

This edition features

## Aaron Saint John & Kierstin Bridger

Welcome to the second of our new perfect-bound poetry journals; all the poets herein were shortlisted from over twelve thousand submissions to the 2021 *erbacce*-prize for poetry... it may be that this collection will be referred to in future as the 'political' *erbacce* as both of our featured poets express strong views which are stimulating and controversial! We LOVE it! Power to them!

*erbacce*-press and the annual *erbacce*-poetry-prize are co-operative projects ran by poets FOR poets... we can only exist via this journal and through people who support us by taking out a subscription.

Each journal is 96 pages and perfect bound and contains two editions of the journal. We publish twice a year in December and June and the subscription fee is a mere £15.00 per year, though individually each double-journal has a cover-price of £10.00.

If you want to help us to combat those other profit-motivated publishers who charge you a hefty 'submission' or 'reading' fee to enter their money making 'competitions' then visit the *erbacce* site and take out a subscription: [erbacce-press.co.uk](http://erbacce-press.co.uk)

Please consider joining us; we are not your usual publishers, more like a family... but a family at war against the way poets are treated by publishing companies more concerned with taking your loot than getting your poetry published... while you are at our site read the truly amazing testimonials which poets world-wide have sent us and visit the book-store as well.

### POWER to the POETS

***erbacce* poetry-journals 68 & 69**

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***erbacce* poetry journal**

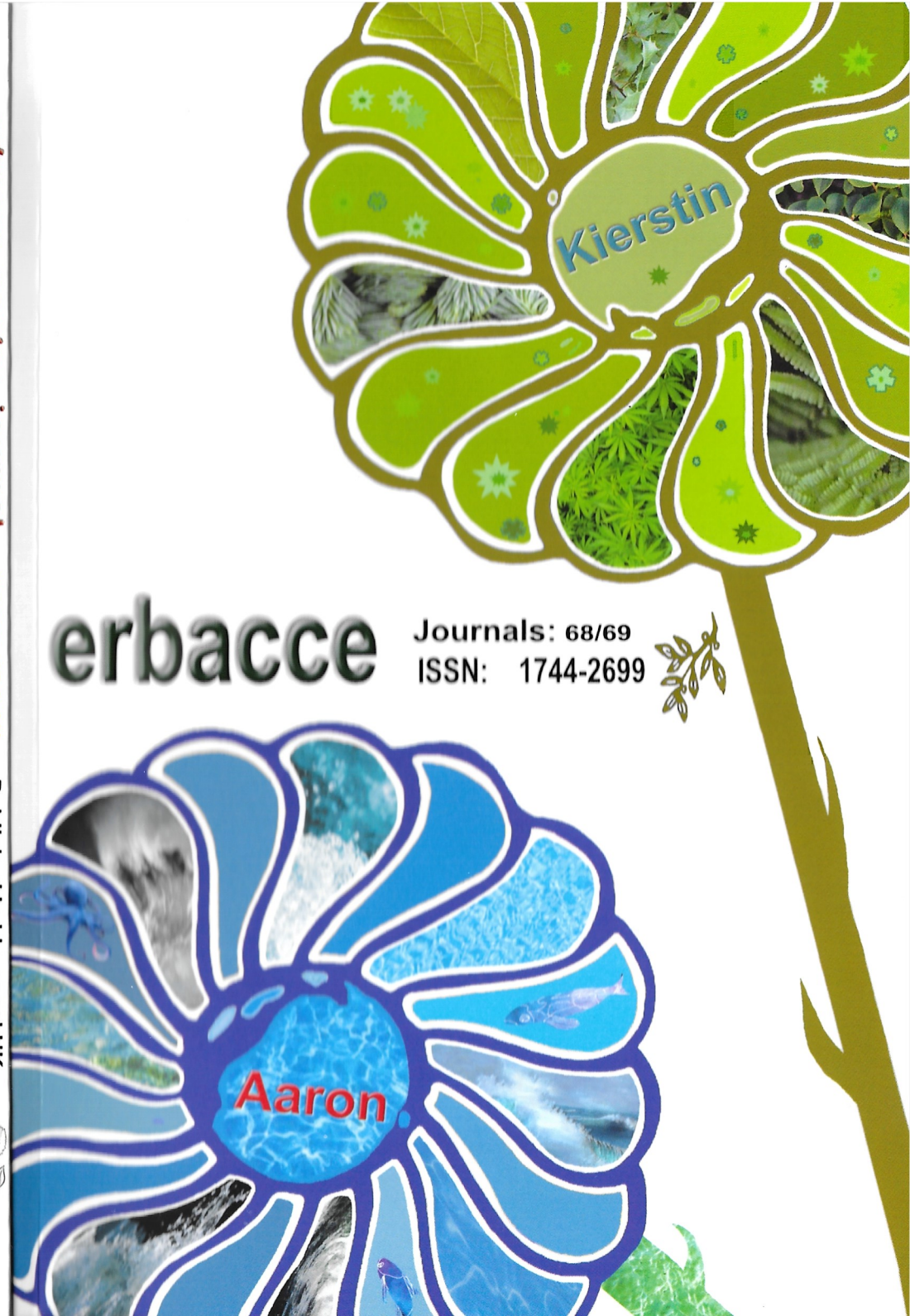
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# erbacce

Journals: 68/69

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***erbacce* poetry journals**  
numbers 68 & 69

featuring

**Aaron Saint John & Kierstin Bridger**

plus:

