Welcome to Fran

Fran Lock is a some-time itinerant dog whisperer, the author of numerous chapbooks and thirteen poetry collections, most recently Hyena! (Poetry Bus Press, 2023), shortlisted for the T.S. Eliot Prize 2023, and 'a disgusting lie': further adventures through the neoliberal hell-mouth (Pamenar Press, 2023). White/ Other (87 Press, 2022), a collection of hybrid lyric riff, was a Poetry Book Society Recommendation. Fran was the Judith E. Wilson Poetry Fellow at Cambridge University (2022-23), researching feral subjectivity through the lens of the medieval Bestiary. Fran's other work includes the chapbook Forever Alive (Dare-Gale Press, 2022), and the critically acclaimed work of "queer mourning" Hyena! Jackal! Dog! (Pamenar Press, 2021). A recent collection of hybrid essays, Vulgar Errors/ Feral Subjects (Out-Spoken Press) was published last year. Fran is a Commissioning Editor and maid of all work at the radical arts and culture cooperative Culture Matters, where she edited the mammoth anthology The Cry of the Poor (2021) and launched the Culture Matters Pamphlet Series in 2023. She is a member of the new Editorial Advisory Board for the Journal of British and Irish Innovative Poetry, and she edits the Soul Food column for Communist Review. Fran teaches online for Poetry School, and is occasional co-host of the cross-cultural poetry podcast Social yet Distanced, with her cousin Jack Varnell. Fran is proud pit bull parent. She hates the Tories and all who sail in them. She lives in Kent.

Guest Poets, March and April

Saturday 9th March Roy McFarlane FRSL
Poet, Playwright and Writer Canal Laureate England & Wales
Birmingham Poet Laureate 2010/2011

Saturday 13th April Bohan Piasecki (tbc)

The

Brooke's Review

Monthly anthology of poems read at the Saturday Books Poetry Breakfast, held at Brookes Bar and Bistro, Priory Street DY11HA

Saturday 10th February 2024 Issue No. 1.

Welcome to the first edition of the Brooke's Review.

The poems you'll find inside were performed at the last Saturday Books Poetry Breakfast, on 13th January 2014.

They are reproduced in this rudimentary publication because we at Saturday Books naturally believe in all spoken-word art having a literary form. The one form does not surpass the other; there is no 'hierarchy', that would privilege the print over the voice - rather that they are complementary expressions. A performed poem can shock, engage and move; the remote reading-back is far more than a recollection of emotion. It is rather an internalisation of the verse, where it lodges deep in the consciousness, from which a phrase can arise unexpectedly, in all its beauty. In other words, the verse has become part of a shared culture, with its own dynamism.

Heart Cracked Open

(9/3/22)

To taste the sweet thrill
Of her,
Tasted again
And then tormented
By her absence.

Unrequited.

To feel the tsunami of emotion
Rising up,
Like a tempest
Or a hurricane
Only to plummet

Like a stone.

Dead.
Nothing.
No future
Facing the punishment
Of getting it wrong.
"There has been a misunderstanding".

She sits,
So innocent,
Smiling,
Watching you
The way a vulture
watches dying prey.

Dying for you.

"There has been a misunderstanding",
She says
And you feel
As if you could die,
Heart cracked open.

Ian Henery

The black dog

The black dog is howling today
But that's okay, I need to take him for a walk
Let him off the leash for a while
And let him run around.

He gets more exercise than I do
Taking me into the past and the future
The bleak end of Blighty
The bleak end of time.

The black dog is howling
And I've fed him treats and taken him for walks
I've ignored him and screamed back at him
And still he runs around.

The black dog –
You know what? I'm sick and tired of this black dog.
He eats up my time and my happiness
He eats me up.

The black dog's gonna find
He might bite but I'll still carry on
I know I'm good no matter what he says
This isn't imposter syndrome
I've fucking earned it!

