

Open Skies
Poetry
Anthology

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Open Skies Press

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For The Misfits

This is for the people
Who feel lost and alone
This is for all the misfits
Who feel they don't belong

This is for the people
Who don't know who they are
This is for all the people
Who might seem bizarre

This is for everyone
Trying hard to find their way
Who keep reaching for the sun
To try and make a better day

This is for the lonely and tired
Trying hard to stay strong
This is for everyone
Who have fought way too long

This is for the people
Who try hard everyday
To be better people
In every single way

Please keep on going
Don't change who you are
I know you are tired
But you have come so far

Please keep on going
For you are not alone
Your strength is showing
One day you find your throne

Please keep on going
It's okay to be you
I'm thankful for knowing
Each and every one of you

- Janelle Erin Elizabeth Peters

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Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Rhiannon Owens

Oceans of Time

Night and day
Kiss goodbye
Sunrise, sunset
The moon and stars sigh

Coming together
A brief moment in time
Two ships passing
Lost in rhyme

'Onward we sailed, we had oceans of time
to make sweet memories, while the moon kissed
sunshine, your lips tasted sweet, they were
sweeter than wine, as onward we sailed, we had
oceans of time...'

When they move apart
A whisper on the breeze
A sigh exhaling
Love's gentle melodies

Rising and falling
In that endless sea
Dark seeking light
Together, meant to be

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

'Onward we sailed, we had oceans of time
to make sweet memories, while the moon kissed
sunshine, your lips tasted sweet, they were
sweeter than wine, as onward we sailed, we had
oceans of time...'

Reaching calm waters
Together they hide
Up on the beach
Away from the tide
A new land they've found
But they cannot stay
They know before long
They must be on their way

'Onward we sailed, we had oceans of time
to make sweet memories, while the moon kissed
sunshine, your lips tasted sweet, they were
sweeter than wine, as onward we sailed, we had
oceans of time...'

(Co-written with Ashley O'Keefe)

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Bracken

Ferny fronds beckon you
Beckoning you beneath the bracken
Coarse green leafy feathers
Waving their abundant glee

Sometimes they sway to a gentle rhythm
Matching the leaves in the trees
Sometimes they ripple
As if their ruffles are tickled

Sometimes they stand tall
Dense and unfathomable
Stern, immovable sentries
Pierced by pinpricks of light...
Denying all entry

Different generations
Shooting out their spores
Invasive, persuasive
The smaller, all eggs and sperm

Watch the deceptively delicate fronds unfurl
Of the bracken
Beautiful bracken
Beckoning beckoning

With feathery frivolous fronds
Frivolous ferns with feathery wands
Carrying their sex on the breeze
Fiddleheads, uphold their legacy with ease

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Lotus Flower

Listen well to my humble story
I tell it and hope one day the world will see
What the little lotus blossom can achieve...

From tea ceremonies
And stilted tradition
To comrades in arms
Here is the tale of brave Mulan:

My noble father too old
Yet would still risk his life
For Kingdom and Emperor he pledged to fight...
There was me, strong and lithe
But destiny had mapped out my life
I was to be an obedient wife

I am beautiful, resilient
Graceful, smart and tough
I prayed to my ancestors up above
They lived in my heart, spoke to me
Everything I did, I did it for love

Pure and unstained, like the lotus flower
I rose from the mire
My petals unfurled
I rose higher and higher

This is what I must share with you
The truth that a woman really can
Have the strength and stamina of man

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

And the courage to help her people be free
And determination to save her family
We are all soldiers in our armor
Whether woman or man, peasant or farmer

A sword raised in one hand
And flower in my hair
With cold ferocity as one with my horse I ride
Praying to have lady luck on my side
Knowing those ancient spirits will guide
For family honour I will not quail or hide

Pure and unstained, like the lotus flower
I rose from the mire
My petals unfurled
I rose higher and higher

I am Mulan, a Kingdom bowed to me
My father tucked a blossom in my hair
The Emperor tells stories of my bravery
Mulan!
I am love and defiance
Spirit of the Dragon
My story is legend, it didn't end there...

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Ross Leishman

Lover Within

Come and take my hand and lead me from this
place of sorrow.
Cold and dead inside with nowhere on this earth
to hide.
A brush of your lips or a shoulder just to cling
to.
My mind plays tricks while wild thoughts
smolder just below the surface.

I saw you across the crowded room, but all you
saw was a walking voice behind a smiling mask
aching under a heartless moon.

My mind jumps from one fantasy to the next,
one paperback novel to another.

An empty room, lit by a naked bulb, the only
company I get to keep is my lover within...but
never deeper than my own shedded skin.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Last Writes

He blew his mind out in a haze,
the smoking gun, his worn-out pen,
the last words still in his gaze.

The contents of his mind spilled out onto the
pieces of paper strewn about his drunken and
disorderly desk.

His head resting in his clammy hands,
empty, spent but satisfied, job done.

The absolute joy or dreaded curse, the knife
edge of being a writer, poet and freedom fighter.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Ultimate

In pieces I fall, exposed at your feet,
in pieces maybe but not in defeat.
Arms wide open, palms out turned,
a crown of thorns and sun-bleached burned.
Unbreathing, undone, another nail and the
damage is done.
Is he the king of the Jews, or just the salt of the
earth, or the Devil in robes standing on hallowed
turf.
We follow like an addict to the needle, like a
scalpel to a vein, the joker behind a mask trying
to ease his inner pain.
A handful of nails, a crown of bloody thorns, a
game of lost chances and Jesus reborn.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Debbie Clewer

Planet Earth

If we could look down on our world
of blue and green
Would our eyes be opened
Like we had never seen before?
Would we fear the vast expanse of space?
And forget our wars?

We are here for a brief moment in time
It is not about race, colour or creed
Or which political party leads
But about the need
To look after our human race
To keep us safe

So we should stand firm
On terra firma
And celebrate the place of our birth
And appreciate our magnificent
Unique...Planet Earth

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

A Pure Love

Her fingers stretched and touched the ice
A teardrop fell upon the snow
A love so pure swelled in her heart
And formed an everlasting glow

A Barron earth unloved and lost
Had fought a war of greed and might
The soldiers of this land marched on
Not knowing why they chose to fight

Lay down your guns and look at me
Forget your words so full of hate
For no one listens anymore
It's time for you to clean your slate

She spoke her words without a voice
She sent her love unselfishly
And one and all could feel a glow
Of pure love in its majesty

Take heed for unto you I give
A chance to start this life anew
Don't waste this gift
It comes from one
Far mightier than you

Her fingers stretched and touched the ice
And rivers flowed once more of blue
And as the birds began to sing
This earth of ours was born anew

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Melani Udaeta

Welcome Free-Fall

All these emotions
they linger in the dark
close enough to hold
but you never know where to start;
Left wanting to get closer
but you let me slip away;

I don't want to be disappointed
but I know it's the truth;
Nothing will ever feel as good as you;

You're a painkiller;
It's no wonder I constantly want a hit;
Stop asking me to admit it;
You already know what you do,
so don't deny me what I need;

I don't want to be disappointed
but I know it's the truth;
Nothing will ever feel as good as you;

Coming for me you took my hand,
gathering momentum built a deafening silence;
With an outcry the screams
began to tumble into peace,
plunging faster and faster into a crescendo;

I don't want to be disappointed,
but I know it's the truth;
Nothing will ever feel as good as you;
It's a welcome free fall you talked me into.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Earthquake

When our tectonic plates collide
there will no longer be any place to hide;

Walking an active fault line tiptoeing
until we catch each other's eyes glowing;

Shocks waves thundering deep within
will explode as you cover my skin;

Everything will suddenly rupture
splintering cracks into a fracture;

We never really made any sense
until reality crumbled into a mess;

What once was can no longer be;
You broke down, finally touched me;

Unable to pretend this can persist,
our calm facade can no longer exist;

Destroyed so we could finally shake
the idea we could stop an earthquake.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Surface To Air

Surrounded by your hair
with that scent, I bombinate,
fall to pieces right here;
We sit just baking in the sun,
no need for a chair;
I want to lay my head on your shoulder,
I swear you ignite such a flare;
With a twist of fate,
surface to air.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Maid Čorbić

If The Earth Was So Beautiful

Not everything we see every day
People have become very strange about this
That they may see the holiness of their day
And they look for problems in others

I know the world just needs the best
And that every day is special for us
The meaning of happiness is in the little things
That love does not have its own grammar

Let love be born of every dream
The earth is mine that gives everything
And we need to keep this faithful
Which was created just for us

Let love shine with all its glory now
Eternity is great for the planet to manifest
We need to understand that we need everything
That we have our limits and behavior

Let people understand, and even myself on
Yes, nature is my only sanctuary
Without her, I would be a dead man
I know there is a time for everything

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Everything will be fine one day
Only hopes will be special
Because the planet needs to be guarded
carefully
Time is on my side

The truth is that the country is great
I should keep and not throw garbage
Because the global climate is very strange
And I'm just looking for a solution for everyone

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Jimmy Broccoli

Do You Know What I Mean?

So – I'm falling in love with you –
and I'm going to need for you not to die –
do you know what I mean?

This past year I lost my best mate, my mother,
and a childhood friend
- and two weeks ago, I lost the friend I first told
I was gay
(the first time my mouth uttered these words) –
he died – he took his own life –
and this story isn't fiction

I'm going to need for you not to die

So, yes – I'll go to the restaurant with you –
and I'll hold your hand while we walk around
the grounds at the carnival –
but I'm going to need for you to be careful –
I'm going to need for you not to die –
I'm falling in love with you – and I'm going to
need for you not to die -
do you know what I mean?

I see you crossing the road – look both ways –
please
Wear a seatbelt, make sure there is proper air in
the tires –
they need to grip in the wet –
I'm not telling you what to do (I'm really not), but
more vegetables than ice cream will be good for
your health

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

No cell phone at the gas pumps –
and no bungee jumping or high rock climbing –
no skating on the ice unless it's mid-season
and no over-drinking or occasional drug use –

Take my hand – I promise to hold yours tightly –
and I will not let go until you instruct me to do
so

I'm going to need for you to be safe –
Keep close watch on campfires and fireworks –
and listen to your doctor – she is paying
attention – listen to her

I'm going to need for you not to die –
do you know what I mean?

Don't die
Don't die
Don't die
I'm going to need for you not to die

I'm falling in love with you – do you understand?
And I'm going to need for you not to die –
and I'm going to need for you to promise me you
won't –

Because I can't take that again –
I can't have that happen -
not again

Do you know what I mean?

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

My Friend Carol

Sometimes using a cliché, like –
“she shined brighter than all of the stars in the
sky” is okay,
if you’re pressed for the right words to describe
someone incredible –
and you can’t immediately think of better
wording
There isn’t always a reason to use new words –
when there are words that already exist for this
purpose –
Or – at least that is what I believe at this
moment

My friend Carol was a bright and shiny diamond
We marched the streets together, demanding
equality –
and her voice was loud –
like a car crash or sudden thunder
I use clichés because I am too sad to be creative
today –
I don’t have the emotional strength to be clever
And, for today – they’ll have to do

Her heart was as big as the ocean –
wide and long with compassion that spread for
miles
I’d call her – sometimes late at night and say,
“Carol, I just can’t” and she’d tell me I could,
when I’m ready
One starless night, her kindness and friendship
led me to return the open bottle of too many pills
to the medicine cabinet –
where it belongs – and where it remains

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Fast forward seven years...

A Home Depot purchase with hope extinguished
- like a glass jar over a small and dying flame or
a glass jar covering a butterfly that is suffocating

—

because there is no longer any air
and a few hours later,

Carol - my beautiful butterfly friend – lay still -
“Carol!”, I screamed when I got the phone call –
it wasn’t Carol calling

—

Carol’s memorial bench is on the waterfront at
Lake Olmstead in Augusta, Georgia –
and I’m visiting her today

All of the benches in the park look exactly the
same –

but hers is the most lovely

So, I sit here, and I sit here, and I sit here

And begin to cry

“Carol”, I whisper,
gently and quietly to an empty sky with nobody
listening

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

The Ducks

I want to go see the ducks –
the ducks at the park that swim in the park lake
You tell me you aren't up to it, and I don't
understand

Who doesn't like ducks?

"Come on", I say, "It's ducks – and you'll love it!
Don't you think it's time to get out of the house?
You've been in bed for weeks"

Now – I'll be honest – I don't know the difference
between a duck and a goose –
and, I'll be honest, the answer doesn't really
matter to me

They have cute – and sometimes colorful heads
and they waddle –
and they eat the popcorn I bring to the park lake

–

and I love to sit for hours and spend time with
them

- and sometimes I bring bread and break it up
for them

They like that too

and this makes me smile (I enjoy seeing happy
ducks) –

sometimes I bring my MP3 player and listen to
my favorite songs –

while I sit with the ducks (or the geese – or,
whatever)

"I'm not up for seeing the ducks today – I just
can't", you tell me

And I tell you I don't understand

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

“I like ducks – and I like to see the ducks with
you –
because I enjoy being with you,
I think you’re amazing” – I tell her
“Don’t you think it’s time to get out of the
house? You’ve been in bed for weeks.”

We go to the park, and I feed the ducks at the
park lake –
She looks sad the entire time – the ducks are
enjoying themselves – or so it seems –
but the humans aren’t. I take her hand in mine
and it is limp -
I’m seriously questioning her commitment to
enjoy spending time with the ducks... - and with
me

And – 5 hours later – we no longer speak – we no
longer speak forever
because she is no longer breathing –
and it takes breathing to breathe and to say
words –
sometimes people have had enough, and they tie
a rope around their neck, and they never do
anything else after that – and you don’t expect it
–
even when they tell you they are going to do it –
and you don’t believe them
- she told me she didn’t want to see the ducks
today – because she just couldn’t –

...and she said that
And I wasn’t listening -
because I wanted to help her

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Maria Evelyn Q. Soleta

Given

Given one more life to live
Given one more time to grow

Give one more day to give
Should you love me so?

Given one more line to write
Given one more note to sing

Given one more starry night
Would you forever be my king?

Given one more wing to fly
Given one more step to take

Given one more tear to cry
Should you do all for my sake?

Given one more night to spend
Given one more dawn to see

Given one more breath to breathe
Would you save it for me?

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Finding My Heart

LOVE's consuming sweetness overflows,
Like caresses of early morning wind.

LOVE's tears, in sadness, do not show,
LOVE forgives despite embarrassments.

LOVE basks in lovers' lane,
The two sip its sweet nectarines.

Within reach of Cupid's arrow,
Under the yellow moonbeams.

Towards ends of the rainbow,
LOVE designs such fervent dreams!

LOVE is today,
LOVE is not tomorrow,
LOVE conquers all fiery pains,
LOVE is not 'I-mine-alone-solo'.
LOVE does not exalt,
LOVE finds no shame.

Silent, if need be and with Truth, 'tis true,
LOVE sees only pieces of heaven!
Of you, may I ask,
"If LOVE's Beginnings, through time, grow.
Can LOVE's Endings, won or lost, never, ever
end?"

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Tom Barlow

Apps

Mom shared champagne with her boss late on Thursday night; so says her Venmo™ account/Dad bought a set of golf clubs for way more money than their budget can support, according to Simplifi™

The son's Chrome™ browser history shows he's intrigued by soccer and tattooed women/Mspy™ reports that the daughter has twice received obscene pics

The AngelSense™ tracking software on their phones tells their parents that neither child ever leaves their suburb/A comfort Mom shares with her counseling app Betterhelp™

Meanwhile, deep in the Cloud™, the ghost lord blinks on and off faster than any human can think/Chewing the family up until they are nothing but a paste of ones and zeros

Painting portraits of them, the color of handcuffs, and plots the theft of the future/While the four of them continue to mistake revolution for convenience, until the lights go out

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

The Planning Meeting

"Anecdote: A conversation in which everyone is talking, and no one is listening"

-John Koenig

(From the Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows)

I could be talking to headstones though.
Headstones would be more likely to listen.
At least headstones would not prattle so.

For they have heavy business, while this anecdote is as doomed as the prairie weeds that grow around the graves in an 18th century cemetery and wait impatiently for a buffalo to harvest them.

The nutsedge and purslane are unlikely to pay heed to my sad news, any more than this meeting will grow in wisdom by filling the room with words that overlap and undercut and pile up in the way nonsense grows tall on the soil of disregard.

I close my eyes and dream of a sickle.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Ndaba Sibanda

The Past Catching Up With Him

For money they said he lost his soul
And found nothing, nothing foul
About the gangs depravity
He basked in their immorality
Till they turned him into irrelevancy
A brand-new team sought transparency
They accused him of feasting with stray dogs
And said: deal with the fleas and our legal logs

Falling For Their Fragrance

Enraptured, a book lover
sauntered through the aisles
of the colossal council library.

She fell in love with the scent
and feel of a variety of books
that gleamed, and gleamed in glory
as they greeted her eyes and nose
in their colourful and fragrant custom.

Their balm boomed into an enticement,
her eyes plumbed into blurbs and quotes
between the covers, and bookworm Sethi
spotted her possible reads of the year.

The tranquil ambience of the free library
was the right character and atmosphere,
she was glad to crown her happy haunt.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

A Mirror of Life

Her poem appealed to him
With its pains and passion
He couldn't get enough of it

It was a beautiful throbbing
Its ache echoed and echoed

At the lowest part of his heart
It was a beautiful ache, a pinch

His heart pined for over and over
Its encores of pains were his pills

Her poem pleased his earlobes
Her poem seduced his pained heart

As it weaved together several layers
And aspects of human flaws and foolery

And it not only gave him an understanding
Of everyday intricacies and enticements
But also a mirror of creativity and authenticity

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

John Grey

Horizons

The highway is long and flat in
keeping with the desert it crosses.
With every mile beyond the last town,
the number of stars in the sky increases.

With only darkness to compete with,
ten thousand or more of those sparkling
zircons make brilliant work of the only
direction unavailable to us.

We're stuck with the horizon, a blur
beholden to the nothingness around it.
But we need to be in Phoenix by morning.
The universe will have to wait.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

This Knight's Quest

I'm less captivated by beauty
than by a quest for epiphany.
I've devoted half my life
to being in a position
to reconcile a revelation
with a very human need.
I project the lineal ascent
of my ordinary life into
a kind of celestial splendor,
a glorious halfway house
with someone who, in turn,
comes down to it from above.
Yes, it's partly psychological,
partly theatrical but at heart
it's this compacted impulse,
reality's inheritance from dreams.
I don't need love to be perfect.
It already is.
My expectations have seen to that.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Gary Percesepe

Outbound

Seated at last in my writing chair,
something stirred beneath my pen.
The ceiling began its slow drip.
Pages blurred and bled as I recalled the
beautiful lacerations of bygone times.
Volcanic isles where we plotted revenge
or abandoned honeymoons.
With a jerk and a splash, floating in
lifeboats past a crying Crusoe, as
the ropes became water.
The rains came faster and faster
just wanting to be friendly.
We pitched and rolled toward dawn,
then flung at last into the mortal sea.
We clung to the square corners of
the sinking hull of the ship.
Beat together by testimonies of desertion.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

What The Buddha Said

I heard the Buddha say, "I look down on no one because every being will become a Buddha."

