

POEMS FROM “POETRY FOR INSPIRATION & WELL-BEING” 2021

“Poetry for Inspiration and Well-Being” was offered as an online course through the Charter for Compassion for the first time in April 2018 during America’s “National Poetry Month.” Amazingly, over two hundred students signed up from around the world. Because of its popularity, the course has been offered every April since then. Almost a hundred students enrolled during the global pandemic. In 2021, a new feature was offered to students. It is commonplace in creative writing courses and workshops to include student writing in some kind of anthology at the end of a semester. In keeping with that tradition, it was decided that such a collection of student poems would be assembled to showcase our amazing group of poets. This is the first annual anthology of many to come in the future.

–John Smelcer, Creator and Facilitator of “Poetry for Inspiration and Well-Being”



The Call of Love

by Arun Wakhlu

Come home to me
says infinite love—
I am here, there
everywhere!

See my hand

in all things,
within and around
what you call

“yourself.”

See me

In all others

as one self .

Feel me
As the timeless guide
Whose guidance
Is a dance
Of gentle whispers.

See me flowing
In all the cells
Of your beautiful body-

A miracle of perfection
Just as it is.

I am the Source

Of perfect health,

The course

Of all movements—

The silent peaceful

heart

Of all things.

Find me

In Nourishing food

And the loving caresses

Of your loved ones.

Search not

For my everlasting

Peace and joy

In objects, people

Philosophies

Or books.

Find me instead

In the chirping of birds

And the hearty laughter

Of pure little babies.

I am

The juicy source

Of all your art—
A never-ending well
Of creative emptiness.

I am ever yours
My love—
For we are one!

Come home
To me
And gently melt
Into glorious wholeness.

For what else

Is there to do

On earth

But to celebrate

The heart of it all.

Poetry Recital

by Angelic “Angel” Que

Sometimes

When I am

Very quiet

And gazing

At nothingness,

I hear

A poem

Recite

Itself

In me

My First Memory

by Lisa Jennings

My first memory
Is a spiky purple ball
Held in Perspex.

Perceived,
Timeless,
Like lamplight on oil cloth.

My past,
My history
Is burned into my being.

Outlined in black ink,

A portrait of pain.

The Volcano protects its young.
Its flaming core
Flows lava into my soul.

I witnessed the wound,
Was thrown into a cupboard,
Came out a healer.

Out

by Michele Leschi

Father Time Screams Out,
Mother Nature weeps.

It should come as no surprise that they are quite fed up—

I suppose it wasn't enough that we'd bled them dry,
Drained, Prodded,
Pitted, Spilled and
Let the Bullets
Fly —

It wasn't enough that we were killing off each Other

Murdering
Slaughtering
Fathers
Brothers
Sisters
Mothers
Bang
Bang

Bang—

How many more, Lord, How
Many
More?

We mangled, muddled,
beat back,
scrubbed and scorched
the earth so bare —

Sent

Our

Toxic

Bullets

Down

Into

The

Seven Seas.

And

Up into

The greying,

Poisoned

Air.

Carved our names

In

Space

Until

There was

No

Other

Place.

And Still—

We maim and kill,

Destroy

at will

All

In

The
Name
Of
Power Gained,
Chunks of Change,
Bloated
Egos'
Bold Refrain— More
More!

How much more, Lord?
How much more!

No way
To
Repay,
Repair
What soon may be
No longer there.

Father Time
Cries out

Out! OUT!

Mother Nature
Weeps.

In Search of Bruce's Cave

by Lisa Browning

The painting hangs
in my front hall
A place of honour
in memory of you

The colours are vibrant
golds, reds, and yellows
Sunlight streams through the leaves
on the trees

There is a stark contrast
between those leaves on the trees
and the stones of Bruce's Cave

Autumn has always been
my favourite season

I met you in autumn
while I was
in search of Bruce's Cave

Lost
I could not find the cave
but kept ending up back
at your gallery
and so I went in

perhaps I was not lost at all

What would possess a man
to live in seclusion
for so long?

The Bruce Trail
a Canadian treasure
with 250 miles to hike

Many take it on as a life goal
"I will, in this lifetime, hike the entire trail," they say
and many have

On that trail
is Bruce's Cave

You are the man behind the brush strokes
the painting, you did for me
If I look closely
I can see you smiling at me
through those vibrant
golds, reds, and yellows

I will always be grateful that I went
in search of Bruce's Cave
because it was that search
that led me to you.