The black dog howls.
And I howl right back at him.
He howls I growl we snarl
He goes for a bite but I'm looking for a fight.

The black dog and I aren't friends.
Sometimes he swamps me but I've got claws as well
He can rage and snarl
But I can drag him into the light.

Steven Davis

Find me in the storm

Find me in the storm

When everything's a mess

When life turns on its head

And you're far from your best.

Find me in the quiet.

In the tranquil evening air

When you close your eyes

I will meet you there.

Find me at my gravestone

I'll watch you sitting by

I'll listen to your love for me

Know it's okay to cry

I will never leave you

I'm always sitting near

Just call me and I'll rise

Inside your heart I'm always here

Beth Williams

Winter Willow

If this willow
stretched her arms
And drank this red lake dry,

Lay down her hair,
as held on moss
To sigh with words pass't by,

You'd think she'd see
as poisoned leaves
Shed down in silent night,

No, not for her grace
Frosted embrace
Nor even branded cries

Would my willow
Look on down
And know my earnest try,

Be with me now
Forget about
The candid and the lie,

I love you
Dying willow
Still sweet to say good bye.

Claire Willetts

Winter on the X8
“Tay cold enough to kill germs”
Silver streams run down the windows, breath forms swirls and curls
Condensation sits on the ledges, wetting elbows
“ This ay winter,
call this winter,
this ay winter-
too mild ay it, too wet"
The germs spread themselves around, like butter on bread,
Thinly, covering lips that get licked, and fingers that poke teeth, rub along rails, trails unseen
Street after street, weak sunlight bounces off wet cars and dappled coats
People huddle at the stop but step back from the spray
Away from their place in a queue that forms round a puddle
Face the drizzle to read the number, fold the umbrella, lead the conga
Warmth grows, loosening buttons, removing gloves, claiming space, drips on a nose, misted specs maiming vision.
“Ah well, cor afford winter any way -
Ta ra a bit”
Vibrations move bones, fingers tight on metal bars, taste lingers of fumes, scents blur
The afternoon rapidly darkens to night, lights blink on, traffic soon builds
A fiery line drags the bottom of the sky behind the buildings, finds the swoop of starlings gone
A pocket of pure cold air is quickly replaced by fug of food stalls, swaddled bodies and vape cloud fruit
“Arr, see ya bab" Sallyanne Wright

Death Shall Not Persuade
Death shall not persuade our hearts to sorrow,
O! Impenetrable depths of the veil
That sway the tygering Sun of ‘morrow,
O stop time with your cloudy fingers pale,
Although my plea is thankless and hollow.
Heavy are the chains forged in the abyss,
Yet lighter becomes Oblivion’s fears
When one recalls Death’s ancient and grim kiss,
Though one recounts Death as a Mother’s tears.
Black seas and black dunes destroy life’s bright glow,
Be ridding, too, the pains of our weak flesh,
Allowing the Immortal soul to flow,
And giving the living a chance to grow.
Death shall not persuade our Hearts to sorrow.
BB Holmes

A Day at the Beach
I thought that you would be watching me,
observing
Like Bruno Ganz
in the film about angels
You just couldn't stand.

Or that you would appear
In a supernatural glow.
Curiously juxtaposed,
with your customary
black jumper and jeans.

That you would take time out
From your eternity, to find me
Working alone,
Bedevilled by deadlines.
Shuffling from room to room
Somnambulantly
Caressing re-re heated
microwaved coffee Of the day at the beach

And how those pictures
Made you real.

And that this fancy and wordplay
Cannot change that past tense
To a present one.

I cannot impose
Any arc of structure
Or narrative sense,

No spirits, souls or angel wings

The sun starts to descend
The tide is starting
To come back in.
.
But then I realise that this
Is
A fiction

A
Staged scenario
All
Unobtainable

And that you'll never return
to explain
How you succumbed to this cruellest
of seasons
We will not finish that final
conversation.
Recall that song
About the futility of epitaphs
or how I finally found those
photographs