*"There is nothing falser to me," I replied,
"than a story that ends with catharsis."*

"You must be thinking of Aristotle," said the Buddha, pausing to light a Galois.

"I am not proud of my suffering," the Buddha said, "any more than a man who mistakes a rope for a snake is proud of his fright. My suffering has been a rope of emptiness so insignificant that it should dissolve like mist at dawn."

"I want to write down whatever I know about fear, but fear I would have time to write of nothing else. What do you think of that, Big Boy?"

The Buddha took a drag on his cigarette, "Then too there is the wisdom of the saints. Our way of life, as we are living it, is not worth saving. You get lost in those spaces where memory blurs into forgetfulness."

"No shit, Sherlock. In conversation, Mr. Buddha, you are like the fisherman with a number of lines he is constantly checking."

"Would you prefer the truth?" he asked. He had stubbed out the Galois and was fixing us two French martinis.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

“Who knows the precise hour of one’s arrival, anywhere? Your path is clear: You will find yourself naked under the open throne of sunlight and graves.” With that, he threw up. The martinis were very strong. I gave him a moment. He gave off a smell of burnt wiring and dirty motor oil. I still wanted to hear what he had to say but figured he was forty miles of bad road.

The soul, I thought, is a divine instrument, an aeolian harp which is not played by chance but by all the winds of despair that blow from the four quarters of human nature. The wind blows where it will, and the wind will carry it all away.

Still, I needed more from him. “More nudity is forecast,” he said.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Patricia Walsh

Buried With My People

Animated, pirouetting on another grave,
obvious certainties collaborate on spec,
a literate exit, closed on a myriad of lilies,
slave to form, meaning never sacrosanct.

It's a given, these trite platitudes, laughing once
the deed is done, sipping the free, wanting to be
remembered as a humorous sight, distributing
pleasantries worn thin as always, solitary, once
bereft, facing a mess of particulars.

Tweaking into some shape or form, niceties,
covert truths demanded a singular audience,
tears on the public eye, enough to comfort,
burning with open sleep, never getting over it.

Favourite songs declare themselves open,
standing on nearby graves almost a given,
borrowed flowers on the grave, a good touch,
names in-store a finality worth pursuing,
falling into the hole suddenly understood.

Picking through associates, resurging from the
slush, beef and salmon meals airbrushes the
decorum, the animated church recollects all its
darlings, under cover of one god, abandoned as
he is.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Inducing Vomiting

It is impossible to know the consummate way,
obsolete lights pervade the entry level,
this unusual mistake walks through apologies,
classic shows funded by anonymous states,
perfected food assuages the foreign country.

Starting out on a literature well-worn safe,
prohibitive postage dictates the purchase,
foreign death from an easterly wind a given.

Whatever happens, you will always be loved,
picking through fault aside, cutting this down,
the summer stench through a perfect letter,
rarity of form wholly passes through enmity,
this easier life doesn't wash well, probably.

Balcony or stalls, not given a hard choice,
highbrow insults taken on the quiet, forever
drowning on the banks, an existence for now,
just going home, a disgraceful entity, poetic
gems hunting through various tirades.

Repeatedly performing, selling out these venues,
art being quite useless, hiking up the price,
dark lovers clamoring for some redemption,
in house food wanting to be a genius, lamped in
front of others, this embarrassment returns.

A strange way of sweets, pennies a boon,
cola bottles a speciality, fizzed or unfizzed.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Lukewarm Coffee

Biding time, the unspeakable being the undrinkable, bleeding on the quays a favourite trait, testing and tasting too much, so what, local notices to announce some right affairs.

Going like a juggernaut on the new motorway, destination a poor reward for strenuous effort, looking at the state of affairs draining off water, the puss of you picked through infinite boredom.

Right bus, wrong direction. Sidling through traffic, the diesel slave scales through mediocrity, flushes of brilliance over an announced terminus, walking through sweated brows a treat.

This jovial alcoholism, meeting the convenience, freaking out over affection, given the go-ahead, saccharine balls not even covering ground, coffee now cold enough to drink, albeit slowly.

Shunted for convenience, biros getting depleted, holding on tile the sweet end, obsolescence gaining, killing hard-wired facts, fake news aside, tactical diatribes hardening this little break.

Granite certainties, this architecture rising, distributing numbers at a cost worth taking, traditional time-serving, scribbling for dear life, the coffee remains a prize, making thing work.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Karen Richards

If They Ask About Me, Say...

Say I was never a poet,
I was merely in love with words,
how they felt on my tongue and
the imprints they left on my heart.

Say I loved to dance but when my legs
no longer could, my mind waltzed,
sashaying our concrete dance-floor,
head feathered lightly against your chest.

Say I smiled, more than any person
brimming with pain should.
Tell them you could see it in my eyes,
the happiness, the love, the importance
of every minuscule moment I was given,
never wasted.

Say pink Gerberas were my favourite,
because I loved the way every petal overlapped,
always touching, embracing sunshine.
Say I was flawed, I made mistakes, some I learnt
nothing from, others shaped me.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Say I took a chance on love,
many times over and I found it,
the good and the bad, the forevers
which never seemed to last long enough,
only as long as they needed to.

If they ask about me, say something,
anything, so for a moment I know,
this life hasn't been lived in vain.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Absent Moon

an absent moon
leaves in its wake
only fractured stars
devoid of all light
just the way I felt
when you left

Olive Branch

When you ask why I write poetry,
I tell you it is like an olive branch,
offered by my closed mind,
to my open heart,
apologizing for the pain it has caused.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Joseph A. Farina

Timelines

It's a late September early morning,
under the first dark skies of autumn.
Trucks are queued to the bridge for miles,
waiting to cross the border.
I am alone at my office window-
trees are leaning,
pushed by a north wind southerly.
All is a darkened grey,
as low clouds threaten the first cold rain.
I watch and observe the transitions
from chiaroscuro to bright sunlight-
pedestrians traveling to coffee engagements
quicken their pace as the first drops fall.
I can feel their chill and wetness
as they huddle under sparse trees.
Couples oblivious to the weather smile,
gathering closer as they shelter.

I see and remember-
seeking cover from rain,
under turning leaves of red and gold.
First year books in a leather satchel,
a black bandana around her neck
and later poetry and mateus rosé.
Exploring Eliot and Cohan and listening for
entrance, as we laughed at our inexperience-

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

and as I look out my cold window,
back to present time and space.
I would dare to change set history,
bend physics to my will,
recoil the hurling universe,
to replay that laughter just once more,
and have that day stand still.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Memoriums

How shall we retrieve you?
Prayers to angels and gods will not recall you
No seances nor those who speak to spirits
Not we who loved you and knew your secret
names
Attendance at memorials serve only to increase
the distance from us
Our tears only cloud you further
We place your portraits and souvenirs in places
of honour
Like children, we smile at photos of you and us
in youth
Your ceaseless tending to our needs
Unjustly torn from our embrace
In labor and in love we remember you, through
inexorable tomorrows
Unable to deny the consequences of time

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Sons and Daughters of the Morning

We were children of the fifties,
with warrior fathers of the 8-hour shifts,
and mothers who stayed home all day.

In the shadows of smokestacks,
our world was our neighborhood.
In short cuts from porch to schoolyard,
our boundaries stretched each year.

As street and bicycle acumen grew,
days became far sighted.
Classmates, lost and left.
New sides were chosen,
as enemies or friends.

Geography and prejudice made it simple then,
until kites and strings no longer flew or bound
us, and bicycles became too slow.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Bolualabi. O

The Path We Choose

It's yours and mine to choose between life and death
Two have been crowned to us from heaven to earth
The evil and the good is gifted to all human
The life we live is defined by ones choice and we live as a man

We were not made crippled by the heavens itself
But we were given grace to choose light as darkness can't survive by itself
The independent darkness refuse to set us free so clinched to all man kind
We were made fortune by the heaven but the jealous giant to all won't be kind

So from heaven we have been given power to choose for our soul
Be it the right path or the wronged, it's our path we must finish the mission on earth
Choosing wronged isn't a crime but losing hope to get to the right path
Is the greatest offense which can be committed to one's soul

The path we choose...
Defined our life and one must be ready to wear the shoes

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Eratos: The Grassroot Love

It was the cold hand of morning that woke me
up and took me to the mountain as I looked up.
And I saw how the feelings started sprouting
out, like a vegetable planted beneath a river of
yamuna.

The very first day which my heart and mouth are
trembling.

But made up my heart as I opened the tap of
words that rushed out from my depth heart.
And ye digested it and took me in, like the way a
merciful woman took an orphanage in.

Now as time goes by, the night is whispering to
me,

Saying, "Say a warm goodbye."

And the coolness and brightness of morning is
saying loudly, "Keep it safe."

Five months or more has testified that am too
young.

But the only thing my shadow and heart is
saying is that "Thou aren't young."

Haven't I lost in the river of Takao?

The little bird is lost.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Kathy Jo Bryant (Poetree)

Land and Sea

Pablo Neruda, that Nobel Prize winner
Who loved the rough, wild sea
Would not enter a boat, even if it could float
But preferred on land to be

So he asked to be buried, in a ship-like home
Facing the Pacific Ocean
On that rocky outcropping, there was no
stopping
The crowd's overflow of emotion

Door To My Heart

Verdant growth
Of bush and vine

A foretaste sweet
Of love Divine

Guards the entrance
To my Heart

This double door
With decorative art

For what's inside
Where no one sees

Upkeep of the outside
Are clearly, the keys

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Dreams of Ethereal Bliss

My head is filled with ethereal bliss.
It's so full, It's hard to manage this.
A rainbow moon of gigantic size...
Just fills my dreams and is quite a prize!

I wander through the fluffy clouds.
I'm just alone, and away from the crowds.
But I search for you, and hope I'll find.
You're the love of my life, so sweet and kind.

Wait, just a minute, am I seeing things?
A beautiful figure floats toward me on wings.
How can this be? I must be in a dream.
It appears, things are not what they seem.

This sweet angel figure, comes near, my bed.
"Come meet your love, attired in gold thread."
I am led to you, Dear, and hug you so tight.
Then I wake, with a start...just a dream of the
night!

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Swayam Prashant

Butterfly

This has been since I started my journey
before four score and twenty,
but I have just come to know the truth
and I feel the secret I must reveal to you.
Tell yourself that you are a butterfly;
never stop flapping your passionate wings;
fly from flower to flower to serve and gather
honey;
it will keep you (a)live and energetic.
Repay each of them with your loving touch,
the memory they will forever carry;
Come what may never stop flapping your wings
and never stop flying from flower to flower.
Flowers are nothing but your little homes
your stay makes them divinely blessed;
When you stop not flying and flapping your
wings,
it makes your life's journey immortal.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Colours And Words

You don't know what makes people love you
until you discover it by standing outside
yourself.

Once I thought the simple poem, I wrote was too
unworthy to be read but was sweetly astonished
when an editor selected it for an anthology and
readers enjoyed it.

Truth exists amidst illusions; beauty lives
amidst chaos.

Dreams can create beauty by weaving shreds of
raw reality into symmetrical patterns, however
distorted or disorderly they might seem.

Colours and words, they dance their ways into
human soul and create music.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

A Village By The River

By the river, Mahanadi, my sweet village lies
where I have spent all my childhood days.
My father was a farmer, my mother a home-
maker, eight in all - five brothers and three
sisters were we.

What a tough job parents had to bring us up
to feed all well, keep us healthy and educate us
as well;

it was so difficult to manage a joint family
especially when brothers got married and had
children.

Father developed hypertension and to lessen it
had to read religious book Srimad Bhagabat*.
He was also used to listening to it read by
others, but it could not save him from a
heartache.

He died of suddenly while still listening to it,
read loudly in the neighbor's house.

My elder brother was the first graduate in our
village and also the first headmaster of a high
school.

Under his guidance I became a matriculate and
won a National Scholarship, became a graduate,
then a post-graduate and subsequently acquired
a Ph.D. degree.

I became a college teacher far away from our
village in a distant state.

More than thirty years have passed since I left
my village, but the memories of childhood days
come dancing before my eyes whenever I sit
ruminating over the past.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Not only the familial relationships, happenings,
events...

but the happy days among village friends in the
rustic carefree atmosphere.

Running after birds, walking in green paddy
fields, and bathing and swimming in the river
Mahanadi.

Playing soccer, cricket and rural games together
with friends all come crowding in the mind.

How I wish I could go back to my childhood days
again and enjoy the unalloyed rustic joy forever!

*(Srimad Bhagabat is a religious book of Hindus)

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Aleksandra Vujisić

Broken

It feels like waking up next to a ghost
and craving for life and getting lost.
And I want to hold the girl that I used to be.
Tell her that ancient secret for me doesn't
mean more than a sweet lie.
Come on little girl, be brave, don't cry.

Broken, like a glass of wine after a fight.
Broken with all that was mine, without no light.
Broken like a preacher of forgotten prayers.
Like a painting with no colours and layers,
and never asking the reason why.
Come on little girl, be brave, don't cry.

You have left me so many times before,
but I always tend to ask for more.
I never stop and never believe-
Come on little girl, be brave, just leave.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

The End

Let me hold your dreams while you shake off
the golden dust from your skirt.
Let me release my hopes that there is nothing
left for you to get hurt.

Let me open those curtains that hide the light
from your memories.
Let me share with you all the magical herbs,
let my words be your remedies.

Let me hold your pain while you slowly
walk down the path of never found peace.
Let me protect your eyes, wings of a
powerful bird that needs to be released.

Let me hold you dear like a flower
in my hand.
Let me share the loss, then the power
of coming to an end.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Love

I don't speak Japanese,
but they told me that
"Itoshi teru"
means I love you -
and that is what I do.

I would love to kiss you in French
saying *"je t'aime"*,
while you roll your eyes,
begging me to forget the cliché.

I heard from you *"Ich liebe dich"*
a couple of times in our decades
of love and fight, of dark and light
and maybe it was a *"я тебя люблю"*
but your words, always powerful and strong,
sounded like German to me.

I would maybe sing to you in Italian
waving from the window,
kissed by the Sicilian sun:
"Ciao bello".

And although my Chinese
is not so good,
I would try to be the one and only
emperor of your world, or a warrior
maybe, your own Mulan.

In Spanish I could try to use
castagnette more than words,
(although *"te quiero"* sounds
like an oath or a promise,

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

a dream, and a kiss).
And I would passionately try
to dance for you,
like there is no tomorrow
or need for sorrow,
or words that are
hurtful and simply hurled.
I would love you in all
the languages of this world.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Stephanie Daich

A Home That Is Blessed

The love of spouse and family
Of game night at the table
Where family gathers often
To build a home that's stable

Strong feelings unite the siblings
With experiences together shared
As they work together
A place they know they're cared

The loyalty of family
As they show up and cheer
Where sacrifices made daily
A place to wipe away fear

The heart learns to forgive often
And patience and virtue do test
Yet the greatest place on earth
Is a home that is blessed

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

As Our Relationship Turns To Dust

When we were last together
 You saw me in your light
A promised friendship forever
 A unity ever bright

Since then, I've born my soul,
 To the real me trapped inside
Acceptance is my ultimate goal
 No longer wanting to hide

Though few have stayed with me
 Most friends have closed the door
All because I let myself be
 I've lost my friends from before

Flooding me with sorrow
 More than the rest
you closed down our tomorrow
 Your disapproval you've expressed

Unchanging is my value
 My personality the same
I can't handle your displeasure
 As you now treat me with shame

I suppose I'll go on living
 As our friendship does combust
I'll work on my forgiving
 As our relationship turns to dust

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Always Chasing Something More

Always chasing, chasing, chasing.
Always chasing something more.
Why do I believe happiness?
Is just beyond the door?
My life is filled with goodness.
I have nothing I deplore.
Yet, instead of enjoying the moment,
I am frowning at the floor.
Why am I keeping track of others?
Trying to even up the score?
I have relatively good health.
Nothing on me is sore.
Why is finding contentment...
Such a heavy chore?
Always chasing, chasing, chasing.
Always chasing something more.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Linda Imbler

If Only

As Tantalus pleaded
All only ever out of reach
So shall I
For the alchemy of properly positioned syllables
The perfect mathematical equation of sounds
Whispered out from a broken heart
That allows me to have
That one last minute again
Before you take your last breath

As Garbo bid
From well-lit corners of her stage
So shall I
To get that perfect retake
The best possible script written
Delivered in most dramatic fashion
To re-create the final scene
To assuage my grief
At the stunning irreversibility
Of your death

(Previously Published At Scarlet Leaf Review, 2017)

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

The Waiting Man Paints His Mind

No one stops to listen
while the holy painter
describes his technique,
and why he chose his colors thus.

Even with his pitiful disassociation,
dreams of this portrait will haunt him.

None suspect
his stuffed background of experiences.
This unimportant man, this waiting man
who asks the day if anyone feels love.

A torture battles his thousand spirits,
as the sanity thief lurks,
unwilling to offer
a reasoned viewpoint.

Inside this consequence,
his spooky abilities
still let him manage his brush-
fresh paint thrown upon the canvas.
He shifts his emphasis
to the form of the subject,
until he completes his binding task.

And no one stops to listen, nor answer,
as this waiting man asks if anyone feels love.

(Previously Published in Mad Swirl, 2020)

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

The Most Deafening Sound

The most deafening sound is:
a silence born of fear.

The evil spell of a struggling need to
speak one's mind while leaving traces
of a terrible time:

Wherein, the sinister has happened,
and all wicked deeds have been covered up.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Carol Aronoff

The Wisdom of Sunflowers

Their roots take in
the toxic waste
of thoughtless acts,
transform them
into food for thought,
into flowering.
Young heads turn
always towards
the sun. When
there is no sun,
they turn towards
each other.

Sun gods incarnate
with all-seeing eyes,
uplift nations, stand
watch over dreamers,
ornament graves. In rain
and wind, they bow like
supplicants, shed seeds
of possibility yet to
germinate. Even when
dried and past their
bloom, they feed us—
asking nothing in return.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Who?

Dusk has given way
to prayer, a solemn
and holy recounting
of our place in nature

It is once again night;
day has released me
to walk among sleepy,
moonlit flowers, to dream

An owl rests on a branch
of the rainbow shower tree,
rustles folded wings
and asks, Who? Who?