Countdown

by e. McDermott

Bezos
clown
of gross
production

Musk
we throw
the Jesus stone

tech gone mad
brain chip
corruption

bury and blast
the hybrid
horns

Gates of greed
feign disaster

nature settles
what She abhors

Death of Nature

by Denis Crowley

I am base in nature.
No heavens light here to see.
I snarl curse and demand it all for me.

Listen to my Industry,
My power and my might
O, how I revel in this, our glorious sight.

My account numbers,
Can you hear the ticking?
Of the greenbacks I am sticking.

To the lobby group,
The green washing and the
Legal loop the loops.

What use has I for trees or grass
When dead timber with stone
Can be conceded?

Not for me natures delight.
When I can have more colours
Than are ever needed.

Who cares about my neighbour?
Live in squalor, to

Die a premature death.

I need the cheaper clothing,
To make my eyes stand out.
The curse of fashions met.

I am base in nature.
The profits all for me,
I will take what I can get.

As I travel in my sports car
Squash the little mammal
That hampers progress that must be met.

I want to be a rich man.
Let no snails stand in the way,
As a beaches wears,

Who the hell cares?

Curse you, you smelly tree huggers
You're all self-loving whiners.
Thank god, we have never met.

The sand dunes are for racing
Who cares for nesting birds?
They are a nuisance anyway.

One mountain is like another,
The seas are all the same
Just numbers in a realtor game.

Butterflies are merely brooches,
No better than roaches,
Like you beneath my feet.

Be quiet you little tree hugger.
And know your little place.
Or this bullet will be your final fate.

For I am all consuming.
All powerful,
Everything will be mine.

I am man, I am Divine.

One Day

by Lisa W. Sterling

A young girl perched
on a giant boulder;
stretched out
face to the sky.
She heard

Child, this is Life, I have much to teach you.

The girl listened to stories passing on the breeze,
absorbed the ancient wisdom of the stone,
felt the radiance of the sun on her face,
and carried these teachings throughout her life.

An old woman rested
on the inclined hospital bed;
friends and family nearby,
biding time.
She heard

Child, this is Death, I have much to teach you.

The woman smiled,
closed her eyes,
and listened.

Yoga of Life

by Patricia VanBuskirk

When you slipped away
my life changed

your offering was light
and more

more than
laughter
as you bounded
into the sea
beckoning

more than aromas
of simmering garlic and olive oil
nurturing

more than
gentle sparkling
blue love gaze
uniting

more than
the inner smile of your
smooth accent
playing

it was this

together we experienced
the yoga of life
the fullness of
laughing, loving,
crying, loss

to keep

what you said we each had been doing all along,
“sweeping the path
and scattering it with rose petals”
inviting love

no burdensome carrying of
dry bones or
wailing at
the cool moon

a tear,
a softening heaviness of
a healing heart

a cup of tea

for this is truly the yoga of life

isn't it

When I Was Young

by Cyndy Oligny

When I was young
afraid of other people
any one
everyone
My wish was to be blind to differences
My thought was to force myself
to treat everyone with equal respect and humor

but
When I shed my cocoon
venturing into relationships

watching
listening
learning
My hope was to see humanity's many facets
My attempt was to celebrate the kaleidoscope
to rejoice in the beauty of the composite whole

and
When I let go the fears
talking one on one
face
to
face
My revelation was of injustices I'd missed
My resolve was to learn the tragedy of everyday oppression
to peel away to uncover its ugly reality

now
When I move through each day
grasping hold of the moments
one
step
at a time
My goal is to flow forward through life's course
My challenge is in making positive change
to whatever plight is within my reach

The Question

by Tam Martin Fowles

A lone voice carries on the wind:

what can *I* do?

At a time of so much suffering

what can *I* do?

I can't stop wars or end inequities

I can't feed starving orphans

or protect rejected refugees

I'm just one tiny human

in a world of ceaseless tragedies

but I need to do *something*;

what can I do?

The answer carries back:

What can *you* do?

You can take a stranger's quaking hand

and hold it in your own.

You can phone a neighbour sinking

in the quicksand of despair

and just be there to help her onto solid land.

You can look for multiple new ways to be compassionate

and practice every day.

You'll soon find you are not alone.

There are so many roles for tiny humans just like us to play;

small acts that, joined together,

make way for a shifting paradigm.

The secret is to all keep asking, all the time,

what can *I* do?

What Am I?

by Robert Dager

Sometimes I'm a bin.
Sometimes I'm a pile.

I eat grass clippings.
I eat deciduous leaves.
I eat small dead plant vegetation.

