

Poetry section

Edited by **Victor Postnikov**

Victor is a poet, essayist and translator whose home is in Kyiv, 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.

CLASSIC

The Second Coming

William Butler Yeats

*Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.*

*Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?*

CLASSIC

Now I can see... (excerpt)

Mikhail Lermontov

*We'll perish and our steps dissolve,
Such is our fate, such is the end;
Our spirit will be sent away
To boundless, tenebrific space.
Our dust will merely soften earth
For creatures of a purer race.*

*They'll curse no-one; for their kin
Will worship neither gold, nor rank –
Their days will be like children's days
Of innocence and simple games;
The chains of decency won't kill
Their innate friendship, nor their love,
And their brothers' righteous blood
They, idly laughing, shall not spill!...*

*To their lovely crowd, we'll see
How angels flock from outer space
And their Eden we'll observe
From our bottomless abyss.
The pangs of jealousy, ennui,
Will be our punishment for eons
Of villainies under the heavens.*

Translated by VI Postnikov.

CLASSIC

What was great

Czesław Miłosz

*What was great, now looks diminished.
Kingdoms turned pale like snow-piled statues.*

*What was amazing, now no more amazes.
Celestial spheres are rolling and rolling, and rolling.*

*On a river bank, stretched upon grass,
As in distant childhood, I'm launching the boats made from cork.*

Translated by VI Postnikov.

CLASSIC

Today, I'm doing nothing
Roberto Juarroz

*However, many things
still happen to me.
Birds that don't exist
have found their nests.
Shadows that don't exist
have found their bodies.
Words that do exist
have found their silence.
Maybe my inaction will somehow
restore the balance in the world
by removing things cluttering
the horizon?*

Translated by VI Postnikov.

CONTEMPORARY

They are enough
RM True

*I stand at your border before your throng
of whip-poor-will, meadowlark, doves unseen.
Had I my druthers, I'd bathe to-n-fro
amidst your brothers' sisters' songs, o Wood,
Oh would you let me in amongst them all?
I escape my toils and the rising sun
And softly step in your shade of mercy.
All my machinery behind subsides,
And so, too, your brothers' sisters' songs.*

*But rising swifter than the dawning sun,
Like church choir after pastor-prayer,
They speak for you, they speak to me—they sing:
“Do not invade the forest-line, stay blind:
Had we our druthers, aren't our songs enough?”*

*Ere I retreat alone and go, o Wood.
I take a small step back into my field—
a life beyond fathom, necessity—
and softly hear your brothers' sisters' songs
from a distance sounding over my field.
I sing to them, to you: “they are enough.”*

CONTEMPORARY

On Seeing a Butterfly in My Garden
James Bellanca

*Today in quiet I watched
a silent monarch float,
flutter, flit, flick, fly in flows
above this summer's white,
pale yellow and red coneflower plants.
Twin orange-black speckled wings
sweep up and down to reach
new cloudless heights
before a stop, a stolen rest
atop a single bud to drop
five hundred fertile eggs.*

*I searched to note
one magic larva born.
It stirred my eager soul
alive again this morn,
assured that Aurora's new light
will bring a bright-lit sky to foretell
such next green-golden days
to urge each new stirred
grey chrysalis to rise
from measured sleep,
a multi-striped self.*

*I closed my eyes
so my gladdened heart
might flutter-float-flick
with bright-winged joy.
I soared above, conjoined as one
with this first-day butterfly,
soul free, our cycle from death
to life an ever-turning clock
with endless spinning
hands that circle round
In cornucopian conjoined delight.*

CONTEMPORARY

Nova Scotia

Bill Garvey

*Cormorants gathered at a bloated seal
skip into flight when I paddle close enough*

*to this lonely beach and witness entrails
splashed across bleached driftwood.*

*Its face stares blankly away as if in resignation
to the shark that did this, here, as far*

*north as Nova Scotia. Cormorants return,
long past their fear of my kayak.*

*They circle the seal with reverence
that doesn't belong to me.*

CONTEMPORARY

The meadow's tender grace

RM True

*Amidst the meadow's tender grace,
A mole, unseen, burrows grassy ground.
A farmer frets a furrowed frown,
His holy place now a holy place.*

*Days of toil to the devil displace,
Roving and roving mound by mound.
Amidst the meadow's tender grace,
A mole, unseen, burrows grassy ground.*

*To the clouds he pleads his case,
But settles for a hose on ground.
Floods flow forth eager to erase,
Yet the mole, willful, won't be drowned.*

*The farmer bides patient in place,
Til' up for air, the beast uncrowned.
Amidst the meadow's tender grace,
A mole, now seen, dreams of grassy ground.*

*By shovel-face to a neighbor's place,
He brings the mole to virgin ground.*

*And returns to his defaced space,
But hears an unfamiliar sound.*

About the poets

William Butler Yeats (1865–1939) was an Irish poet, dramatist and writer, and one of the foremost figures of 20th century literature. He was awarded the 1923 Nobel Prize in Literature.

Mikhail Yuryevich Lermontov (1814–1841) was a Russian Romantic poet and writer. His influence on Russian literature is felt in modern times, not just through his poetry but also his prose. The excerpt translated above was written when he was 16 years old.

Roberto Juarroz (1925–1995) was an Argentine poet famous for his *poesía vertical* (vertical poetry). In the words of Octavio Paz (another notable poet): “Each poem of Roberto Juarroz is a surprising verbal crystallisation: language reduced to a bead of light. A major poet of absolute moments.”

Czesław Miłosz (1911–2004) was a Polish-American poet, prose writer, translator, and diplomat. One of the greatest Polish poets, he won the 1989 Nobel Prize in Literature.

James Bellanca is a retired high school English teacher and author/publisher of teacher education guides. He writes poems which spring from many years observing and caring for nature, advocating for peace, and laughing at bizarre events in senior life. He lives with his wife in LakeForest, IL, USA. *Witcraft*, *The Oakleaf*, *Down in the Dirt*, *Calliope*, *The Ethereal Haunted Journal*, and *SolutionTree Press* have elected to publish his poems this year.

RM True is a writer from north central, rural Kentucky, USA, that engages with humanity’s relationship with nature, specifically “one’s own place.” To further his relationship with nature and place, True is an environmental engineer (working fruitfully to ethically steward the environment), farmer, and landscape photographer. He holds a BS in Civil/Environmental Engineering from the University of Kentucky and an MA in English from Texas Tech University.

Bill Garvey grew up in Springfield, MA, USA. He is a dual citizen of Canada and the USA. He currently lives in Nova Scotia and Toronto. Bill’s collection of poetry, *The basement on Biella*, was published in 2023 by DarkWinter Press. His work has been nominated for Best of the Net, and has appeared in *Thimble*, *Wrong Turn Lit*, *Rattle*, *One Art*, *San Antonio Review*, *Connecticut River Review*, *Cimarron Review*, *The New Quarterly*, *Nixes Mate Review* and others.