I say to the owl, I see you,
but cannot answer who,
carry the question like a
candle lighting my breath

I hold the query, precious
bud, close to my heart, hope
it will flower as wisdom—
a wish-fulfilling jewel

that leads me to who I am.
Aside from thoughts and
memories, when I look within
there is nothing I can find.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Uncertain Times

some days
suspended in amber
an inclusion in limbo
in disbelief
in sorrow

some days floating
like anemone
here and there
in turgid waters
going nowhere

then brief mornings
clouds break away
lightening a dull
inner landscape
hopeful wind sigh

seeking a way
to thrive in this
between time
seeming void
with no landmarks

without touch
or certainty
or ready prophecy
without remedy
easily named

the only place
still open
twenty-four / seven:
the patient
loving heart

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Kay Watkins

Ode To The Rainbow

Sometimes, just sometimes, it pays to go out in
the rain.

You never know what can happen unless you
face your pain.

I usually just want to stay inside,
close the blinds, stay in bed, curl up and hide.

But once I summon up the courage really quite
near,
I can face the storm without any fear.

You just never know, unless outside you go...
there just may be that glorious rainbow.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Beauty In The Wreckage

A friend once said,
"There is beauty in the wreckage once
sorted out one will find treasures which
were hiding amid the debris."

Such an encouraging quote
Such an interesting thought
For the days I screwed up
Feeling down and overwrought

Times I feel so unlovable
Times I feel lacking worth
Broken and totally wrecked
Questioning the value of my birth

But then I remember
The beauty I see in some old, broken shells
The ones tossed out by the ocean
When the tide really swells

And I will remember
That despite my imperfections
Some love me anyway
There's no need for inspections

"Beauty in the wreckage"?
Old and broken, I feel is me
Yet I'm still "treasure that is hiding
amid the debris"

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Sunlight

Dapples of sunlight
Poking through the Live Oak trees
Sunlight shining through
Refraction of light making prisms
Imprinted on my soul
Let the light shine through me, too
Showing forth myriad of colors
Adding warmth and making me whole
I seek out the sunlight
Looking for it through the trees
Diamonds of light sparkling through the green
And breathing deeply whenever it's seen

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Jaber RC

A Fatherless Child

A fatherless child
Looking for a safe life
But how will he get it?

A fatherless child
Hoping for freedom
But how will he get it?

A fatherless child
Waiting for justice
But how will he get it?

A fatherless child
Seeking a looted right
But how will he get it?

A fatherless child
Wanting to call a country as his
But how will he do it?

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Carol Tahir

Masks

I'm good at hiding behind masks.
Whether it be a mud, egg, honey or an emotional
mask.
I need no Halloween to have a cover-up face.
Every day is a mask of different colors.
A mask of different faces.
The question is, which will it be tomorrow?

Faces

I shop for wigs and hats, like I used to look for
new hairdo's.
A hat for every day in different styles and colors.
An assortment of colors and shapes of wig.
This is my life now.
I can be a blonde and have more fun.
I can be a sultry redhead.
I can choose a chestnut brown.
It can be any length.
Long, short, mid shoulder,
I can be a new me on the outside.
But inside, I am vulnerable.
I am scared, and I am staving off an invader.

I need people to hold space.
I need people to hold a hand.
I need people for hugs.
I need people to listen when I rant.
I need people to know my fears.
I need people to help hold my space.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Paul Edward Costa

Flames, Blacksmiths, Icicles, Show Me Your Vortex

I'm here,
not to challenge physics,
but to speak what I do know:

You blacksmiths,
claiming no culpability
where thermodynamics apply,
stand by and marvel
at molten orange
freezing over,
while burning fingers,
with a frosted façade,
saying "This might be my final form,"
instead of embracing
their earnest fever.

What cause withholds you then,
from warning them
about blasphemous binary lies?
Both factions meet again,
criss-crossing new sides—
folding in possibilities,
doubling down on one ideal, its shadow,
or letting each impersonate the other,
like these blazing snowfalls
and sub-zero infernos.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Staring Down The Reduced Blue Dragon

Windstorms coming through my cracked mirror,
howl and wail like harmonies
of an avant-garde symphony.

I reinforce the frame to perfection
and win awards for designs,
holding back my other half.

His invisibility simply means
I'll sense him everywhere he could appear.
Only containing what he is by knowing his
location through a constant vigil of what I'm
blessedly not.

Conjoined with visceral warnings
of what I could become.
Angling my stance off to one side,
without letting a reflection of myself
line up with his visage,
in the soft, transparent barrier
between our private yards.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Jude Brigley

Dreams of 1966

In lockdown, time plays tricks.
Sometimes you wake after a dream,
and just for a moment you are
in 1966. Your home alive with
people who can only live now
in your mind's eye, but are
as cantankerous as ever, arguing
over the World Cup and whether
to support England, in the absence
of Wales.

Poised to start your studies
in earnest, you only care about
English results, and reading the
library dry. Aberfan's tip is poised
to slip down the valley with its
heavy black sleeve, crushing hope.

Bobby Searle turns to Huey P. Newton
and names himself black panther
ready to strike through injustice.
But now awake, I read of the Valley
sites which could tip their balance,
of the duality of Welshness,
and the matter of blackness.

Still, I reach for poetry, despite
discouragement of word inaction.
Sadly, it seems not everyone had that
real Dream that buoyed me up with
the hope of a new rising.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

The Magic Show

She longs for parties
and the rustle of silk
music in the treetops,
and the moon
regarding jealously
the merriment
of fugitive faces.

A rabbit from the pot
can jokingly be pulled,
but is no substitute
for magic's rat-a-tat.

No mandolin or violin
scrapes its chords
to make the sounds
which start the heart
and tap the foot
in riotous regard,
so that a stranger's smile
can be embracing.

Once she sang of meetings
on the road, maidens
all forsaken near a river,
but now she looks into a glass
only to see her own mouthing
as if another spoke her words
despite her own volition.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

He places the carving
on the grass
as if to charm
their rough features
into human form.

She sees the woman
wrapped like a pioneer,
but cannot tell him
that she sees herself
trapped in a wooden form
when all her senses
want the footsore
dancing and the danger
of tricks not fully
understood.

But still she places
the carving on the window frame
in case some tall enchanter
finds a way
to smooth the nicks of time
and pressure,
making the music play
and her voice sing.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

May Lene Reodique

Life's Journey

In my journey of life,
many times I stumble.
I get bruises and wounds,
but I don't mind them at all.

Instead they serve
as my foundation to continue;
My elixir that makes me strong!
In every failure I learn a lesson.

I drink from the cup of tears,
and I eat on the plate of pain.
But like the sun,
I rise after every storm.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

All I Need

I haven't heard
any news about you.
All this time you were quiet,
as quiet as the dead,
lying in their graves.

I trace your shadow
in the back of my mind.
But your image is blurry,
like dark clouds in the sky.

Day and night I patiently wait.
Hoping to hear anything from you.
But in the end, I got nothing;
Except the glacial fangs of pain.

This pain is slowly killing me.
It poisons my whole system.
Like maggots on a corpse,
it creeps from body to brain.

I want to stop thinking about you.
So that I can move on with my life.
But I need a word or even a clue,
that I should now close
this chapter of our story.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

In Time Of Need

In time of need
when you feel that
you are slowly sinking
into the well of despair...

And it seems like
you don't have anyone
to hold on to.
Kneel down and pray.

Ask God for help.
But don't just pray.
Act and make way,
to fill your need.

Plow the ground,
and plant the seed.
One day you'll taste the fruit
you dream of eating.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Courtney Glover

Demesne

I never know how he'll react, what will anger
him, what he may or may not say.
His moods ever-changing like the shifting March
winds of a tumultuous and rainy May.

It's hard to adjust one's chakra, steady one's
heart, and calm one's chaotic soul.
His unstable temperament inconstant and
having gotten extremely old.

To be denied love and affection, unloved and
unadored.
Yet still expected to fly, demanding me to ever-
higher soar.

Though my wings, callously broken, again and
again and again.
My soul shattered by cruelty and hate, as if I'm
his personal demesne.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Beware

Beware the dark
Beware the deep
Beware the places
Where nightmares creep

Beware the darkness
Beware the deep ravine
For monsters lurk
In places unseen

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Dear John

Dear John, I cannot fathom a world without you in it.

I cannot understand why you felt so alone or so unloved.

Your smile was the brightest in the room, your laughter was contagious.

You had the kindest, sweetest soul of anyone I've ever known.

But your eyes, they always seemed so sad, like your soul was broken.

You just couldn't escape the volatile situations or the manipulation...

No matter how far you ran, nor how many times that you tried.

And now you're gone. And I'll never see your sweet smile or hear your infectious laughter again.

I pray you found the peace in death that you could never find in life.

You'll be missed forever and a day, dear sweet John.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

TAK Erzinger

Mid-life

Under my coat, I pulsate
like a Dutch bulb ready to
emerge from its sepal.
I've already faced the darkest day
and settled in this soil.
I want to rush this moment,
to reveal what I have become
but the travel has been more robust
than I've anticipated.
I need to wait out this hibernation.
A half a life away now, a lingering
fog begins to lift, I notice even the
meagre trees are full of buds,
I think I hear a birdsong.
Let the days slowly lengthen;
I might not catch its first light but
my thoughts turn towards its warmth.
In spring, I shall emerge shawled
in ripened skin, perennial and strengthened.
Far off, a young girl departs from home
bearing down the path, her beacon,
the promise of the journey.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Rebellion

This land has taken me for itself.
It has claimed the person I once was
consumed me like a juicy cutlet.
Its tongue sucking at my marrow,
licking me clean, leaving me feeling
exposed like bones.

At the foothill, it swallowed up a girl I once
knew.
Its earth sneaks into our skin and tickles us
and we absorb its soil and still it hungers for
more.
It pushes against the village where homes hang
over the valley, a battle of the wills.

Growing, when no one's looking,
it calls back the heron, the raptors
and wild and pushes up flowers, a distraction,
as it slowly overtakes this space.
In the forest, I wander and watch overgrowth
carpet patches of this place.
Industry has given up and a generation of who
resided in this hollow are called back to nature
one-by-one.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Nkrumah Bankong-Obi

That The Storm Settles

I hold a vine to fend
Hitchhiking on curvy climbs
Bent, our fragility
Helped by the sun and sea salt
I let it flow in rivulets
And then up Ganges River
Which swirls on the faith
Bathing Gandhi's solitary soul
Its washing speed spruces earth
Poring swamps for new seeds
To cool the burning rage of ravens

When the storm at Yerevan stalls
And turrets hide martial tails
I scurry to Campania for a grape gulp -
Amalfi coast opens a door of two shades;
One time, nature is canvass on black skies
And soon, she smiles by gleaming sunshine
I drift on shells of Camorra's sinful scenes
And trail albatrosses of squeamish men
Sons turn down carved hills and olives
To embrace the of death metal

I will run to Allah and to Buddha
And say a prayer at Halabjah
For souls in a despot's purgatory-
The stonewall built on memory cells
Along the strip to the Ziggurat of Ur
I will sing and fantasize about the beloved
Timbuktu

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

And the temples lost to brown faith
Scrolls dotting aged lips
Say a word about the much lost
To lustful guns
I return to the banks of Bemi, the queen
Snarling in light and loneliness
To call for silence...

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Zaki Biam '02

We have been to the tombstone
And seen its sallow smiles
At Biam, half the temple is a tuber
Another, a text of bullets
Mercies of memory mould
The bones at Oleh, tars
Suitors wheeling witness wreaths
The leavened blood calcified by harmattan
Retreats at the deadweight of politics
Justice is a morsel
Eaten with slimming fluids

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Vote Toss

*The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.*

-W.B. Yeats, The Second Coming

The story is leased to colour
Fear and bleak wore togas to polls
Effigies rose to rostrums
Sunken populists bear dud ideas

The crash and tumble of loudmouths
Widened uncouth gobs
And racists bite the dust
Of the shards picked from fibs

A virus whispered to the greenback
To spite workers of pull-and-rule
Honchos of colour billiards, the
Men latching on flames to flip borders

Prophecies fail at bilious altars
Crowds huddle on sills to catch news-bits
Resolute against blurry blustery
Pollsters scramble wit to wreck fainting hopes

The anarchist casts off his cloak
And in market squares, he tends the skin
As receptacle for vote offering

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Sofia Kioroglou

On The Death Of My Father

You are gone and with you I cannot converse
my prayer our only communication channel
This phone call will certainly reach you

My cries no longer heave
I have started to play the piano again
got that pixie cut with long bangs

I know you are well
I can feel you
I see you smile

Hypochondria Winking At Grime

As time rolls by,
the twain shall eventually meet
with scraps of knee jerk iconoclasm
starting to meekly recede.

Years of being together
have mellowed my tetchiness,
brimful ashtrays no longer call for
scathing versified onslaught.

The caterwauling about dripping faucets,
not affecting him too much,
my hypochondria now winking at grime.
In love's dazzling and menacing world
our hearts melt in its immensity.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Melanie Garfinkel Waknine

My Pebble

How could it be that time passed us by
searching to correct all which made us cry.
Among the grains of sand a pebble appeared,
overwhelmed by the anticipation to view it
the moment neared!

Pebbles get weathered yet are strong and
unique, the most beautiful and perfect may take
years to seek.
Once in your hands examine it and decide,
if it's worth being in your collection
of love and pride!

Only one pebble can emit a ravishing shine
no imperfections- like a moment in time.
The more and more it is handled and glanced
upon, you realize you possess a piece of nature
it can do no wrong...

Was it luck or some Divine intervention
that only to this pebble did I pay most attention?
When one finds something precious the value is
immense, and the sense of appreciation
is profoundly intense.

Pebbles are keepsakes of times reminiscent
of a past history we wouldn't want to be
different. As we delve into thoughts the pebble
reveals its true self, oceans of joy and happiness
overflowing with wealth...

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

The Buds Did Not Bloom

(Dedicated to the 19 children and 2 adult teachers
who perished in the mass killing at an elementary
school in Uvalde, Texas on 24 May 2022)

Nineteen beautiful buds
slowly beginning to bloom-
plucked and ravaged so vilely
taken from earth way too soon.

Together with two mature roses,
mowed down amongst the carnage:
to this once colourful 'garden';
we collectively need to pay homage.

Precious souls and loving faces
they belonged in crystal vases-
to sit with pride atop the mantle;
now, a flickering flame from a candle...

Fountains of tears spurt
as we say goodbye and weep-
roses and buds return to the soil,
their names in our hearts to keep.

Compassion and care
during difficult times-
are truly more powerful weapons,
it's YOU it defines.

Let's hope and pray
these crimes will end,
there will be no urgency
to defend- one another
from the murderous and crazed-
life WILL go on, no fear, unfazed.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Ocean's Potion

A large deep smile engulfs
whatever's in its wake –
make no mistake
it's ready to take
your breath away...

Pristine whites flash
as azure waves crash
against rough sea enclaves.

Glistening and sparkling
crystal droplets
dance and prance
reaching a crescendo–
safely fall, yet through it all
go with the ebb and
natural flow.

Nautical-magical-spiritual
captivating and exhilarating
surfing the surf
on the ocean's turf.

La Mer
is not to be played with
if you dare
she doesn't care
will draw you in
under erratic tidal skin–
you CANNOT win...

Ocean's magnetic
and hypnotic potion
will savour its prey
with unrelenting
zero devotion...

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

David Ehrgott

I Go Slow

The heart can't help what it holds
All that it remembers
The warmth and the cold
When you hold a body close to it, it grows
Then only the future knows of what can unfold
So I hold you as close as I know
So it won't break I go slow
For the one for sure that I know
The heart cannot help what it holds

Sometimes it fills up with hate
The heart cracks with hurt and then breaks
Forgiveness comes way too late
The makeup just won't fix the fate
This story is finally told
The heart cannot help what it holds

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Evie Groch

Where Life Should Begin

A wanton wind exhales
through the cracked windowpane,
pushes up against the edge of night.
Empty cradles rock themselves,
awaiting the return of lullabies,
lost forever in limbo status.
Much is amiss in this unnatural
nursery, caring for no one in the
orphaned cities of Ukraine.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Time Sequence

Not to worry--they're after them,
not us--a religious thing.
Just the synagogues
subjected to gun violence.

Oh God, they've come for the churches.
It can't be--what have we done?
We're the innocents, still a religious thing,
with targeted shooting.

Why the hospitals?
No religious ties in here.
Just the sick, the injured.
The vulnerable.
But not immune to guns.

Now the schools--why them?
No longer religious.
Children, teachers gunned down.
Left to bleed or hide under
another's blood.

Why the supermarkets?
The shoppers, clerks,
food providers?
Why the concerts?
Why the marathons?
Why the parades?
Have we not been paying attention?
Rewind to the synagogues.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

The Tide

When it ebbs along the Santa Monica beach,
I am lured into it, sidestep the slippery seaweed,
stand erect in the saline solution.

Waters wash over my fair-weathered feet,
stinging where parted pebbles have opened
pores.

I close my eyes, exhale into the briny breeze,
imagine solitary serenity with the world.

I am on the blurred delineation between
solid and liquid, the line where one
becomes the other, where boundaries merge.
Consciousness combines sea life and shore life.
Lives redefine themselves, and I am aware of it
all.

Suddenly thunder rolls in, waves inflate,
huge and loud, threaten to abduct me.

I put my steps in quick reverse,
speed walk back to safety.

Shells in sand impede my retreat
as I affirm the lessons of the shore:

Chaos follows calm, one must follow the other.

The tide has no option, will never change its
ways.

I acquiesce.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Allison Grayhurst

Combat-Zone

How do I receive a future,
inheritor of such a dense darkness?
Healing is spared, the sunburn
grows into a rash and takes over
the possibility for stillness, sanity.
Every day I am splintered, struggling
to conquer the dominant strain
lacerating my equilibrium with
its anarchy and drive.

I see the black hole conjunct
with the sun, transitions
that can transform any wound
into a terrifying progression.
I embody lethargy as the renouncer
of hope in the afternoons where
there is nothing to understand.

Fantasy is not a future, not
a worthy evaluation, though hypnotic
in its almost tangible relief.
It is not about an unfortunate circumstance,
but about the journey of my faith,
the validity of miracles and God's gracious love.

Sing me a future. Do I believe?
Do I step down from all insight
and fall into an agnostic stand-still?
Do I accept this nullifying reality,
impenetrable, embrace meaninglessness,
and lose my final ground?

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Crisis

Release this sickness from my spirit,
call me to recuperate, to be on the verge
of a tremendous awakening, and then
to cross over.

Pluck me from this impending catastrophe.
It is yours to do and no one else',
to solve the riddle and allow me
to heighten my focus, undistracted by
this draining burden.

In this place, there is silence,
has been for so long, silence enough
to make any atheist gloat,
affirming a barren heaven, denying
everything that does not serve gravity
and inevitable darkness.

