inside.*

CONTEMPORARY

In the Air

(From the Extinction Rebellion opening ceremony)

Grae J Wall

*Helicopter hovers over Hyde Park
747 cruises beneath the sharp half moon
As I saunter past the buzz and hum of Speakers Corner
Wrestling with the stiff breeze buzz
There's something in the air tonight*

*The throng at Marble Arch eager and set
Hang on every word relayed through the struggling PA
Prayers of hope and calls to peaceful disobedience
A small child takes the microphone
Something she has written today
Sweet and hopeful
Angry and alive
Crescendo triggering a roar of approval
Her face taken aback
But clearly proud
In the bonfire's glow
Some have brought candles in jars
LED's hang from flagpoles*

*And a few bold torches
Ablaze and thrust aloft
There is rebellion in the air tonight*

*This feels like a moment
Something real and pure and strong
A pin stuck in a slow revolving globe
A force to be breathed in and held
A song of hope that could awake the globe
There is a determination in the air tonight
This moment is the only moment
And it is a moment to believe*

CONTEMPORARY

In Exchange

Dee Allen

*I feel for the antediluvian forests
Being systemically cut for
American lumber building
Spreading more civilisation,
European biomass for burning
As factory-made fuel, new
Means to spoil the air—
Critters of the trees, of wings and paws,
Forced to fly and crawl to new lives
Of displacement—
Their original homes in exchange
For uncertainty— W: 7.9.21*

Note: This is a response to the poem *Immigrants* by Rupi Kaur.

About the poets

Matzuo Bashō (1644–1694) was a famous poet of the Edo period in Japan and the great master of haiku.

Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882) was an American essayist, philosopher and poet who led the transcendentalist movement of the mid-19th century in America .

John Keats (1795–1821), an Englishman, was, together with Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley, one of the great Romantic poets.

Vladimir Mayakovsky (1893–1930) was a Russian and Soviet poet, a prominent figure in the Russian Futurist movement and probably the greatest innovator in Russian 20th century poetry and culture.

William Blake (1757–1827) was an English poet and painter, one of the forefathers of the Romantic Age and a prophetic genius.

Abi Loughnane resides in London, is currently studying writing with the London School of Journalism and is collating her first collection. She has been published in *The Honest Ulsterman*, *The Broken Spine*, *192 Magazine*, *Idler* and *StepAway Magazine*.

David Crews is a writer, editor and wilderness advocate who currently resides in southern Vermont – the ancestral lands of Mohican and Abenaki peoples. He serves as managing editor for *Wild Northeast*.

Christine Hallman is a professor of Geography and Sustainability Studies at Northeastern State University in Tahlequah, OK, USA.

Pete Mullineaux lives in Galway, Ireland, and works in development education. He has published four poetry collections.

Grae J Wall is a poet, musician and lomographer.

Dee Allen is an African-Italian performance poet based in Oakland, CA, USA. Active in creative writing and the spoken word since the early 1990s, Dee is the author of seven books and has 41 anthology appearances under his figurative belt so far.