I love fresh vegetable scraps.
Fresh fruit scraps are my dessert!

I save the lives of garbage disposals.
I help prevent water pollution.
I help reduce the size of landfills.

I provide food for earthworms, gnats,
and other insect critters.

I provide wonderful supplements to the
soil of gardens and flower beds.

What am I?

I AM COMPOST!!!

Star

by Marion Gamble

I have never been a star
People are not drawn to me
like a moth to a flame

But I have heard I am made of stardust

Even red dwarfs cannot hide
from the Hubble
Each glimmer has a name

A Box of Lies

by Diane Valeri

“No regrets,” I say
as a tear streaks my cheek.

I wrap an item
in brown paper
before placing it in the box.

Cobwebs of memories cling
to these objects collected
over a 25 year journey
together.

A porcelain figurine slips and
crashes on the floor.
“Son-of-bitch,” I say,
wondering who I am talking to.

I know that a broken heart
will not kill me
but I also know,
staying here
might.

I return to packing
remembering the promises made
but not kept.

I walk out the front door
leaving shattered pieces on the floor
beside the half-filled box.

“No regrets.” I say
as a tear streaks my cheek.

Finding Myself

by Jackene Laverty

I am still finding myself
And not from being lost
Creativity seeping from ossified wounds
Hope reflected in trouble, treachery, turmoil
Awe expanding with each lived day
Joy surging from the smallest of graces
Binding
 Combining
 Renewing

Deepening

The well is vast
The time is short

The Phoenix is Rising

by Philomena O'Dea

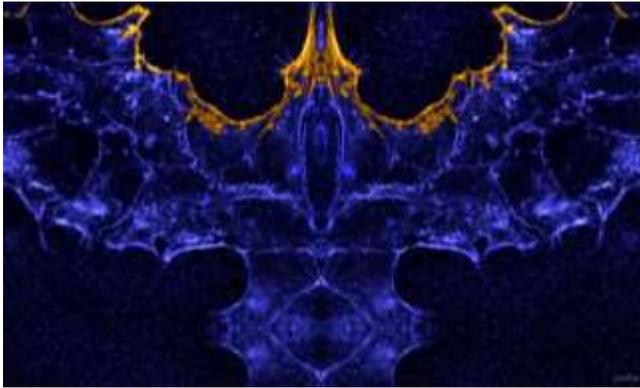
This is a true story.
I saw it with my own eyes, I felt it with my own heart.

April 12th 2021 a spring day, in a dark century,
the morning a new moon began, when
a hawk hovered over a nest, home
to blackbirds. Defending her chicks
a lone mother zoomed directly
toward the imperial invader, shrieking
with all her might. Reputed to be too small
to deter raptors, this verbose mother
called out to the forest. The bigger
bird, with talons visible, circled the
menacing mother disarming his ease of
expectation. Suddenly out of the blue
a lone bird
becomes a flock, cowering the bird of prey.

United they rise like a phoenix, a myth manifested
in nature to illuminate the darkness
of greed,
of hatred,
of delusion,

to kindle Courage
to replenish Compassion
to regenerate Love

for the Earth
for Everything
for Everyone
We Share it with.



Eyes

by Anne Murray

The supermarket where vulnerable people shopped early became a regular hunter-gathering expedition.
...head downlistshortest exposure possibleno chit chat
I headed to dairy where fat-free milk had journeyed to the top shelf, and met a woman looking up with eyes saying “help me”
I grabbed a milk for her and one for me.
Her eyes smiled, and a tear slid behind her mask.
“Anytime,” I said “my mother used to say my height could be useful.”
“Well it is,” she sweetly replied... “See you”
I hope so...

The Long Road Here Began with a Poem and a Poem Emerged

by Paul Palmarozza

I read a poem with fine words that changed my view,
From main concern for me, to love of you.

Not for a personal you who is so small,

But for that grand you that lives in us all.

The poem is a message from father to son,

It says our true nature is like the sun.

Ever shining sun, but clouds can block our sight,

These ego-based covers of day need light.

The rays of our sun are values to guide life,

When lived each day we can then deal with strife.

We can help light the way for others to see,

That life is good when lived for we, not me.

If I can live them is the challenge I face,

It needs a still mind and heart in place.

What arose in my mind were some lines to write,

That show how true values give better sight.

If I can change the words of the wise to deeds,

And let fine values be my living guide;

If I can seek to meet my neighbour's needs

And not what I want to have on my side.