But I am no atheist.
I have felt your ground-shaking tenderness
envelop me, make me yours, eternal.
I have known your great mercy,
your personal love,
your taking away what must be gone
and letting stay what I cannot live without.

But here, in this spawning hell of hopelessness,
I cannot find you, cannot hear your
whisper or your guidance out.
I am scared and at the end.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Every day the birds wake at 4am
and sing your glory.
I know your glory, and so I must see
this harrowing hardship as an illusion,
crack this façade and its senseless insides,
hold it to your light, saturate in your light,
and believe in that light, only.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Luisa Reyes

In A Whirl

I pull to the side of the road, and I sob
Enduring another harangue has made my heart
throb

Having never consulted my father about
something so dear, I do so with reluctance,
hesitation, and fear

To my surprise, he is both sympathetic and kind
Making my spirits swell and sorrow disappear
from my mind
Yet another day entails another wailing lament
When I thought my driving for her would make
her content

Longing for some understanding, I call him
again
Being filled this time with the typical belittled
chagrin
Eons ago I was his very favorite one
But standing up for my mother and my brother
rendered it finished and done

Now none of the three have the slightest regard
for me
And I wonder if I didn't act most foolishly
When I stumble upon pictures of him happily
running
With his little granddaughter who is equally
stunning

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Tears well up in my eyes as I see I'm not missed
And it dawns upon me that I was never remiss
Were personal gain my single most compelling
desire
I certainly erred in provoking his resentments
and ire

But I followed my innermost principles of right
and wrong
Filling my heart with forgiveness and the
soothing nature of song
Seeing a picture of me as an accomplished
young girl
I hug her, allowing joy to come over me in a
whirl

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

A Warm Autumn

“Global Warming just doesn’t exist!”
“Climate Change is a myth!” they insist
But as summer gives way to Fall
Filling up one’s weekends with football
The college stadiums in The South
Make people feel dry at the mouth

For heat exhaustion is so real
That passes and tackles lose their appeal
The leaves just aren’t turning yellow
While people try hard to stay mellow
But with daily record-breaking heat
Good air conditioning just can’t be beat

As the months mount up full of drought
People are really beginning to doubt
Autumn used to mean cooler weather
When touchdowns could bring us together
Yet now it seems like pumpkins and scarecrows
Will melt in the warmth of our meadows

Have we erred and is it too late?
To take care of our planet so great?
Let us hope that we have learned
A palatable autumnal equinox must be earned
For swirling in piles of leaves in the Fall, like a
dance
Is part of our natural earth’s refreshing trance

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

A Homeless Encore

Aimlessly driving along the highway
The rooftops seem distant and far away
We dream about having a home
While on asphalt we continue to roam

Amidst all our homeless confusion
Such abodes are a heartfelt illusion
It is tempting to cry and to grouse
About us never having a house

Yet once we did have a dwelling
That was small but for us quite compelling
We had parties that were wholesome and fun
And fondly remembered by more than just one

Playing the piano and singing
Paired with dances that were happy and swinging
Now seem so far out of place
They are hard to recall and embrace

To yield not to despair and persist
Is what we must do to exist
So we search for a weekly hotel
That isn't so moldy we'll end up unwell

Desperately seeking some simple stability
We find it is never of long durability
So when relatives begrudgingly say we can stay
Our relief lasts at most but a day

For troubles of old do arise
Giving distress a momentous reprise
And our car remains partially packed
In the event, this encore needs to be quick to enact

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Nardine Sanderson

Where The Sea Has Housed Her Heart

Where does one begin, I tell you at the start!
How well I knew the day's and night's in such a
tender way – something unfamiliar comes, with
the sudden dray. A dreary conception or a
phantom afterthought, I was mid between the
lines, when my Eleanor was caught. Caught by
my affection, caught where hearts proceed to
form, and bond between the heaven's angels,
and the open seas that fraught. Down inside the
everlasting waves of my contentious being, I
could not misplace the love and value I was
seeing.

How on earth could clouds define such a
tempest way to act, and strike the winds of
trouble towards a love way low to act? Had there
been a lover's paradise waiting on the shores of
hell, a kingdom of my sufferance, I hand, and
foot had fell. Oh, nights were sweet within her
hold, and gaping wounds belong to the sun, and
there she lay on trepid vows long before I called
us one. Ahhh, the sweet melancholy of the
starlight onlooking the burning nothing, but my
sweet surrender left her there but yearning.

Solid tears of anguish, the turning over of that
tide, left her body dosed with white as if the
sand her landing. Snowy lips and pale remains
of a smile sure to spark the darkest of flow had
my mind the very concept of where she might

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

long to go. Oh the heavens moved promiscuous
and catch a glimpse of her attire and set the
boundaries of love, on a whimsical desire, and
death became her inner vision and her promise
to obtain, but there bewildered was her heart,
for pressing love was vain.

So the night became her, lips all blue stark and
deplete, a love that brought the angels down, too
walk upon their feet, and there the love was
forgiven to translate none but burning awe. The
light would shine upon the grave of my dear
sweet armor. Should the sea obtain her beauty
and surge the remaining values to me, her grace
be told. As ever gold on the wretched waves of
thee, I'm inset to remain here in discontent with
loves remains and find my eyes with tears of salt
like her perfection framed.

How does love leave patterns my skin may brace
the time's age ahead, my bittersweet it is this
love for Eleanor is dead, wrapped tightly in
waters breath, and death may keep her still?
Oh, the sorrow of my heart who longs to hold
her dying will. To the cliff, she took her
thoughts, and the wind was harrowing just the
same. Oh, sweetly that bitter end had whisked
her off again, and rain the stormy seas make
wavers out of this fair love, buried down below
the tide, as angels watch above. Silk dress in
the eyes of blue and white makes her a
bride, but still, the silent ocean seeks to house
her and the tide.

So I must endure the pain and, in my
sufferance, haunt the hall's, and plead with any

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

storm that's coming, or any wind that calls. My Eleanor might resemble the lightest spark of this here heart, but those who wish to seek it true shall find it well and dark. I made a vow to undertake my love to my asserting grave and the more I find in life, without her here that sweet death I crave. Oh, to be the inland where she washed the tears of her affliction and gave the more asserting look towards opium addiction. Where the clouds reach in mind, she cast away her guilt there for and seems as light, her inner fight had knocked upon the door, of a heaven she once called upon to retreat from her own sorrow. Ask the Lord above her now, for salt like tears I cannot borrow.

Love may lead the temptation of a tortured soul to glorious light but call upon the very nature to proceed as right. Had she not a lifeless limb, I'd delight within a million trials, but something reassures my being, it's true love that neither fails. There must be a greater theme than death beside her longing heart, for how could she have ever leaped, but fell where world's depart. Oh, the irony of a bitter butterfly to fall from the sky above, I watched as she grew wings from I, and scored the seeds of love. And so to say I must retrace from moments she has left behind, and madness seeks to compose my heart, for Eleanor and I were bound. I have loved beyond this frailty the cruelties of a dark displeasure, and find none but her own heart, in my daily leisure.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

When the season frightened comes from all the lands beneath that sea, she is that everlasting sanity in the corridors of me. Oh, cruel and tantalous variations my soul makes grave her breath, for I must live to tell her story well and due before my death. Objects in the halls of haunting, make shadows of fire in my eyes, and no one who trespass here, could not hear the cries. Such a lady fair with amber, and pale-faced just like the sun, can only imagine the pain in her heart, when drowning had begun.

My poor love had many moments that she could not suppress or tame with joy a missing piece upon the fire and her flame. What makes the heart grow darker than anything else, to say the least, she could not give in to the hunger of death's beast. Oh, my darling Eleanor who pleased my soul and made thence with love, could never learn the language of her morning dove but flew from me to an unknown place where grace behold, I love her still, like a madman hunted for his breath, for she shall not nor ever will. And so I must endure the pain unto my death, when the seasons turn, and so the fire in my soul, it is Eleanor then pleased might yearn.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Eleanor's Poems

(Decorum)

How bittersweet is sleep, the pillage of the end.
Where death evades the breath of life and silence is a friend.
For what becomes of us and love?
Does it last eternity and seek freedoms like a dove?

(Values)

I cannot place my value on a single string that love would play.
For I am mortified that death might take away.
All that I had valued in a single note of bliss.
And once it comes, the blue unpleasant, might linger longer than a kiss.

(Forgiveness)

Must I ask forgiveness, from the dark void that steals the light?
Love would armor any hand, but willingness to fight.
For love it lives in shallow ground, the water takes its toll.
And there is would justify that ache within my soul.

(Starlight)

This the night so bitterly divided, and starlight makes an interesting scene.
But not before we are subsided for all the love that lays between.
How does one then reach the heavens, whilst the clouds all rage with rain?
And that lonesome wind it calls, unto my heart again.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

(Live In Him)

Will the tapestry weave his soul into webs of my
sleeping limbs?

For I have suffered long and hard but waiting for the
hymns.

A song might play against the waves and morrow
bring the dawn, but I have many times before felt as
if forlorn.

Oh, sorrows plague me in the heart, where he alive
can only dwell.

And tender, I may live in him a holy light as well.

(Clovers In The Rain)

When the light shines on the clover and rain persists
to fall, luck might grant him pardon and not hurt at
all.

For what of his heart when faith insists, he be as
brave, only to find his gentle love falls upon a grave.

(Judgment)

Might judgement call this dusty place, a lifeless
home and deaths disgrace.

For withered like an evening rose, the ocean greets
beside and throws.

Back and forth the moon of night, only to greet
the lending light.

Which shadow on my pale face, and all those angels
lead with grace, to a paradise unknown, when seeds
of love are set aside, because that love had slowly
died.

(Alleviate My Pain)

If the harrowing wind shall brace these arms, like
they have never loved before,

and heavens grounds shall reap thus soul, in high
tides evermore.

Should you find the cold limbs of an enchanted tree,
turning barren,

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

no fruits held down by the seasonal rupture of a
seaside.

Down with roots, buried in a tomb misplaced, when
grace has left the light behind, alleviate my pain my
darling, for love I say I've lost my mind.

(Surrender Not To Death)

Surrender not to death my darling, for long might
angels sing.

What I can't nor dare to say, as an offering
surrendered hearts they plead for light,
and mine well due might glow, but only as a star
might wonder, towards the night and so.

Deep breaths would have been hard below the tiding
sea, and as you know, I loved thee so, more than life
in me.

(Reconcile)

Can you begin to reconcile the love within your heart
my dear,

for all is dark without a flame, and I fear the end is
near.

How does one tell the heart to stop, it loves forever
just the same,

and nothing can relieve that ember of my aching
pain.

For I am lost amongst the dark, my darling, awaiting
the coming light,

and so I say, it soon is day, but leave thee in the
night.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

The Only Letter I Could Not Send

Dearest beloved,
Do not weep, for I am sleeping, and paradise it
holds the light. A frail moon would lay with
doom and all the stars would fright. But you, my
darling Edgar, might not understand me now.
Long ago, we were so young and strong enough
somehow. My very weakness proceeds me, to the
cliff face and the tide, a place of rest for ghosts
they haunt, I kept it all inside. I shall lay with
sorrow at the rushing of the stormy sea, and
there make heavens' angels come, and waves
would cover me, and love would neither part the
way. It lives eternal like our vow, you may hold
my heart against the pressing chamber now, so
leave not the window open, and place more rose
to pasture there. For I was loved so tenderly, but
in my depths' despair, forever seems to promise
something. I know you'll love and never leave,
but ghost or darkness, I had nothing but my
lungs to breathe. In my shallow water, the rocks
make better use of me, and so my tears lay
hollow, too. Into the deepest sea, where loves
sweet accordance won't crave me in the
wretched end. For you, my sweet darling, were
my one and only friend. Love me in the seasons
when the amber takes to heavens sky, and leave
me not without a rose beneath the tide, for I.
-Eleanor

As so loved for many years, my Eleanor of light,
and as the haunting so begun, it was my only
right.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Needless to say I loved her hard, embraced she
was by death's great tide, and I was broken
beyond measure for my darling bride.

There lays a tomb of troubled souls, whom could
not bear the other to leave, and so one died, the
other cried, and haunted I believe.

Two ghosts may travel the waves, of love into the
ocean deep, love forever haunts, the halls in
shadows that they keep.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Dibyasree Nandy

The Lute of the Stars

At the edge of the moor, on a summer's eve;
Breeze through the forest ripples, the clouds
leave;
Fingers play the Lyra's harp, the stellar tune
above the knoll;
The Orion in pursuit, the Seven Sisters of the
Pleiades call.
A rill of crystal in the air, the Cygnus serenely
swims;
Andromeda's wistful dreams;
Oh, the sublime hymns;
Like the flow of ethereal waters as Aquarius
commands;
The orchestra of Aurora Borealis demands.
From one stream to another, the Delphinus
leaps;
Its radiance blinds, the immortal Horologium
weeps;
Locked in eternal battle with Hydra, Heracles the
hero;
Meteorites fly past, overwhelming like Draco and
Scorpio.
Meadow of silver blooms, Aries and Capricorn
feed;
As darkness descends, Pyxis shall lead;
Cassiopeia's tiara, bedecked with sapphires
blue;
The tails of comets, masts in the heavens, the
Vela flew.
Silks of Virgo's dress;
The plumes of the Columba's caress;

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

The Corona to the North, the Crux to the South;
Regally it roars, Leo opens its mouth.
Lepus in the woodland of ink;
In the pools speckled with white, the Lupus
arrives to drink;
Celestial truth by Libra shall never tip;
Thy empyrean lute shall sound even when the
seasons flip.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Carl Scharwath

Tears

Lacrimal glands creating
basal, emotional, and reflex tears
they say are good for your eyes.

The hypostases of three
in a washtub of emotional water
overflowing in sad memories.

The misery of life within,
when a memory of you evaporates like
leaves migrating in the wind.

Your name on my lips, aching
to talk to you again in the
quiet moods when I forgot the words.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Weslea Sidon

Only A Crow

It's only a crow I say,
after the excitement of the shadow on the field
was not the snowy owl
we all believed would appear
the way the painted bunting did, once.

Only a crow I muse,
remembering the crow who built her nest
in Washington Square Park
and how we stood, a crowd of well-wishers
united in awe that this creature
of the wild suburbs would grace
our park, bless the tree so small,
she had to go to the tallest branch
to escape our reach.

Before the red-tailed hawk became famous
on public TV and peregrines eating pigeons
became old news, one crow delighted us.
Only a crow, and enough.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Decisions

Snow is a swirling mural where there should be road.

Torn between safety and beauty,
I slow and try to focus on the shoulder,
or the line that might be visible along the edge.
Is this where it should end, this life spent
swirling in a maelstrom of practical and
wonderful, searching for/abandoning the edge?
Too many secrets in that question, too much to
be revealed in asking it aloud, even here, alone
in the car, late at night.

Cloaked in snow silence, skirting the edge.
At the end of this road the house, a-sparkle with
icicles, lit from within with firelight, full of
aromas of wood and soup, coheres its secrets
without quandary.

That is what home is for, that is why I watch the
snow, that is why I watch the edge.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Marianne Tefft

The Night I Dreamed of Dolphins

I knew you were coming the night I dreamed of
dolphins
Walking with your father beneath moonlit veils of
Spanish moss
So unlike the icy drapes that cascade from northern
roofs
I had gazed with joy and awe so many years before
As those sleek coursers sine-curved up the Broad
River
That night I stood on boulders – peering into a sea
the color of pecans
From a depth where even my night-mind knew no
air-breather could ascend
A dolphin flew toward the surface
Mesmerized by that determined arrow
I stared as if into a hand-mirror
When the dolphin stood tall on his silver flukes
Held me in the full sunshine of his indelible smile
Then bent his strong neck and kissed me on the
cheek
Un-pleating my body in one move
I sat up sure
Like tropical dawn that bursts from dream to
daylight
Knowing as I have never known anything before or
since
You were coming the night I dreamed of dolphins

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Repeatedly

Because I do not want you to think
That when you lay again beside me
My lips will open only with a screed
About democracy under pressure
My tongue denouncing the hellhounds
Who threaten my birth country
With reproductive Armageddon
I tap out a song of laughter
From a poet who reminds us
Believe in love
And as my fingertips move
I mind-stream the pleasure they will bring
When they trace your body
In the cool moonset
My tongue tastes your skin
For mango souvenirs
And my lips meet yours
Repeatedly

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Steven Bruce

Fret

You fret about the uncertainty
of an ever-changing world.

You fret about loneliness
and the humiliation of rejection.

You fret about being inadequate
and unworthy of success.

You fret about career criminals
moving in next door.

You fret about career politicians
destroying the economy.

You fret about your bills and debts
rising like thistles.

You fret about missing the metro
to the perfect life.

You fret about being a nonentity
in the never-ending sea of nonentities.

You fret about your alcoholic friend
finding peace in a razor blade's edge.

You fret about your children
getting ridiculed in the playground.

You fret about flies laying eggs
in your ear while you sleep.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

You fret about the recurring dream
of carrying a skull in a night meadow.

You fret about the boss finding a reason
to take their frustrations out on you.

You fret about how much of your time
has slipped through the hourglass.

You fret about the faceless crowd
and what they will say of you.

You fret about existing as a guttered candle
during life's summer season.

You fret about dying alone with maggots
hatching in your eyes before you're buried.

You fret about not being able to protect
your loved ones from chronic heartache.

You fret about the war for your soul
as a sinner and a saint.

You fret about the phone ringing
at an unusual hour.

You fret about your face and body
wilting like an out-of-date fig.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

You fret about Maniae running
wild in the mind's corridors.

You fret about old age robbing
your last teaspoon of dignity.

And some nights, you lie awake
fretting that all of this must come to an end.

* In ancient Greek religion and mythology, the Maniae were spirits that personified insanity and madness. Along with their sister Lyssa, the spirit of rage and rabies, they worked together; they were all considered daughters of the primordial deity Nyx (night).

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Hark

As I watch from my window,
the night river running towards something
greater than itself.

As I recall my storms as survival training.

As I gaze at the poetry of starlight,
the clouds propelling forward
like dark sea horses.

As I sit alone like some forgotten hamlet.

As I forgo the goddess in my bed,
the maelstrom of words rising
around my head.

As I self-flagellate for a misspent youth.

As I bite down on a cheap cigar,
the vengeance for ghosts
blackening my veins.

As I curse the bonds of trauma.

As I recall that the walls of hell
are built with the bricks of regret.

As I grow wild in the shadow of self-exile.

As I find my heart to be a half-eaten apple.

As I envy the moth sweating in the moonlight.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

As I exorcise the demons dancing within me.
As I confess to whichever god who cares to
listen.

As I acknowledge that I do not know enough.

As I remember that even the oldest scholars
remain students of the world.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Wayne Russell

Bike Ride After Work

Racing thought's prevail
on this after-work bike ride.