Ferida Ducicrajevo

Randy Lee Gross

Frank McMahon

Kathryn Rose Newey

Luc Schneider

Claire Thom

David Belcher

Craig Coyle

Kelly C. Davis

Tracey Hope

Akis Parodis

Adam Phillips

Noel Sloboda



***erbacce-press***  
**Liverpool UK**

**Soweto, South Africa**

out of the ethereal	dangle by a single rope
swirling smoke and	together
dying scrap-iron shacks	how strong is a thin
urinated dirt tracks	gnarled tree
and chickens pecking dust	how taut is a crude
some malnourished trees	shocked rope
hang out of the ground	will their parasitic
stick arms groping	rotting flesh
two dogs	half-furred lives break
dead	before the rope does

**Head Whack**

the mother's	squeal reel
hunch run	seal slump
distress calling	the silent white snow
when the men come	red splashed
the soft white wide black eyes	where they fall
head whack	intact white coats
dead thump	with expensive cot deaths

**Poem Written In The Dark**

There are some bicycles chained by the river  
 That no one wants.  
 Chained to posts, rusted and forlornly  
 Half-standing, half-leaning,  
 Their pride not quite gone.  
 They are like skeletons, in balls and chains.  
 At night they dream of dashing about river pathways  
 In mad ecstasy,  
 Ringing their once-shiny bells at sleepy ducks.  
 Perhaps they even fly,  
 Rising above the cold river and chimney-potted houses,  
 Soaring and swooping with glee,  
 Until they land back on earth with a slight bump.  
 That's why, if you look carefully,  
 On some days you'll see  
 They've changed their position, just a little.  
 But no one seems to notice.



### Birth Mother

The blue sky, all around me, distant, faint.  
Phantom stripes, their nets cast wide,  
with periwinkle cobbles.  
Neurotoxins idly trickling,  
Like fingernails dragging down paint.

The summer flutters by, like a rash.  
It shivers, sensing the vibrations of millions of  
machines, chopping, grinding, exploding.  
The green carpet is ripped up, rolled up,  
and thrown in the trash.

Lone insects creep, their non-wings hesitant,  
Searching for mates swallowed by the earth  
generations ago.  
The others, who may have eaten them,  
Sunken, hollow, an expensive impediment.

The ocean weeps.  
Waves crash and sigh, washing over  
Coral scars, brittle like dry bones.  
The last fish flops on the sand,  
Hot, painful, gasping leaps.

We sip our poison, suck it in,  
push it out.  
Our cries go unheard in the darkened valleys,  
Blown away by the dust and wind and  
fire and smoke of the final sell-out.

Mother earth.  
A rock, in space.

### Grave (The day before the Day of the Dead, 2013)

The shocking stillness of the graveyard  
Bombards me, like cold arctic air.  
I breathe in fear.  
The old trees bend to hear  
Grieving sounds that are barely there.  
Grey, cold gravestones slowly  
Sigh into the heaving ground.  
How they died, how many cried –  
Is forever covered up by their mounds.  
Moss and weathering grind and entwine  
The carved words into gentle extinction.  
Here lie old and young side by side –  
Their shocking or expected deaths nullified.  
Some graves are demarcated with name and date.  
They stand proud with nimbly trimmed rims  
And carefully snipped flowers in tins.  
Others are carelessly engraved only by time and fate.  
They are untended, with long grass wilting  
From the bitterness of being late.  
Some have no stones at their heads;  
They are the ones who remind us  
We do not want to remember the dead.

## Vulnerability

I hold you like a baby bird, curled in my hand  
 Softly stroking your wrinkled skin  
 You stretch out, unfurl and silently drop  
 An unhindered waterfall that gushes straight and heavy to the ground  
 Suddenly you are standing here,  
 Your laughing eyes in front of mine  
 I reach out to slowly touch your face  
 You avert your eyes from mine  
 Shy away from me  
 Curl up and fly  
 I sigh

### Infanticide

Somebody's baby died tonight.  
 No one will mark its death  
 With flowers or notelets  
 At the side of the road.

Somebody's baby died tonight.  
 No one will mourn it's short  
 Life or pointless demise,  
 At the side of the road.

Somebody's baby died tonight.  
 Its mother will call and cry,  
 Sleepless, her teats weeping,  
 At the side of the road.

The driver, a little guilty,  
 May stop briefly, but then  
 He'll drive away, relieved  
 His car had no damage,  
 At the side of the road.

## Ode to a Bird

Today a large pigeon crashed into my kitchen window:  
 His flutter silhouette is still there – white-etched against the glass.  
 As I opened the door to see what made the bang,  
 He lay on the ground, amongst the plants, his neck throbbing;  
 Little green leaves and stems had already moved slightly to cover him.  
 Had I not heard the noise (like a shot),  
 I would not have known, or noticed him there,  
 Quietly dying, becoming part of the earth outside my door.  
 I touched his neatly folded wings,  
 And felt his lost life in his still-warm feathery chest.  
 His head flopped to the ground, and he closed his eyes,  
 Like a soft goodbye.  
 I thought he might still wake up,  
 So I wrapped his silken body in a cloth to keep him warm,  
 And took him from the earth where he had fallen,  
 Into my house.  
 There he lay, perfectly still all afternoon,  
 Safe – but too quiet.  
 Later I touched him – he had become cold and stiff;  
 Alas, he was gone.  
 That evening, a storm blew up, and afterwards,  
 There was a broken rainbow, arched across the sky,  
 Bright and beautiful, but with a piece clearly missing.

