

## 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.

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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.

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### 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.