I have no one to talk to,
should the universe listen?

Shall the heaven's bare
witness to this loneliness?

And yes, these pumping legs,
throttle those petals like
darkest of hooves of steed in
stealth gallop.

My being slices through the
emptiness of existence, the
bike sets sail through this life,
taking me with it; for now.

And yes, those endorphins are
released within the greys
of brain matter.

And yes, I do feel that dark
cloud drifting, nonchalantly
biding its time, when night
falls and I am truly alone.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

But for now that narrow asphalt trail,
so hot to the touch, you could fry an
egg on it, or watch your bubble gum
melt into the cool stream beneath
needs me.

And what of those birds perched
in dogwoods?

And the horses nestled in the
swaddling greens and browns
of mid-western farmland?

I stop and take a series of photos
wide-eyed like a child.

The trees form a ribbon along this
wandering trail, all else is baron.

Does the wildlife know that their
habitat is rapidly evaporating?

All in the name of progress, all in
the name of the all-mighty dollar.

Water never tasted better than
on a day like today, my bicycle
ascends like a chariot taking
Caesar back to his palace.

"Let freedom ring!"

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Ol' 52

The older I get the more I
shun the things of this world.

The more separated from
material belongings I become.

The more I embrace simplicity
and a natural realm, alone with
birds songs and gentle winds and
towering trees.

The older I get, the less I
trust people and the smaller
my circle grows.

That ol' number 52 brings
forth an omnipresent
realization of my own
mortality, and how making
peace with a troubled
past must be finalized;
before it's time to depart
this earthly plane.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

360

Unequivocally, the dance of
union is here, that cornucopia
of autumn leaves, a not so
distant memory.

The snows of seemingly nonstop
winter has at last melted, gray
clouds ominous to the living, and
perhaps even the dead, have dispersed.

And now spring, bringing forth
her multitudes of fledgling weeds,
flowers, and the new creatures,
charging forward into the madness
of Summers unbearable debauchery,
drunken bravado, intermingling with
the high-pitched giggling; perfume
laced with crescendo of crashing waves
infinite nights in pubs worldwide, the
stinging heat and flowing hair.

And on and on it goes, until it all stops.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Kimberly Green

Cleaning The Leach Field

Cleaning the leach field
Is not a joy
But you gotta do what you gotta do
Even when it's something you don't enjoy

You gotta put your boots on
Rise up from the dust
When your world has collapsed
And your life feels unjust

Becoming a widow at an early age was such a
surprise
I thought you would always be with me
I never expected your demise

Your friends won't understand you
They will avoid you to no end
Until the day it happens
When it happens to them

Your hobbies change and life is anew
Everything you once had
Has no meaning without you

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Sometimes people will mislead you
Because you are a wreck
Don't let these wayward spirits guide you
Show yourself RESPECT

Yes...cleaning the leach fields
Just another day in the life
Of a military widow
Whom was a combat veteran's wife

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Charlotte Steenberg

Oceans Blue

I love you to the moon and back, you are my
living will
And even when we're not together, yes, I love you
still
I know your heart and you know mine, like the
ocean knows it's blues
I love you unconditionally, and I know you love
me too

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

D.A. Simpson

A Charcoal Sky

A charcoal sky
Of enigmatic beauty
Graced the star-studded firmament

As it stretched a taut sheet
Through the impassive emptiness
And beheld by the silent beauty
Of an ivory moon

Which sought obscurity
Behind a veil of ethereal mist
That stole across the serene heavens

For to follow after the shadows
That roamed amid the trees of green
Which covered the face of the earth

And fled in the wake
Of the departing kingdom of night
At the hour of daybreak

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

The Shadows Were Long

The shadows were long
one early morn
'Ere the great star of day
from the moribund darkness
had emerged

Where at the horizon
it a'hovered and a'lingered awhile
recumbent upon a pillow of night-cloud
Roused from the sublime delights
of an erstwhile slumber

Now with a reluctance overcome
the pleasures of a vanishing night-tide
With much regret to relinquish

As the cool air of the nascent dawn
an austere chill did send
For to blow across the empty scape
of the deserted beach

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

In The Silent Darkness

In the silent darkness of a velvet night
Indistinct shadows
Ephemeral entities from another world
float amid the tranquility
that pervades a remote forest
Where the trees dwell
in a perpetual glory of emerald green

Wreathed in a scented mist
borne on the dreams
Of those who slumber and dream
in a far realm of reverie and visions

As their boughs they raise
in supplication serene
To'ard yon celestial canopy exalted
that arches over the wooded idyll
Beneath infinite heavens
which abound in a flawless sky
of midnight black
That prevails in the exalted solitude
of the deserted scene
Lost in the enigma of an endless cosmos

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Chris Bulteel

A HISTORY OF THE WORLD

(In three very short chapters. Showing how the Earth has changed in the last 200 years of industrialization after billions of years of existence.)

Chapter 1: The Present

My thoughts soared high above the sky
To deep and starlit darkened space
Above the peaks where eagles fly
Away from teeming human race
Beyond the murky blackened clouds
From whence polluted rain did fall
Upon the earth are battle sounds
As nations fight the devil's call
I spied the oceans, lifeless, bleak
Where melting ice-caps waterfalls
To raging seas in constant seep
Filling the seas to flood the land
As nature shows its mighty wrath
While towns and cities fight to stand
As poisoned gasses grab the breath

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Chapter 2: The Past

My mind goes back ten thousand years
A stable peaceful land appears
When earthly climate held no fears
I look upon a heartening scene
The mighty forests verdant green
And sparkling oceans pure and clean
Where mother nature reigns supreme
A land where nature, man and beast
Live peaceful lives in perfect peace

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Chapter 3: The Future

And now I see the years ahead
Where half are hungry half are fed
The cold gales rage with frightful speed
Crushing all within their reach
While drowning torrents drench our greed
Defenses from the water breached
The once plush forests burn unchecked
With lush green pastures ashen, wrecked
The choking air makes living brief
As man and beast all seek relief
From earths relentless drive to death
Midst mans continued greed for wealth
Ignoring signs that all will fall
Believing in that final dream
With total power over all
That greedy man may reign supreme
And now in airless endless space
An earth devoid of human race
The airs polluted clouds abound
As lightning strikes and thunder roars
To issue forth the storms that drowned
Grabbing man with icy claws
And leaving trails of putrid death
Of life that lived from sea to shore
Destroying all within its path
Where once a thriving planet spun
With natures awesome battle won
The once loved birds that we adore
Are gone and now they sing no more

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Tim Kahl

Shocking The Wakeful

That was the Christmas there was no joy.
It was seen as a waste of energy.
It did not fulfill any task.
So it was farmed out to anxiety and fear.
Abruptly, those sectors of the emotional
landscapes were merged.
Thousands of greeters and smilers and carolers
were suddenly out of work.
Everyone was expected to huddle around on a
rug, dressed in an old sweater.
We conserved our motion and breath, waiting for
the next miracle to come.
It happened on Tuesday.
The livestock startled when it arrived.
The helpless sun returned to its duty of
shocking the wakeful to frolic with each of its
replies.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

First Obedience

I search the mold on my kaiser roll for a sign of
a primordial utopia.

Do they share resources equally?

Or are they planning regicide?

The color of a spore may be seen as satire of the
human flesh inside, which never has any fans.

It's the color of soft and mushy support.

It reminds one of the first obedience, the initial
instance of setting down rules that are then
written as laws.

But there is an impulse to resist and break free
that some see as essential, present in the perfect
early hordes that spread across the bread of the
land still looking for a better social deal.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Daniel Moreschi

The Simmered Sea

Although the sea is pulled by lunar reins
Its servile ebbs conceal subtle strides
Of a fateful pledge, once nature's patience wanes
To test its tether with unruly tides

Where frozen hills are stoked by metal fumes
It brings a rhythmic ruse of turbulent grace
As thriving swirls are topped by sprightly
spumes
That lead a charge, when growing flows retrace

And while humanity ignores the signs
Of ominous plights as billows start to roar
A steep caress erodes the coastal lines
And razes borders like a siege of war

Till risings of tsunamis stir the straits
Once swells attain the sways of ancient scales
And wayward spans cascade at mankind's gates
Where ceaseless reach of simmered spite
prevails

When swept-up crowds are pleading for an ark
And lands are swallowed by the famished surge
The moonlit sanctuaries turn to dark
For undulating chains of Gaia's purge

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Amit Shankar Saha

This Immensity

(On the Dichotomy Between Romantic Time and Space Time)

When at night my heart does wake up
and I know my oneiric world
has taken me to an imagined time.
Where shadows blink like lights in darkness
and waves of time swing to and fro,
lifting a strand of your runaway hair
in the stranded air of our breaths,
so many muted minutes slumber there.
We tiptoe past them forgetting
that this earth is burning
and the sun is a cold place.
That all space is just a loud sound
and the moon is a drop of liquid
in the pupil of the sky.
And we forget that the earth is burning
as we tiptoe past supine seconds
that coalesce into bodies of hours
still sleeping while we are awake
because my heart does say so.
Through its crunching footsteps on a graveled
path of an obliterating existence.
As bubbles of universes
collapse back into chaos in my mind
all the while, while the earth is burning
and your strand of hair stranded in the air.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Interlude

Deep into the forests of the night,
thoughts visit my bed chamber,
wake me up from my slumber,
take me beyond what I remember.

In the dark, my palm falls on your palm,
a moment turned forever
before consciousness enters,
before spaces fill up the distance.

You recite the words of a poem
where death comes someday sometime,
stays behind and does not leave
till the fading of the pyramids.

Before the dewdrops are arrested
by time and space beyond us,
there is some time for singing,
there is a day hidden in the night.

Figures surrounding us fade away,
it is dark beyond this day,
an ocean crawls in this space,
we become stars in the Milky Way.

In a cab escaping curfew time,
smoke fills in before you sing
songs of old romantic things
in the massive crunch of time and space.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

In that moment the dead are alive,
they walk out of their legends,
pull down my palm on your palm,
while a teardrop in time is fading.

The teardrop turns into an ocean.
It is winter, we are out,
under a shawl full of warmth.
This night breaks like a night-show movie.

Soon folds appear on the skin of space,
memories wrinkle in time,
pasteurized in a poem
lie preserved what I don't remember.

The deep forest is no longer dense.
An exhausted summer sees
me a cross-legged pyramid,
while you sit somewhere hugging your knees.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Grace Matson

Humble and Proud

This story was one that Dad told over and over again.

Perhaps it was his therapy.

We all listened intently.

World War II took my dad to Europe.

He was with the US Army, driving an artillery truck.

Battle of the Bulge, Beaches of Normandy, and so on.

The Germans flew overhead.

Dad was forced to drive the artillery truck into and under water.

When the water reached chin level, he had to bale out.

Imagine what that must have felt like.

He could drown, get shot or his entire platoon could get bombed.

Dad never boasted, but he received the Purple Heart for his bravery.

He was humble and proud of his service.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Don Narkevic

Finding Angela's Dried Roses

A pair. The first flowers a lover sent.
They hang upside down
from attic rafters like torture.

When the dozen arrived
like apostles, their promises
spilled onto the green tablecloth.

Angela giggled. She slept with Anna
once. The bouquet arrived the next day
like a perfumed love letter sealed with wax.

Blue as venous blood, Anna's thumbprint
ridged as a fossil fern. When a thorn pricked
Angela's finger, she sucked.

The irony taste mixed with the myrrh
of adoration. When the affair ended
before the roses withered.

Angela disposed of ten, keeping two,
perhaps the Jesus and Judas of the bunch.
I found them a year after death broke in.

Like the souls of children told to stay
until a good Samaritan
would come and fetch them home.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Last Rain

Last rain, the dead birch fell,
traversing the swollen creek,
the clay bank whittling away
by the insistent will of water.
Roots, unable to hold ground,
let earth move on.

Last rain, a north-wind
resurrected the decay of leaves
stirred by your footsteps.
Leaning in to kiss me as custom,
you thought better of it, and while
distant thunder brooded,
you whispered goodbye.

Last rain, as I returned
to an empty house, I stopped
to watch a gray squirrel
test the fallen birch.
Like a tightrope walker
sensing danger, it hesitated
above the muddled water
and returned to the familiar
woods that lay beyond the field
I will leave fallow another season.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Renee Butner

The Embrace

Sadness took me
in her arms
She exhaled warm breath
into my face -
scent of bitter dandelion.

Her fingers ran
through my hair,
tangling;
her velvet lips
kissed away
my tears.

Throughout the ebony
cloud of night
she held me close.
But as day broke
I gently pushed her
to arm's length
and slowly stepped
away.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Sea Glass

there are
sharp edges
to her soul

ebbs and tides
wash over -
relentless

circumstances
dark and terrible
collide with those
excellent and gratifying
a rock tumbler -
a tsunami-

polish and hone
revealing
intense shades
mellow hues
an effort to soften
that splintered circumference

so that she may
at least -
acquire understanding

accept
the varnished
embrace

the piercing

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Celesia Parker

Cross Your Heart

Pristine promises within one's soul
Evokes truism ready to unfold
Somewhere sometimes the eyes hold

Glimpses so strong
All awhile all along
Wondering where they have gone
Believing there is no wrong

In those stored clean promises of fate
Refusal is calling out negate
Strong word that hate
Unfolding truism provides love a clean slate
-full of promises and fate-

(From Celesia's book "Glimpses Of You"- copyright 2021)

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

When Need Be

I am a woman
I cuss when need be
And I honestly
Will test you unmercifully

When I get the chance
Away from being tested
I need romance
Not hugs from daddy

My body is that of a woman
Not one of a little girl
It has been mine for 64 years
I love giving life a whirl

See me through the eyes of a man
Assure me I can trust you
Please take your hand
Guide me like a man

I am a woman
Away from being tested
Not a little girl
Make me believe I can trust you

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Out

It will all come back around
My life's purpose without a sound
Not taking your back handed put down

Crumbling my insides into dust
Let me go, you must
You, I do not trust

Some fishing trip you are on
I already am gone
Keep your damn song

It will all come back
With me picking up your slack
Man, this train jumped the track

-Conductorless-

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Robin Michele Payne

Ravens Perch

Humanity, what bell has tolled for thee?
Amidst chaos and insanity; rings.
Reverberating for eternity.

Time's coming to a close; why don't you see?
Corpses pile higher as the raven sings;
Humanity, what bell has tolled for thee?

Acid rain falls from up high, leaves debris
Miles wide. Rolls harmless off of ravens' wings.
Reverberating for eternity.

We rushed carelessly into industry.
Consequences of our thoughtlessness stings.
Humanity, what bell has tolled for thee?

Distracted by lust driven fantasy
Of eternal power; from would be kings.
Reverberating for eternity.

They sold their souls; the price, their sanity.
On corpses, ravens perch and daisies spring.
Humanity, what bell has tolled for thee?
Reverberating for eternity.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Shifting Times

Today I feel so empty, deep inside.
Today I'm not so hopeful, though I tried.
Today I cried and cried till all tears dried.
Yesterday, so full of wrenching feelings.

Yesterday, full of ugly revealings.
Yesterday, inside and out, I took his beatings.
Tomorrow, thank God, is another day.
Tomorrow will be better, "Please?", I pray.

Tomorrow, old life gone; new on the way.
In this moment, I feel the love return.
In this moment, passion begins to burn.
In this moment, my soul will always yearn;

Forever I hope to be provocative.
Forever I hope to be optative.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

I Will Fade

I will fade alone with the setting sun;
Hues of twilight, into glorious night.
A magnificent run, but now it's done.

In this stillness before the end is spun;
Solace lies in the honor of requite.
I will fade alone with the setting sun.

Will you miss me when a new days begun?
Or forget me when the sun shines so bright?
A magnificent run, but now it's done.

All my existence, I've tried to outrun
My shadow; it grows with the dying light.
I will fade alone with the setting sun.

For a moment in time, my heart was won
By eyes that saw me; let my soul take flight.
A magnificent run, but now it's done.

Fate stole away my love, my blue-eyed one;
No life without! Only death will make right.
I will fade alone with the setting sun;
A magnificent run, but now it's done.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Arun Hariharan

The Parched Earth

The sun beat down upon the parched land,
Crack'd and weathered by the machinations,
Scorched and bleak'ed by the human hand,
Only unbearable heat and shimmering
apparitions.

They say the hells are surrounded by an inferno
Which chars the very thought of existence.
Slowly, painfully and unendurably so,
Is this a message from the creator thence?

The lone tree reduced to a dry bony stick
Painted a dreary silhouette against the
empyrean.

A once proud beast
reduced to a carcass mephitic,
Are stark
to this celestial yet ghoulish retribution.

It still isn't too late to repent O selfish man,
Shakeup...wake up, affiliate to nature's plan.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

The First Rains of Monsoon

The first rains of monsoon always make me
behold His wonder!
The pitter patter of raindrops slowly
transcending to a torrent,
The streaks of lightning and the resounding
claps of thunder.

The fragrant smell of damp earth, vegetation and
petrichor,
The croaking of frogs and the joyous calls of
nature's vivants,
The first rains of monsoon always make me
behold His wonder!

A fervid earth seems to have pandiculated from a
weary slumber,
The hot dusty skies of summer have given way
to a cool dark firmament,
The streaks of lightning and the resounding
claps of thunder.

Like expensive incense and good wine - the
aromata linger,
Seducing the senses and freeing the body and
soul of torment,
The first rains of monsoon always make me
behold His wonder!

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Joyous and cheerful nights through which
fireflies flutter,
And the only sound is that of water flowing so
ebullient,
The streaks of lightning and the resounding clap
of thunder.

What more can I say to express the mood at this
hour?
For words ne'er describe enough something this
magnificent,
The first rains of monsoon always make me
behold His wonder!
The streaks of lightning and the resounding clap
of thunder.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Fear

The moon peeped out as the daylight faded
Amidst ominous clouds in dark skies
The Earth appeared tired and jaded
Engulfed by darkness full of deceit and lies

Unholy creatures lurked the countryside
Through which a lonely traveler walked
Shivering each time and quickening his stride
As he heard voices in a tongue never yet talked

A wizened claw seemed to beacon him near
And a serpent seemed to engulf his mind
For it was fear... a deep foreboding fear
In the darkness what was he to find

Uncanny silhouettes, undead creatures
Ghastly noises, eerie laughter
Seemed to be the overwhelming features
As his fear seemed to get him better

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Suddenly he sat up dazed
In the safety of his cozy bed
On the wall he blankly gazed
The fears seemed conjured in his head!