If I can play at life's game and not compete,

Coming to see the most clear conclusion;

That victory's thrill and the pain of defeat

Are none other than the same illusion.

If I can widen my view on what is harm;

Include harsh speech, making others feel small,

Being
discourteous and causing alarm,

And so then resolve to avoid them all...

If I can calm the heart pounding loud for fame

Ignore the hollow echoes of applause;

And so thank those who give my faults a name

So that from the grasping world I can pause...

If I can widen my circles of compassion

To embrace all, put me and mine aside;

Avoiding blind greed that brings on recession

Trusting the present judgement as the guide...

If I can curb the waste of precious power

Not seeking the approval of other;

Resting content like a beautiful flower

Neither less or greater than another...

The rest is Silence.

Gaze

by Robin Bradley Hansel

Exuberant sky –

So bright

I could smell the stars

And taste their wonder.

Stick Ball

by Russell Kendall Carter

A one block street;

cars, new, old, both sides,

even a brand new

53 Caddy El dorado, ragtop.

Four manhole cover ball;

second base – third cover

first and third bases

between cars;

wooden produce tops

for bases and

barrel stave for a bat;

pink rubber ball.

we were creative in our play,

always Dodgers and Yankees;

four to a side;

no one under eight, over ten.

Played on lunch hours;

ump was Ralph, a car mechanic

taking lunch with us.

No real rules, only

three strikes for an out, no balls.

Only the brave would slide;

Not me.

Ralph kept score;

kept records of wins.

End of summer season,

plastic trophies for winners,

baseball trading cards for losers.

I was always a Dodger;

I loved the Dodgers;

I had lots of trading cards!



Love Letter from Mother Earth

by Sue Fitzgerald

My Child, thank you
for embracing me as HOME.

Your generous smiles
Ripple joy and hope
in directions unseen.

The simple glance Towards,
instead of away,
Raises Our Vibration.

All Beings are further liberated
with each Reuse and Recycle.

Spending time in Nature
restores your Peace.

Peace restored

is passed along
to all you greet!

Voicing against oppression, Shines a light on Love,
casting a shadow on indifference.
A witness to Courage in action!

You know these lessons well, My Child,
Embodying them through
Compassion Kindness Forgiveness
They are your Birthgifts!
Cultivating Patience is your Work.

Accept the offering of Others
with this learning.

Know that such Acceptance
is as much a gift to the Bearer
As receiving it is a gift to Yourself.

When Darkness finds you,
(and it will!)
Remember to embrace the gifts
you so freely give to others.

Your Light will shine through
Self-
Compassion

Self- Kindness

Self-
Forgiveness.

With Courage and humility,
Allow the flicker of Self-care today
Ignite a fire of Self-Love

reKindling a Perpetual Renewal of
Spirit
Heart
Hope
Action

As your Light within
Brightens our Earth beyond.

Fill the Future
with wonderful memories,
As she moves through a New Day!

In Hope, with Love
wrapped in Gratitude,

Mother Earth



by Mary Martin

Astonishing.
Miraculous.
I remember.
Gift.

A tender and chaotic time of initiation
Exploring this life named Mary
Separated from the voices of my mother and sister
And the large hand of my father.

The lifeforce within me
Knows
The name of my safe place
And where to embody Mary life.

Returning to the soft, hilly meadow
Flopping onto a nest of spongy grass
My body's outline creating
The signature of this safe place.

Silence embodies my still body
Soaking in the beauty of
Recognizing its place in the family of life.
Kindness swallows me.

Now
At this ripe, old age
This memory emboldens
My knowing.

Within me
A guide ushers me
Again to safe pastures.
Her pointers are wonder and awe.

This guide offers no formal name.
She is full and empty at the same time.
In and out.
My breath is held and released with no warning.

The River of Life

by Leslie Tremaine

Living fully
is not just a list
of chores
to be crossed off
feeling righteous
when completed...
Any more than a river
is a road
to be cleared
smoothed

for faster travel
Let go
and remember
the river knows the way
with greater power
than pushing
or posturing

WTF?

by Georgiana Lotfy

I hate to interrupt

The
Netflix movie.

Another black male

killed by
police.

WTF?
Duante Wright

Say his name
20 years old.
20 years young.

Traffic stop

gun shot

hanging air freshener?

expired tags?

WTF?

Mama please help me.
Mother of God
Please help us.

Accept this child
and welcome him

Home,
so young, too soon
into Your Kingdom

And comfort his momma.
And comfort his family.
And comfort his friends.

And
I pray bring justice
Swift as he died.

I can't breathe.
tears choke me
Silent.