Fear is the path to the Dark Side
We believe in ghosts for they're our own creation
It is from them we in vain hide
...and we haunt ourselves in craven

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Brechtje Moen

The Downfall of Desire

Moments like this are lessons
For the truth that hides under
Our desire to be loved
And our desire to love another person
Consequences to actions are inevitable
As my love for you has died
As my belief in you has died
A piece of my heart was lost
I saw in you hope
A longing for change and comfort
You saw in me
A temporary filling of cheap desire
I hold in me this pain
The disappointment in an image I created
I hold in me this pain
And move forward

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

By Myself, I Am Safe

how can it be
how did it start
how come I am this way

my walls up high
you won't come in
I will turn you away

are you surprised?
how can you be
the path was set so clear

from early age
they turned away
which turned my hopes to fear

fear to love
fear to see
fear to hold one close

fear to give a part of me
to someone who might go
away from me
when things get rough
just wait and you will see

it's no surprise
why would I try

if the end's a part of me

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Dance With Me

Dance with me in a cave
Where we will never be found
Where we can be alone, happy
Outside noise will be kept out
Dance with me in the dark
Close your eyes and hold me tight
Look for comfort in my touch
And know that we will be alright
Dance with me my love
Dance with me all night
The light I see ahead of us
The past we leave behind
When dancing in a room of strangers
My eyes are stuck on you
The tunnel's vision shows your face
As if it's all I ever knew
This is what I aim to keep
I need you by my side
To never stop my feet from moving
As our beating hearts collide

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Laurie Lambert

Keystone

We built the arch with rocks from the riverbed several years ago. It took all our spare time in both June and July. When finished, it stood tall and broad in the shallows where the river sprawled in a wide turn.

A six-foot woman walked through it without bending. Over her head the keystone rested, a rounded, reddish chunk of granite that locked the curve in place.

The arch lasted til almost Springtime, collapsing in the February floods. The keystone dropped from the center, the heart, and was hidden in a pile of rubble at the edge of the far bank.

*My river is alive, she is my friend,
the long person by turns slumbering,
singing, and surging through
my piece of the world. She carries
my body, and nourishes my spirit.*

*She taught us caution and respect,
stewardship and love.*

My river changes every year after heavy rains and dry spells. Trees on the shore give up, fall in and head downstream. Saplings spring up in clusters. The banks fill in here and widen there.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Stones are lifted and disappear. New rocks roll in; everything shifts and resettles.

*

It was late October when, after so long out of sight, the keystone tumbled into view on the far shore. We could see it from our side of the swirling span, a dense ruddy egg about as big as my breadbox.

Weeks later, in early December, ice was forming on the river's banks as we buried our beloved pet in the woods overlooking the water.

The reappearance of the keystone caught us then, an old friend, rediscovered in this time of loss. A headstone not only perfect, but imperative.

Only a wading walk away, but in a frigid river, teeming with risk.

*

My girl put on her wetsuit to practice crossing the choppy rush of numbing water. Once across, she lifted the rock with a deep squat, using her whole body. As wide as her chest, we guessed the keystone weighed seventy pounds.

She walked the far bank carrying the burden downstream to a calmer stretch of river. She left it behind and crossed back empty-handed, testing the contours under the water that came up to her chest in the middle.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

She walked out on our side, convinced,
some time to rest and then the next day
come back and bring the stone across.
It seemed at once insane, and inevitable.

She was fearless.
I was not.

*In more than one book I've read
about women filling their hems
or pockets with stones then walking
straight out into the lake or ocean,
or yes, the river, and I've wondered...*

*Is there a struggle,
or just a letting go?*

*

The next day, as we walked back to the water,
I shared advice with my girl. No hurrying, of
course. But also, if she felt a fall coming, jettison
the rock. Push it out hard and quick. It must
not land on any part of her body.

That body I love so much.
Maybe more than she does.

The river was fast and frostier than the
day before, but her walk to the other side
was cold and calm. She lifted the stone
with slow determination and re-entered
the water immensely encumbered.

There was a moment about ten feet
from our side, the rock held tight

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

against her chest, strain in every muscle,
when she wavered, she wobbled, and she
stopped.

I could see in her face the same fear
I'm sure she saw in mine. She knew
sure as hell I was coming if she fell.
There she was, trembling.

A teacup teetering
half on and half off the table.

*On a sidewalk in downtown Dingle
the working men asked why I wouldn't
walk under the ladder in my path.
When I went round, saying
"because I am a witch"
the man closest to me fell back.*

*In that moment I'd found my power,
the push of my invisible hand.*

And in this moment, as my girl swayed,
rocking from foot to foot, in icy water with a
boulder in her arms, I felt my power again.

Our eyes locked, I called to my river and pushed
once more beyond my reach. My girl stilled, then
steadied and came on, dropped the granite on
the bank and grinned.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Lynn White

Re-Reading Old Words

Once again, I'm re-reading old words,
re-reading them
over and over again,
like comfort eating
to avoid the shock
of the new.

Re-read,
review,
like an album of old photographs
of people locked in their past,
still located there,
living there
dead.

History in a flash,
gone in a flash,
brought back
to life,
dead.

Renewed on a treadmill,
turning
round and round
on a loop,
replaying
endlessly.

Returning like old clothes
kept for comfort
to be worn again
like re-read words.
The new rejected,
neglected,

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

shut out,
so I can languish
in the comfort
zone of the old
dead words
forever.

(First published in Praxis, April 2019)

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Glitterati

See how they shine,
hair sprayed and polished,
lips glossed,
sequined gowns shimmering
like sapphire stardust
to match their sparkling eyes.
But I wonder,
if you peel them
like the ripe fruit they seem,
will you find
lusciousness inside
or only dry flesh
and a dusty kernel,
no stars or sapphires,
only dust that's lost its glitter.
That's when you'll know
it was all just art.

(First published by Mollyhouse, January 2021)

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Melanie Flores

Nightmare

Under an eggplant sky
a shard of moonlight
ricochets off an ancient chest.
My hand hesitates on the lid -
every muscle tenses.
The hoot of an owl
pierces the lethargy of the night.

*What treasure lies within?
Precious jewels and gold?
A bounty of wishes?
Ancient scrolls scribed with the secrets of life?*

I tug at the weathered carapace -
the chest cracks open.
A waft of vinegar escapes
unleashing the horrors of the world.
Cancer, mass shootings,
ignorance, racism,
pandemics and loneliness.

I drop the lid
and scream myself
awake.
I realize that my nightmare
is real.

(Originally published in Fresh Voices 23, online
publication by League of Canadian Poets, July 2021 issue)

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Reflections In Ash

*Sifting through the ashes of my mind.
Digging for those golden nuggets of memory.
Moments unearthed; moments remembered.
Brushing off the ash; burnishing the gold -
until it's aflame with life.*

A young you and a younger me
gaze at each other with adoring eyes.
Holding hands, supple bodies intertwine
in a lovers' embrace while vowing eternal love
between fervent kisses.

Time and familiarity
breeds complacency,
arguments and power struggles.
Innate differences surface
as the tedium of everyday
threatens to rip us apart.
Yet, somehow, we weather through
before it's almost too late.

An old me and an older you
forgive each other for their wrongs.
Comforting each other in solidarity
because time is ticking,
threatening to run out.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

*Cherishing the dying embers of recollection.
Stirring up the ashes to keep the flame alive.
Moments re-lived; moments half-forgotten.
Treasuring those golden nuggets of memory -
reflections in ash.*

(Originally published in Fresh Voices, online publication
by League of Canadian Poets, December 2020 issue)

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Final Moments

When death branded your eyes a milky white,
there was no turning back.
Terrified that you would hear me,
I sat motionless as they moved you from
stretcher to bed.
What empty words could I offer you?
Everything will be alright?

The unmistakable smell of tuna sandwich
emanated from my shoulder bag,
betraying my presence.
Your head turned blindly in my direction
for a questioning second, before settling on the
pillow.

I watched you in silence
and lamented losing you and, in effect,
losing myself - for I would never again
be somebody's daughter -
just a woman of questionable origin.

Finally, as your breath came settled and steady,
I made my escape from your death chamber,
like a creeping coward
afraid to face the truth of life -
comforted by blinding tears.

I didn't know it then
but the day of dying came.
Meandering the aisles of Dollarama
looking for things I did not need,
I bided my time before I went to you.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

In the final moment
I decided not to go.
Fearful that my mind would play tricks
like when the subway tracks called to me
with twisted promises.

I stopped at a pile of lavender towels
dissolving into a deluge of tears.
At that instant I felt you go.
You had waited for me to come
and only left when you knew I wouldn't.

My phone rang shocking me into now,
into bright lights and synthetic smells.
A strange voice told me my mother had passed,
a lavender towel absorbed my primal scream.
An electric shiver passed through me – your final
embrace.

(Selected for publication in “Universal Oneness: An Anthology of Magnum Opus Poems from around the World” (2019); awarded 1st place in Polar Expressions Poetry Contest (2017) and was published in accompanying anthology)

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Shunant Wharton

Rough Patches

Like a hurricane, it came rushing.
It could be you; you'll never know.
It's only when life carries you down in low gravy,
You'll realize who really cared.

If the question had been asked;
Are you living or are you existing?
Existing would have been a mere reply
And no one would dare to find out why.

It's been a while since we haven't spoken.
Guess you never expected to feel this broken.
Individuals come and go in our lives,
Some leave without a trace of goodbye.

When emptiness becomes a feeling
rather than a place,
It's only then we finally understand what we
should have been doing all along.
Not waiting to be accepted but just loving
ourselves and living our lives to the fullest.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Heart-Broken Kid

I hope my lover's eyes will not go past me today.
Hope he would remember to still care for me as I
got older.

Being in a state of anger and frustration to the
point of exhaustion.

Have you decided to gain some consideration?

Am I not your loyal companion?

Lacking attention,

Missing Love and Affection.

But you failed to even look in my direction.

When will you decide to contain some feelings of
compassion?

Now I am here, all alone.

But soon they will be tomorrow.

And there will be no more sorrow.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

New Beginnings

I eventually got up.
Washed yesterday off.
Second glances weren't made on any of the
paths crossed.
Today's another day and it's even more exciting
to look forward to whatever the future surprises
us with.
Its promises are unquestionable.
I'm honestly not who I was before.
I would have reached the state of being
emotionally dependent upon myself.
Since caring about others rather than yourself
was never necessary.
Growing older, it's realized that I don't owe
anyone any form of explanation for my feelings
or otherwise.
So it won't be scattered like a pack of cards
across a table.
Who cares anyway?
Seems the only person concerned about what's
experienced within us is ourselves.
After bringing together the pieces of each
mystery:
A better smile is finally formed.
No form of assistance is required to be fixed.
That can be done on its own.
Looking back, I now understand how I no longer
need what I thought I needed in order to
succeed.
Everything was right in front of ME.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Johanne Lee

Should You Wish...

Fall into my green flecked
And I will conjure
Your undoing
Unsheathe and snake into your mind
Great sorcery sizzling you blind
To my insecurities
And power is my remedy
Carefully housing dragons
A talisman for wit
And maybe we would speak
In sweated tentacles of wispy hair
I dare

Do you?

Something of the fae mixed with
A cocktail of snakes in the grass will flash
As an ending
And you will seed a thought
For a future
But no
I play with words
Only

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

This is my witching craft
My sensual draft
Pop!
Shall I stop?
Your mouth came undone
So yes
I won
But still the prize was not the spill
But the rise

And this I find
Satisfies

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Find A Corner

Peace may be perched
Precarious
Housing itself high
Wedged in tiny pockets of matter
That could fall in the blink of an eye

Love just as easily chased
Pursued by the teeth of lusting wolves
Its whereabouts a troubling secret
Precious held by those who won't divulge
Its happiest relate
Its constant navigate
Its climbing driving force
Its commitment to its course

They'll come for you

Long upon your existence
Argue freedom and wilderness
Consider baiting your resistance

Hold fast

Find a place of greenest grass
A tiny corner of your own
Then defend it to the last

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

If Vows are but bits of paper
Try telling that to the bard
For words are the epitome of all
Not so easy to discard

When you find your peace and your poetry
Your love a life you recognize
Stay high hold fast on that mountain
Far far away from prying eyes

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Love Love Love

Love tender in every abode of gender
Give Hope to the heart feeling slender
Thrumming in beatbox of living

Love without vanity without abuse or profanity
Be kind to fragility of stretched mind in sanity
Drumming in worlds unforgiving

Love in the holding of hands
Empathy not errant of demands
Build mountains that love understands
Strumming the chords of misgiving

Love is love simple in clarity
To all of the people in parity
Foster its feel in familiarity
Becoming the grace of its giving

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Julie Bolt

Rubrics

The future fulfills though nature's temper, decay
Through laws unfurling and dreams obscuring
thick smoke
Through solitude of elderly, the blown minds of
young
Through exhaustion of generations, cynical song
The panting of species dying and yearning to
breed

For passionate idealism, there still is a need
The answers are documented, the promise
proclaimed
Yet some holler: too fast, the market, the crash
Truth tellers and visionaries reviled and
shrinking in shame
Or chanting ecstatic past safe-keepers of
tradition, taboo

Unshackle the mind, abandon the trickle of time
Teach and learn off the grid
Release the true selves that we hid
And before we die, we know we gave it a try
Watching grass as it grows, catching the
snowflakes
Still left in the snow

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Jennifer O'Shea

The Things of Dreams

Enraptured with laughter amid friends and strangers
Unusual attire, odd angles and colors
Sometimes I'm falling and other times I fly
Where do you go when you close your eyes?
Circuses, planets and sloths eating sorbet
Stairs leading nowhere, eerie glowing doorways
Lost in a forest, or swimming upstream
Walking with lions, so normal in dreams.
Sometimes its old bedrooms, sometimes I'm at school
Sometimes in pajamas my hair all askew
Where did my clothes go, I try to scream
It's such a relief when it's only a dream.
How does it work, my subconscious at night?
Dreams leave me breathless and preoccupied
Time to wake up and to reemerge from
This mysterious world I have no control of.
What is this thing that our sleeping invokes?
Nightmares and visions that go up in smoke
I like the ones where I visit galaxies
Riding a Pegasus over the seas.
Is this the time when my soul gets to play?
Make up and dress up the rules fall away
My body is sleeping, my spirit's awake
Maybe dreaming is real and my life is what's fake.
I guess I won't know until I leave my body
If these illicit illusions are reality
One can only hope what excitement awaits
If dreams are the real thing hold tight to the reins!

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Watchful Guardians

Just because my eyes can't see thee,
Doesn't meant that thou aren't there.
I walk the wooded trail
And feel thee whisper in my ear.

Little Spirits, nature dwellers
Speaking for the silent chorus.
Watchful guardian of the plants
And residents of the forest.

And on that night I remember well,
The light that came to me.
Thy illuminated twinkles,
Morse Code information from a fairy.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Releasing

A night will come when I'm not in it
A deep cobalt of empty space
The absence felt by thee alone
For I, my love, have left the race

I've flown the coop, I've finished my work
I'm moving on to higher things
In celestial waves, higher I rise
To the light, oh love hath wings

The earth, a sphere, a murky marble
The place that was my dwelling
For such a short time, I called it home
How wrong I was my darling

Home is drawing nigh, I feel it all around me
Ethereal this route to grandeur be
This destination completely accepting
Transfixed I've changed, I'm glowing

I hope you know my lovely,
How much our love 'twas a beautiful thing
Whispering this truth now, nothing compares
To the love that awaits on that morning

You can cry for me, it's our human thing
But one day you'll see the truth
For passing on, is the most glorious ride
I'm holding your ticket for you

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Zachary Guadamour

Different Register

(In memory of Maria Callas)

Black grains fall through the pinched throat in
night's long hourglass
Settle into memory's developing tank where
negatives appear as apparitions
Grey and white images take shape on life's wet
paper

The endless hours and days of rehearsal going
over scales
To make then rain diamonds falling from the
skin of a fresh caught trout
Small birds peck at the morsels and turn them
into magical notes

Always opening nights with the heart tightly
bound
Catgut of stage fright in an overweight
adolescence
Then the orchestra with jeweled instruments
A swallow escapes with a crystal voice
Hands change to wings and her body a lithe bird
Larks and canaries fill an aviary in the theater's
cavity
Until falcons soar silencing everything but the
magic of flight
Sail through the ceiling in their rise to heaven
The woodwind of her voice open oiled cedar from
Skorprios
Lit candles in front of the shrine's icons

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

The limp exhaustion leaves her spent
Unable to hear the applause because of a missed
note on one register
Scattered photographs and theater programs
Years of silence to explore the heart and love
The voice fades and changes as relationships die
The photographer's portrait stares back
Eyes still wet with fish scales
Blood pressure plummets from bed to bath
A last note escapes the frayed bindings of her
heart

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Emily's Museum

Aunt Emily died over five years ago.
I as her only heir should have sold her
house and everything in it long ago,
though I've kept it as a private
museum to loneliness.

I pay a housekeeper to go in twice a month
to clean and make sure the 2,700 square feet
plus an attic and full basement stay the same.

Elmer and Emily fell in love in law school.
Already a well-known painter,
she paid for school through selling paintings.
Mostly neo-impressionistic paintings of her
garden or Picassoesque self portraits
fusing the bright colors of flowers into her face.

A soft pigskin light enters the library
through brown stained-glass windows.
A bookish light falls on Emily's art and music
books,
darkens over Elmer's books on probate and real
estate.

The light accentuates the colors of the
original Manet, Monet, Renoir and Gauguin,
brightening what would be a somber room.

After Elmer died,
Emily took over his practice.
Kept at it for over ten years
until the secretary Mary
died suddenly of an aneurysm at fifty.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

The music room contains
a grand piano a harp and cello.
The three instruments Emily mastered.
Instruments as light as her soul,
not a brass or woodwind,
in arrangements she wrote.

I remember the lavender water she used.
When she asked me to sit and listen
as her fingers flew over piano keys.
It could be Chopin, Debussy or Bach,
but mostly she extemporized a melody,
while I stared at her fingers.
Glanced out the window,
see how her music captured the light outside.

An original Goya Vasquez and Delacroix
in the room seem to understand
the significance of her music.
Their colors smiling and blending well.
Once I thought I saw the Goya portrait wink.

The room looks onto a walled garden,
riotous with roses and flowering bulbs,
a cornucopia of color.

Emily kept the two rooms
climate controlled
as in any good museum.
The security system state of the art.
At most a handful of people
knew the two rooms existed.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Her photographic memory
saw what she wanted to paint in her mind
and went to her basement studio to paint it,
not wanting natural light to interfere with her
vision

Only a few times did she take me to her world of
pigment.
Light like the color of her music and garden,
yellows and reds, sand, light greens,
a spectrum of joy.

Sixty years of canvases
cataloged in that underworld.
No one but Elmer
and I have seen these paintings.

Someday I will arrange an exhibition
and turn the house into a museum.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Pendraig the poet

Chasing Dragons

Born into a world of pain, feeling nothing
Except hurt, trying to escape thoughts
Confined in your brain, contained
Running like a train on a track to nowhere

Pushing the dark whilst reaching for a light
Seeking to gain respite from the real
Revealed, reviled and relived through the
Prism of your subconscious projector

Mary Jane, Lucy, Miss Emma and Charlie
Blonde China Girl and sickly-sweet Candy
Sirens songs wash upon a wasteland
Chasing dragons with a pipe in hand

Medicated, sedated, on prescription pills
Deliberately drugged and downtrodden
Legalized Pharmaceutical Distribution
Criminalized Individual Consumption

Rushing through rivers, rapids and rocks
Liquid handcuffs hard to take off
Another opioid overdose
Cold and comatose

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Addicted to escapism and ecstasy
A virtual reality, fleeting fantasy
Cold Turkeys can only fly high
When the well runs dry

Between becoming comfortably numb
Moments of clarity and truth can come
Through these windows without dope
Illuminated possible change and hope

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Upload

Digital Death Descends.

It sits, then creeps, and silently seeps,
through tired eye slits, half asleep,
where once wild-eyed youths weep,
but no longer seek, to comprehend,
as Satnav announces arrival,
a subsistence survival, at willful wits end.

Digital Death Descends.

Viral and virtual, downloaded death,
loaded down we now are left,
but bereft, what we define as content,
cortexes constrained, consciousness contained,
confined minds brain drained,
have we forgot what it once meant,
my friends, as monitored messages we send.

Digital Death Descends.

Rapid, riveting rivers of a current affair,
data drowning our minds and every care,
how long we stay under just depends,
upon our need to find and feel fresh air,
souls speedily surfacing from the depths
despair, as they suffer the bends.

Digital Death Descends.

We consume another copious boxed set,
that teaches us things that I suspect,
we will never remember nor forget,
yet still whilst streaming, a never ending
story of shite, we might awake dreaming,
of something that might, draw us towards
the light and transcends.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Digital Death Descends.

As my phone pings, through the ether upon
wireless wings, a ubiquitous, internet of things,
search results spring strings, of the worldwide
sticky web, while governments clear their
history, clear your head instead, truth is a
mystery, something sought, each thought
caught, as data captured minds bend.

Digital Death Descends.

But hang on, don't get me wrong, I'm not bitter,
I need to check my email and tweet on Twitter,
then I've got to take another look at Facebook,
yeah man and post new pics on Instagram,
upload updates, status for mates, likes, loves
and pet hates - wait, the internet's great, but my
friends...

Digital Death Descends.

Cos in all of the time that we spend online
Searching for something that we can't find,
I read it's said that we've been here before, way
back in 1984, I realize deep down in my core,
that what we really need I'm sure, is not virtual,
but spiritual, peaceful and pure, now awake and
forsake what is fake, to make amends
before...this ends.

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Higher Education

Learning to live in a world where we're taught to
fear
Armed assassins shooting guns at young ones
and those that teach
Politicians preach as parents mourn
The ending of a life that began when their child
was born

Again and again and again and again shootings
at schools
Weapons of mass elimination used to end lives
in education
Humanity degraded, detention failed, suicidal
perpetrators shot at the scenes
Where bulldozers now demolish dreams

Another armed adolescent, desperate,
disaffected and dangerous
In a country with more weapons than people
The land of the free and unequal, nothing brave
about sending kids to graves
Nor right to bear arms which cause such harm
to the defenseless

Imagine the effect upon a girl's childhood
When to survive a massacre, she had to smear
herself with the blood of a classmate, because of
hate, a lack of love, despair, depression and
hopelessness, twisted thoughts, rejection,
exclusion, racism, bigotry, poverty or all of the
above

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Perpetrators and victims, but no rescue
It's always too late when an armed assailant is
at the school gate
Ring the alarm, not for dinner or home time, but
despicable and horrific crime
For Whom The Bell Tolls, it tolls for thee
Kids cries on the wind through pine trees

Open Skies Poetry Anthology

Carolyn Donnell

My Mother's Name

Born with just my mother's name.
Father unknown they said, what shame.
Who needed a man's name to have pride?
Was a woman's name so vilified?

Why? To cause us all that pain?
Father or not, I'm still the same.
My name is mine. I'm satisfied.
I'm who I am, my peace I'll bide.

I suppose a boy, a guy,
needs a man to identify
his own masculinity.
A pattern to follow, what to be.

But I'm a girl, a woman and more,
just like my mother and her's before.
I'll wear my mother's name with pride.
Hold my head up, and deign to hide.

She paid the price, she carried me.
No father where he needed to be.
To give a man more rights than she
is the opposite of liberty.

If my father ever looks for me
he will have to ask to be
allowed into our family.
Her rights and privileges be.

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Arms Of The Angels

(Inspired by Sarah McLachlan's song Angel)

In the arms of the angel,
a line from a song.
The hum of the music
rises to my tongue.
Whenever I see
gray-haired
bent ladies, wobbly
walkers crossing
at lights,
insufficient time to catch the train,
closed doors don't wait, schedules to keep.
Guy in the wheelchair. Unwashed, feeble, maneuvering
down
Main Street. To where?
Veteran of wars
sent to kill,
returned home
to die untended.
Mothers with children
no home to keep.
Bankers' golden balloon.
Others, no place to sleep.
Where are the families,
sons, daughters or friends?
Church and charity they say
but too often they pray,
"Thank you God, I'm not like them."
Where is the angel for all of these?
Are angels that selective and few?
In the arms of the Angel.
Do you have one?
Lucky you.

~

(Written in 2009 after watching the homeless on North
First in San Jose)

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Biographies

Rhiannon Owens and her writing partner, **Ashley O'Keefe**, met via a local online writing group, and since then have published six poetry books together as well as becoming firm friends. And there is still much more to come! They have had poems published in e-zines and anthologies such as 'Merthyr, They Wrote', 'DPS', 'Ravencage' and 'Quintessence'. Most recently they held a book launch/live spoken event with performance poet, Janice Price. They also work on solo projects.

Ross Leishman hails from the small city of Dunedin at the bottom of the south island of New Zealand. He lives there with his wife Shelley, their 3 children, 2 dogs, 1 cat and a turtle. He is the head chef at a boarding school for girls. He is a keen vespa scooter enthusiast and motorcyclist. He finds writing as a stress release. When he writes poetry, he is at peace.

Debbie Clewer had always enjoyed writing poetry since the age of nine. She joined online poetry groups during the covid lockdown and rediscovered her love of writing. She is a hairdresser by day and frustrated poet by night. She is married with two adult children. Her work has been published in 'Keys To the Kingdom: Unlocking the Form' (Poetry Kingdom), 'Spotlight' (Jimmy Broccoli) and 'A Woman's Journey' (Johanne Lee).

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Melani Udaeta is a writer of various different forms of poetry, who currently resides in the Florida panhandle. Her work can also be found on Facebook at Melrose Poetry, on Instagram at melrose_poetry18, and under Melani Udaeta on poetrysoup.com

Maid Ćorbić is from Tuzla, Bosnia and Herzegovina. He is 22 yrs old and enjoys helping others in his spare time. He is a moderator for the World Literature Forum WLFPH (World Literature Forum Peace and Humanity) for humanity and peace in the world in Bhutan.

Jimmy Broccoli enjoys long walks on the beach and playing with puppies.

Tom Barlow 's poems and short stories have appeared in nearly two hundred journals and anthologies. He writes because conversation requires a great deal of give and take and he's always considered himself more of a giver. See more at tombarlowauthor.com

Maria Evelyn Q. Soleta Maria Evelyn Quilla-Soleta, or 'Eve' to many, gives thanks to Poetry! Maria hails from the Philippines. Her poems and stories are unadorned yet truthful, purposely warm, and witty. People, things, living and non-living creatures and even circumstances, are subjects that inspire and give colors to her rhythms and rhymes, stanzas and lines. They give vibrancy and feelings to the words she pens. These feelings come to her in the stillness of the deep quiet moments when she can commune

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with Him for inspiration and life. Evelyn's first love is writing, when, at six, she wrote her first poem in a school paper. In college, her forte was writing feature articles, personality sketches and poetry. She was a freelance writer to local women's magazines before publishing her first book on poetry called "My Twenty Poems".

Motherhood is a subject close to her heart and what inspires her to write. She has a good eye and ear for the peculiar and mundane details of everyday life- endearing in her lack of pretentiousness among the trivial and ordinary matters around her. Evelyn's husband Danny, her four girls, and beautiful granddaughters, Tala and Mayla, are her inspiration to pursue this first love of hers, Writing!

John Grey is an Australian poet, a US resident, and was recently published in Sheepshead Review, Stand, Poetry Salzburg Review and Hollins Critic. His latest books, "Leaves On Pages" "Memory Outside The Head" and "Guest Of Myself" are available through Amazon. He has several works upcoming in Ellipsis, Blueline and International Poetry Review.

Ndaba Sibanda is a Bulawayo-born poet, novelist and nonfiction writer who has authored twenty-eight published books of various genres and persuasions and co-authored more than 100 published books. Some of Ndaba's works are found or forthcoming in Page & Spine, Piker Press, SCARLET LEAF REVIEW, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, the Pangolin Review,

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Kalahari Review, Botsotso, The Ofi Press Magazine, Hawaii Pacific Review, Deltona Howl, The song is, JONAH magazine, Saraba Magazine, Poetry Potion, Saraba Magazine, The Borfski Press, East Coast Literary Review and Whispering Prairie Press. Sibanda has received the following nominations: the national arts merit awards (NAMA), the Mary Ballard Poetry Chapbook Prize, the Best of the Net Prose and the Pushcart Prize.

Gary Percesepe is the author of eleven books, including *Moratorium: Collected Stories and Gaslight Opera*, a poetry collection. His work has appeared in *The Sun*, *N + 1*, *Greensboro Review*, *Wigleaf*, *PANK*, *Antioch Review*, *Maine Review*, *Westchester Review*, and other places. He is a former assistant fiction editor at *Antioch Review* and an Associate Editor at *New World Writing* (formerly *Mississippi Review*). Percesepe resides in White Plains, NY with his family, and teaches philosophy at Fordham University in the Bronx.

Patricia Walsh was born and raised in the parish of Mourneabbey, County Cork, Ireland. To date, she has published one novel, titled *The Quest for Lost Eire*, in 2014, and has published one collection of poetry, titled *Continuity Errors*, with Lapwing Publications in 2010. She has since been published in a variety of print and online journals. These include: *The Lake*; *Seventh Quarry Press*; *Marble Journal*; *New Binary Press*; *Stanzas*; *Crossways*; *Ygdrasil*; *Seventh Quarry*; *The Fractured Nuance*; *Revival Magazine*; *Ink Sweat and Tears*; *Drunk*

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Monkeys; Hesterglock Press; Linnet's Wing, Narrator International, The Galway Review; Poethed and The Evening Echo. She has also published a novel, *In The Days of Ford Cortina*, in August 2021.

Karen Richards is an Australian born and bred poet. She is the published author of 'Wrapped in Folds of Midnight' and 'The Way My Words Fall' both of which are available on Amazon. She enjoys writing poetry with the kind of emotion and imagery that connects with her readers. She has poems published in anthologies by Red Penguin Collection, Riveting Rants, Analogies and Allegories, Sapphic Writers, Quillkeepers Press, as well as on the In Daily website in Adelaide. You can find more of her work on Instagram @releasethefirefliespoetry

Joseph A. Farina is a retired lawyer in Sarnia, Ontario, Canada. An internationally award-winning poet. Several of his poems have been published in Quills Canadian Poetry Magazine, The Wild Word, The Chamber Magazine, Lothlorian Poetry Journal, Ascent, Subterranean Blue and in The Tower Poetry Magazine, Inscribed, The Windsor Review, Boxcar Poetry Revue, and appears in many anthologies including: Open Skies, Sweet Lemons: Writings with a Sicilian Accent, Canadian Italians at Table, Witness from Serengeti Press and Tamaracks: Canadian Poetry for the 21st Century. He has had poems published in the U.S. magazines Mobius, Pyramid Arts, Arabesques, Fiele-Festa, Philedelphia Poets and

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Memoir. He has had two books of poetry published— The Cancer Chronicles and The Ghosts of Water Street.

Bolualabi. O is a young and upcoming writer, poet and a lover of motivating. He's in the process of publishing his book Soaring At The Mountain.

Kathy Jo Bryant (Poetree) is from Missouri, USA. She is the author of Golden Glowing Mushroom and Favorite Things In My World. Her work is in a growing number of published anthologies. She is a member of, and former moderator for, the growing Facebook poetry group: "The Passion of Poetry"

Swayam Prashant (pen-name of Dr. Prashanta Kumar Sahoo) was born in the undivided Cuttack district, Odisha. He was formerly an Associate Professor of English at Sarupathar College, Assam, India. He has written six books and two booklets: Evaluation of Textbooks in the Teaching of English (based on his Ph.D. thesis); Values in Life (based on a research project on Vedic and Upanishadic writings); Knowledge Tree (miscellaneous prose writings); Haiku from the Garden of My Own (poetry); Live Like a Man (poetry); Premras Amrit (poetry in Assamese); Virgin Land Impregnated (a thematic study of Canadian folk songs); and Joy of Love (a unique booklet of love poems).

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Aleksandra Vujisić is a professor of English and a passionate writer of prose and poetry for children and grownups. She has participated in festivals and competitions across the globe and her work has won prizes and acknowledgments. Her work is published in more than 50 international anthologies, and literature/culture websites and portals. Aleksandra writes in her native language and English, and her poetry has been translated into Spanish, Italian, Polish, Chinese and other languages. She is a member of the Association of Montenegrin authors for children and runs a cultural centre in her town. Her first individual poetry book “Bleeding in my letters” is published in June 2022.

Stephanie Daich works in corrections and writes for the human experience. Examples of magazines and books you will find her work in are Making Connections, Youth Imaginations, Chicken Soup for the Soul: Kindness Matters, and others.

Linda Imbler’s poetry collections include six published paperbacks: Big Questions, Little Sleep, Big Questions, Little Sleep” second edition, Lost and Found, Red Is The Sunrise, Bus Lights, Travel Sights, and Spica’s Frequency. Soma Publishing has published her four e-book collections, Sea’s Secret Song, Pairings, a hybrid of short fiction and poetry, That Fifth Element, and Per Quindecim. In addition to writing, she helps her husband, a Luthier, build acoustic guitars and steel strings. They are currently working on number 10.

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Examples of Linda's poetry and a listing of publications can be found @ lindaspotryblog.blogspot.com

Carol Aronoff (Carol Alena Aronoff), Ph.D. is a psychologist, teacher and poet. Her work has appeared in numerous journals and anthologies and won several prizes. She was twice nominated for a Pushcart Prize. Carol has published 4 chapbooks (Corn silk, Tapestry of Secrets, Going Nowhere in the Time of Corona, A Time to Listen) and 6 full-length poetry collections: The Nature of Music, Corn silk, Her Soup Made the Moon Weep, Blessings From an Unseen World, Dreaming Earth's Body (with artist Betsie Miller-Kusz) as well as The Gift of Not Finding: Poems for Meditation. Currently, she resides in rural Hawaii.

Kay Watkins is a deaf writer in her 60's and retired from doing occupational therapy for 40 years. Cochlear implants have enabled her to enjoy hearing sounds, especially birds which she also loves watching. Kay loves music, nature, all forms of art & especially enjoys combining photography and poetry. She has an amazing family and husband she has been with over a decade who has helped her with her new journey in the hearing world. You can find out more about that journey in a short documentary called "KAY" in <http://AdamGundersheimer.com> under his directing section.

"Thank you for sharing my journey with me!"
- Kay

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Jaber RC is from Myanmar Arakan state, Southern Maungdaw, Baggona village tract but currently lives in a Bangladesh refugee camp. He fled in Bangladesh during the 2017 brutal operation of the Myanmar military. He has been writing poetry to explain his community situation through art. Whenever he becomes stressed and awkward, he reads a story and writes poems. He is inspired by reading the poetry of Walt Whitman, a humanist.

Paul Edward Costa is a Canadian literary artist and Poet Laureate Emeritus who has published in numerous literary journals such as Lothlorien Poetry Journal, Train: A Poetry Journal, and Subterranean Blue Poetry. He frequently performs spoken word poetry live and online. His poetry book "The Long Train of Chaos" was put out by Kung Fu Treachery Press and his fiction collection "God Damned Avalon" was recently published by Mosaic Press. He is a full member of the League of Canadian Poets and has won the Mississauga Arts Council's Emerging Literary Arts Award.

Jude Brigley, from Wales, has been a teacher, an editor and a performance poet. She is now writing more for her personal page. She has a pamphlet, 'Labours' [Thynk Press] and has contributed to many magazines including Sylvia, Otherwise Engaged, The Lake and Anti-heroin Chic.

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Carol Tahir lives and writes from Southern California. She is a retired salon owner and has dabbled many years in visual arts. She recently exchanged painting with brushes to painting with words, for a creative outlet. Several poems have been included in a few anthologies and online journals. She loves to read, paint and write.

Janelle Erin Elizabeth Peters was born in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada. She is a mother of 3. She studied Dental and Medical Administration as well as Personal Support Work. Currently she works in nursing taking care of seniors. She has been writing since she was 8 years old. Poetry is a form of therapy for her. She writes about many different struggles with mental health as well as addiction and recovery. Writing is a healer. On Facebook she runs a group called The Poetry Labyrinth and has a personal poetry page under the name Poetry Pen.

She is in the process of completing her first book, "My Poetic Journey to Healing". She hopes her writing will reach others and show them they are not alone.

May Lene Riodique, birth name Maylene Reodique Mayor, but writing under the name of May Lene Reodique. She was born and raised in Albay, Philippines. According to her, "There is no late when it comes to education. And poverty is not a hindrance, if you want to achieve something in life."

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This is true, because she experienced it herself. She finished college at the age of 33. She has a Bachelor Of Science in Fishery Education (June 9, 2019) in one of the prestigious university in the Philippines, Laguna State Polytechnic University, Los baños Campus. After she graduated, she worked in an Electronics Company as a production operator, but resigned before the pandemic came.

Writing poems is one of her hobbies. She write everything that comes to her mind. Since the pandemic came and she's always at home, she now writes more often than before. She owns a page, "Literary Touch" where she publishes her poems. Founder of an online literary group, "LITERARY CREATIONS" and "Sanctuary Of Poets & Poems".

You can also follow her on her Wattpad account @ sexysweetangel23

Courtney Glover is originally from Fulton County, Georgia. She is a writer, published author, editor and amateur photographer. Her passion for both writing poetry and photography started when she was very young. Three poets that greatly inspired her are Edgar Allan Poe, Robert Frost, and Shel Silverstein. She is the author of four poetry books, including Calypso Dreaming: A Collection of Poetry. She is also the editor of The Sacred Feminine: An Open Skies Collection anthology and the Open Skies Poetry anthology. She currently lives with her family in Camden County, New Jersey.