Prayers and outrage
Live side by side
Can we live side by side?

Say his name
Duante Wright
20 years young
Pray him home.
Dear Lord.

Amen

The ecological self

by Monica Iren Knudsen

This may be the last time

you
see this forest

you will learn to see

through
the roots of the trees,

a wilderness that slowly

vanishes

make you listen

with the ears of an
animal.

When the earth suffers

your body gets ready

to feel the soil

beneath the bare soles

of your feet.

Sense
the scent

of
moist moss, fill you

with
safety, freedom

like
a bear

awakens
to

a
new spring.

The
soul does not

just
belong to

humankind,

its
roots are found

in
rocks and soil

welcoming

your ecological self.



At Home

by Billi Jeanne Vogan

Life was off track
How did I get here?
Certainly *this* wasn't
my destination

When the world view
was not what I had
envisioned,
I went underground

Going within
I discovered
how much
I had lived without

Life should be lived as my soul
desires
Not as my ego

craves

Who is this woman
I never knew? Is this the real me?
The everlasting me?
The underground
Tunnel was dark
It seemed hundreds
of miles long
Never ending
I get glimpses of the light
A sense a lifting
as my journey somehow takes me far above

There are moments anyway

This is when
I feel I am not
part of this world
Is this my true home?
Among the clouds
and Angels

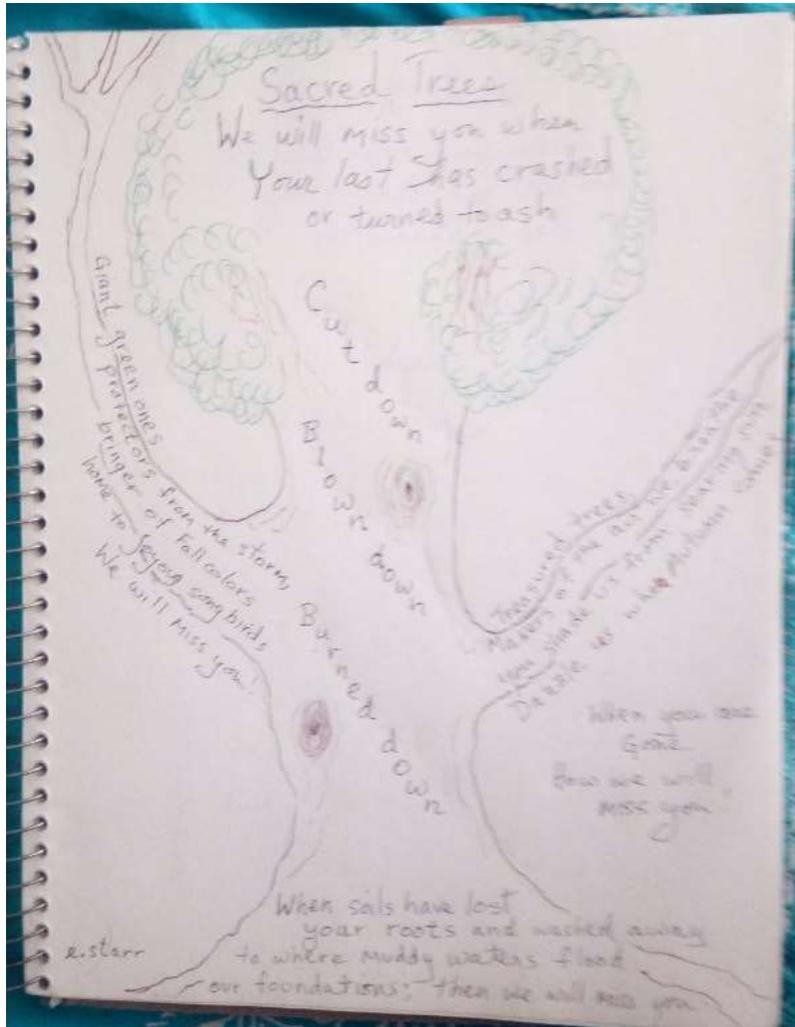
The view
of truth becomes
more clear
As I am looking down
So far, it's impossible to
stay above, in the clouds
It is lovely
I hope I can spend
more time there

I still find myself
In the darkness more
than I would like,
But grateful for
forging a path to the
Clouds

I'll find my way back

I've let go of old ideas
of a world that didn't fit
As I am changing,
Evolving

I realize
I am exactly as I've
always been
It's good to be home
At long last.



“Sacred Tree” by Ellen L. Carey Starr