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Her Facebook page: Calypso Dreaming Press and Photography can be found at

<https://m.facebook.com/SouthernSpunk77>

TAK Erzinger is an award-winning poet. Her collection “At the Foot of the Mountain” (Floricanto Press California, 2021) won the University of Indianapolis Etching Press, Whirling Prize 2021 for best nature poetry book. It was also a finalist at The International Book Awards 2022, Willow Run Book Awards and Eyelands Book Awards. She is an American/Swiss poet and artist with a Colombian background. She lives on a foothill of a Swiss alp with her husband and cats.

Nkrumah Bankong-Obi is journalist and researcher based in Nigeria. He is the author of The First Shot...Ogoja Province and the Untold Story of the Nigeria/Biafra War. Bankong-Obi’s poetry has appeared in the widely acclaimed Nigerian anthology, Lagos of the Poets, National Mirror, P M News newspapers. A grantee of the Pulitzer Center on Crises Reporting, his forthcoming collection, Burning Skies encapsulates the bard’s relation to Mother Earth and the threat she faces from the adverse effects of climate change.

Sofia Kioroglou is a two-time award-winning poet, published author of 10 books, flash fiction writer, journalist and prolific blogger from Greece. Her poems are included in many anthologies, and a number of literary journals

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that include Verse-Virtual, Monokl, Lunariss Review, Writink Page, Silver Birch Press, Ariel Chart, Halkyon Days, Ashvamegh, Fractal.gr, and Winamop to name but a few. She is currently engaged in Business English Coaching and independent news reporting. You can get a feel of her work at <https://payhip.com/b/6Q4jE>

You can contact her @
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/sofia-kioroglou-411187206/>

Melanie Garfinkel Waknine feels blessed and fortunate to have traveled extensively, meeting dynamic people as well as having captured Nature's beauty and purity, both in photography and verse. Grew up in Johannesburg South Africa, emigrated alone to Israel and found love in the snow...Canada! When she's not writing, she gives of her time to elderly dementia patients. A number of her poems have been aired on Fine Music Radio Inc. She hopes you enjoy reading her poems as much as she enjoyed writing them. You can find her work published and read on Instagram: @onemeldoll

David Ehgott is a 64 year old disabled American veteran.

“I have seen the world through the United States Air Force, but I wouldn't recommend it to the average bear. Keep reading and writing. Never quit.” -David

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Evie Groch is a Field Supervisor/Mentor for new administrators in Graduate Schools of Education. Her opinion pieces, humor, poems, short stories, recipes, word challenges, and other articles have been widely published in the New York Times, The San Francisco Chronicle, The Contra Costa Times, The Journal, Games Magazine, and many online venues. Many of her poems are in published anthologies. Her short stories, poems, and memoir pieces have won her recognition and awards. Her travelogues have been published online with Grand Circle Travel. The themes of travel, language, immigration, and justice are special for her.

Allison Grayhurst is a member of the League of Canadian Poets. Five times nominated for “Best of the Net,” she has over 1300 poems published in over 500 international journals. She has 25 published books of poetry and 6 chapbooks. She lives in Toronto with her family. She also sculpts, working with clay.

Collaborating with Allison Grayhurst on the lyrics, Vancouver-based singer/songwriter/musician Diane Barbarash has transformed eight of Allison Grayhurst’s poems into songs, creating a full album entitled River – Songs from the poetry of Allison Grayhurst, released 2017.

Luisa Kay Reyes has had pieces featured in "The Raven Chronicles", "The Windmill", "The Foliate Oak", "The Eastern Iowa Review", and other literary magazines. Her essay, "Thank

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You", is the winner of the April 2017 memoir contest of "The Dead Mule School Of Southern Literature". And her Christmas poem was a first-place winner in the 16th Annual Stark County District Library Poetry Contest.

Additionally, her essay "My Border Crossing" received a Pushcart Prize nomination from the Port Yonder Press. And two of her essays have been nominated for the "Best of the Net" anthology. With one of her essays recently being featured on "The Dirty Spoon" radio hour.

Nardine Sanderson is an Australian author poetess, published in New York Adelaide magazine, author of bare winter and the longings of spring, Nardine has received an ambassador of peace award amongst many others, she hopes to teach poetry in the near future.

Dibyasree Nandy is a 29 year old resident of India. She is a poet and an author.

Carl Scharwath has appeared globally with 175+ journals selecting his writing or art. Carl has published three poetry books and his latest book "Playground of Destiny" features poetry, short stories and photography (Impspired Press) His two photography books were published by Praxis in Africa. His photography was also exhibited in the Mount Dora Center for The Arts gallery and The Leesburg Center for The Arts.

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Carl was the art editor for Minute Magazine (4 Years) and was nominated for The Best of the Net Award (2021.) He is also a competitive runner, and a 2nd degree black-belt in Taekwondo.

Weslea Sidon is a poet and musician living in West Tremont, Maine. Her poems have appeared in several literary magazines and collections, most recently Paumanok, Transition. She is the author of the poetry collection, The Fool Sings.

Marianne Tefft is a poet, lyricist, Montessori teacher and voiceover artist on the Dutch Caribbean island of Sint Maarten. Her work appears in print and online anthologies worldwide and on Facebook at Marianne Tefft - Poet & Wordsmith. She reads her work aloud on her YouTube channel. Her first poetry collection, Full Moon Fire, is to appear in July 2022.

Steven Bruce is a poet, writer, and award-winning author. His poetry and short stories have appeared in magazines, webzines, and anthologies worldwide. In 2018, he graduated from Teesside University with a Master's Degree in Creative Writing. He is the recipient of the Indies Today Five-star Recommendation Badge.

Born in the North of England, Steven now lives and writes full-time out of an apartment in Barcelona.

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Wayne Russell has been many things during his lifetime, he has been a creative writer, world traveler, graphic designer, former soldier, and former sailor. Wayne has been widely published in both online and hard copy creative writing magazines. From 2016-17 he founded and edited the now-defunct online creative writing magazine, Degenerate Literature.

In late 2018, the editors at Ariel Chart nominated Wayne for his first Pushcart Prize for the poem Stranger in a Strange Town, in addition; Wayne was nominated for Best of the Net via the editor at The Abyss. In 2020, Wayne had his debut paperback book of poetry published by Guerrilla Genesis Press; Where Angels Fear is available for purchase on Amazon.

Kimberly Green is a 21 year old USAF veteran, as well as a widow of a combat veteran whom died from service connected injuries. Kim lives in Arkansas and has 2 grown sons. Kim has been writing all her life and is a poet whom has had 56 poems published.

Charlotte Steenberg is 37 years old and currently living in Minneapolis. She has been estranged from her daughter for over 3 years now and misses her very much.

D.A. Simpson lives in a coastal area of outstanding beauty in the UK. The stunning scenery encountered when walking in this unspoiled environment inspires the poet to

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create works that seek to celebrate the natural world.

D.A. Simpson writes late in the evening when the world is quiet and there is time to contemplate.

Chris Bulteel was educated at Kings School Gloucester which is a cathedral school. He became a chorister in the cathedral boosting his interest in music. On leaving school he was advised by his English teacher to go into journalism. Contrary to his advice, he went to catering college becoming a graduate of the hotel and catering institute. After a career in high end catering, meeting with royalty and other well-known people, he retired due to health issues, only to start a new career in the care sector. Starting as a humble care assistant, he progressed to become a team leader followed by the chair of a staff association representing some 7000 staff. From first career to the second, he found himself working with the humblest and needy of people. He loved the job so much that he had a book published about his many experiences.

Upon retirement, he took up his hobby of writing and had another book published which is aimed towards young adult readers. It's about dragons and shows the reader the pitfalls of life. He's also published a book on Kindle about the life story of his mother. It is titled 'Yvonne Bulteel, Lifetime Remembered In Poetry'.

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Chris has always had an interest in poetry and most of his poetical works are concerning such horrors as war, hunger, global warming and greed. He feels that poetry is a means of bringing such issues to the attention of more people and showing the stupidity of many sections of the human race who consider that they own the planet, nature and all, that takes us towards environmental disaster.

Tim Kahl is the author of *Possessing Yourself* (CW Books, 2009), *The Century of Travel* (CW Books, 2012) *The String of Islands* (Dink, 2015) *Omnishambles* (Bald Trickster, 2019) and *California Sijo* (Bald Trickster, 2022). His work has been published in many journals in the U.S and abroad. He is also an editor of *Clade Song* at: [<http://www.cladesong.com>]

Tim is an events coordinator for The Sacramento Poetry Alliance. He builds and plays the flute. He also plays the guitar, ukulele, charango and cavaquinho, as well as many other instruments from around the world. He currently teaches at California State University, Sacramento, where he sings lieder while walking on campus between classes.

Daniel Moreschi is a poet from Neath, South Wales, UK. After life was turned upside down by his ongoing battle with severe M.E., he rediscovered his passion for poetry that had been dormant since his teenage years. Writing has served as a distraction from his struggles ever since. Daniel has been acclaimed by

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numerous poetry competitions, including The Oliver Goldsmith Literature Festival, the Westmoreland Arts & Heritage Festival, the Utah State Poetry Society's Annual Contest, the Jurica-Suchy Nature Museum's Nature Poetry Contest, and the Hugo Dock Snow Maze Poetry Contest. Daniel has also had poetry published by The Society of Classical Poets, and The Black Cat Poetry Press.

Amit Shankar Saha is the author of three collections of poems titled *Balconies of Time*, *Fugitive Words* and *Illicit Poems*. His poems have appeared in *The Yearbook of Indian Poetry in English* 2020 and 2021, *The Best Indian Poetry* 2018 and forthcoming in *Converse: Contemporary English Poetry by Indians*. He has won numerous awards and is also a Pushcart Prize, Griffin Poetry Prize, and Best of Net nominee. He has a PhD in English from Calcutta University and teaches in the English Department at Seacom Skills University. He is the Editor-in-Chief of *EKL Review*. His website is www.amitshankarsaha.com

Grace Matson has been writing poetry on a regular basis for over 5 years. She started writing poems weekly for publication in a Central Wisconsin newspaper where she was a Feature Writer. Her work has been published by *The Avocet Nature Journal*, *The Blue Heron Review* and *Voice of the River Valley*. Recent poems will be published by *Open Skies Media* and *The Poet Magazine*. Grace also writes poetry

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from art and photography inspired pieces, or ekphrastic poetry. Her poems are influenced by family and friends, nature and everyday life. Grace hopes to capture your attention, evoke emotion, and make you think.

Don Narkevic is from Buckhannon, WV. He attended MFA National University. Current work appears in *Agape*, *New Verse News*, and *Offcourse*. In Spring 2022, *Main Street Rag* published a novella of poetry, "After The Lynching".

Renee Butner When not dipping chocolates or making pralines as an owner of Kilwins in Winston-Salem, Renee spends her time writing poetry and haiku, and is a member of the NC Haiku Society. She has been published in journals including the *Haiku Journal*, *NC Poetry in Plain Sight*, *Acta Victoriana*, *Gnashing Teeth Publishing*, and won second prize in Piedmont Plus Silver Games for her poem *Silver Moments*. Her poem *Forest King* earned a spot in the Highland Park Public Art Poetry Contest. Her website is www.reneebutner.wordpress.com.

Celesia Parker has been writing poetry since she was five years old. She has self-published two books, "Practice Perfection" and "Glimpses Of You". She has third book that will be released in July 2022 called "Callie". She received a recognition with a chapbook from Keith Sparks' Open Skies spotlight series called "Stepping Stones" that contains her poems published in Open Skies Quarterly volumes 1-6.

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“It is an honor to be among the most inspiring uplifting poets of our times in this upcoming Anthology. I appreciate warmly your interest in reading my works. Thank you ever so humbly.”
-Celesia Parker

Robin Michele Payne is a native Californian who grew up loving to read and write from a young age. Writing poems and short stories and has always dreamed of writing for a living as it's her real passion. After losing touch with her creative self over the years, she has just recently delved headlong into it once more. Her works have already been accepted in a worldwide published magazine and won awards in online poetry slams and pages.

She currently resides in Giza, Egypt, for almost 12 years now, but will be relocating to England to increase her knowledge in the literary arts, play-writing, and physically exploring the legends of the greats who still remain.

Her biggest inspiration is the love of her life; nature and everything beautiful, dark and full of spirit. She writes what is close to her heart, even if that means laying her soul open for all the world to read. She writes from the heart and is just trying to leave this world a little bit better with her words.

Colonel Arun Hariharan, a.k.a Harry, is an Indian Army veteran who switched over to a Corporate career after his military service. His over two-decade military career saw him foot slog in leech infested tropical jungles of India's

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beautiful North-East, bash dunes in the scorching deserts of Rajasthan, spot Red Pandas in the Himalayas and travel the world seeking adventure.

He is an avid biker, author, poet, compulsive traveler, photographer and history buff- he's always loved exploring the unexplored. His collection of Short Stories titled "A Baker's Dozen- 13 Chilling Indian Tales of Macabre" which incorporated three of his passions - travel, history and exploring local legends-was published in October 2021 by Creative Crow Publishers, New Delhi, India. His poetry and stories have also been published in a number of international anthologies and he is avid participant in English poetry meets.

Brechtje Moen is a poet from the Netherlands. She aims to make her poems approachable and accessible, writing on relatable topics in regards to love and relationships, but also on darker periods of life and societal matters.

Laurie Lambert's poetry explores themes of motherhood, nature, conversation and storytelling. She holds degrees in Chemistry and Medical Microbiology. Laurie is a facilitator at Women Writing for (a) Change in Cincinnati, Ohio. Her poems have been published in Annapurna, Clarify, The Sycamore, Common Threads and For a Better World. Finishing Line Press published her chapbook What I Can Carry, in 2016 and full-length collection, What We Are Made Of, in 2019.

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Lynn White lives in north Wales. Her work is influenced by issues of social justice and events, places and people she has known or imagined. She is especially interested in exploring the boundaries of dream, fantasy and reality. She was shortlisted in the Theatre Cloud 'War Poetry for Today' competition and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and a Rhysling Award. Her poetry has appeared in many publications including: Apogee, Firewords, Capsule Stories, Gyroscope Review and So It Goes.

Find Lynn

at: <https://lynnwhitepoetry.blogspot.com>
and <https://www.facebook.com/Lynn-White-Poetry>

Melanie Flores Introduced to poetry in kindergarten, she quickly became the school poetry reciter at her Canadian/Ukrainian elementary school. After a lengthy career as an Advertising Sales Manager in business publishing, Melanie moved on to focus on her own writing, producing over a hundred pieces (poems, short stories, novella) over several years. Melanie also works as an editor, proofreader, reader and audiobook narrator through her company MDF Communications Services Inc.

www.melanieflores.net
www.mdfcommsvcs.com

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Shunant Wharton is an individual who strives for perfection both personally and professionally. She resides in Guyana and real-life experience is what she is most passionate about. The art of capturing a moment and placing them into written words, later on, is definitely what she's made of. She longs to make it in the writing industry one day and with God, that would be a success.

Johanne Lee is a proud mother of 3 and Mancunian, presently published in 9 anthologies including Open Skies, Soul Poet Society and The Sacred Feminine anthology to name a few. Recently published by Impspired magazine.

She is also a children's picture book author of Dream Big Little One, Maximus the Humpback Whale and Maison Mouse (all on Amazon) all of her books raise for charity. She is about to publish her own poetry book,

'Woman's Journey' which will raise for Crossroads Derbyshire and can be found as Johanne Lee Author on FB and Instagram as well as joleeinpoetry on Instagram.

Julie Bolt is a writer, educator, and an advocate/activist. She writes poetry, short stories and scholarly essays. Her book is Pedagogy for Democratic Practice. Her poetry has appeared in The Raven's Perch, Shot Glass Journal, The Red River Review, Slow Trains, New Verse News, Home Planet News, Celestal, Mutha, the punk online journal Zygoté in My Coffee

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and Writing in a Woman's Voice, amongst other online and print publications. Julie is an Associate Professor of English at Bronx Community College of the City University of New York.

Jennifer O'Shea lives in beautiful Minnesota, a place of transforming beauty. Her writings reflect the observations and synergy between the idea of her eternal spirit and the experiences she accumulates with nature and art. The relationships Jennifer has with her family, and her golden-doodle, River, create a rich fertilized ground in which to write.

Recently, one of her Ekphrastic poems called, "Full Moon Bath" was published in the latest Anthology Book from Southern Arizona Press titled, "The Stars and Moon in the Evening Sky."

Zachary Guadamour is the pseudonym for a writer who had the good fortune to study with Richard Sheldon, Perter Wild and Steve Orlen. He considers himself a nominal blood letter or words, and has been on a lifelong quest for the fossilized remains of the first word ever spoken. He lives nine placks from the Mexican border at 631 East 9th Nirvana in Agua Prieta Norte in The State of Disbelief in Los Estados Estupidos 85607-2115. His email address is guadamour@gmail.com and his phone number (520)368-2773. He seldom answers his phone or checks or responds to messages, and is of the opinion that a phone belongs on the kitchen wall of his childhood home.

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Pendraig the poet is a spoken word poet based in North Wales. Speaking from the heart, exploring different topics and themes. Pendraig continues to push literary boundaries.

“When I was nine years old, I suffered a serious childhood illness and lay in a coma for two weeks. Upon awakening, I had to learn how to speak again. Sometimes people can’t find words to express themselves, yet sometimes words can find people.”

- Pendraig

Check out Pendraig the poet’s website at <https://www.pendraigthepoet.com/>

Carolyn Donnell began writing again in 2003 when she joined the California Writers Club - South Bay Branch, where she wrote articles, stories and poems for their WritersTalk newsletter. South Bay honored her in 2018 with the Matthews-Baldwin Award and CWC’s Jack London Award in 2019.

Some of her awards include 1st in fiction from 2015 San Francisco Writers Conference, Literary Arts Division San Mateo County Fair – including 2014 Exhibitor of the Year, the 2021 best story in class, as well as other prizes in fiction and poetry.

Her short stories and poems have been published in several anthologies which include: San Mateo County Fair Literary Arts Division Carry the Light Anthology Vols I-VI, CWC

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Anthology West Winds Centennial, SBW Anthology Who Are Our Friends? 2009, South Bay Writers Club (branch of California Writers Club) WritersTalk newsletter, CWC Literary Review, Celebrate Creativity 2020, Words For The Earth, and Whispering Willow: Tree Poems.

She also has two novels under the name of C. S. Donnell. Carolyn's current writing projects include novels, a poetry chapbook, and children's stories.

<https://carolyndonnell.wordpress.com/writing>
<https://southbaywriters.com/meet-our-members/>