



American Society: What Poets See

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A selection of poems from authors nationwide describing American society from a personal point of view. Collectively, the book adds up to a critical look at the way things are, expressed in poems whose fine quality makes them deserving of attention.

American Society: What Poets See Details

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From Reader Review American Society: What Poets See for online ebook

Victoria says

This book is full of great poems with different views of American society.

I also particularly liked the poem Cheap Mangos, it really stuck in my head.

I've only given the poems a quick reading at this point but am still going through and spending more time with many of the poems.

I'm excited to find so many great poems with unique viewpoints. I look forward to looking for more work by many of the poets included in this collection.

I was lucky to receive this book as a firstreads winner.

FutureCycle Press says

We are the publisher, so all of our books get five stars from us. Proceeds from the sale of this anthology help support FutureCycle Press's Good Works projects. Excerpts:

David Chorlton
CHEAP MANGOS

There's an easy flow of music through
the speakers at the supermercado
where papayas ripen while you watch
their skins disintegrate
the way a man's skin does
when he's found on his back in the desert
facing the sun with his mouth locked
between a scream and a prayer. His trouser leg
is torn where a coyote
came to gnaw at his thigh
and of his right forearm only
the bones remain, while on his left wrist
a watch still measures time.
The music has a teardrop in its beat
and nostalgia in the singer's voice
but the juice aisle is a happy place
with any flavor you'd remember
from a trip across the border
going south to a colorful village

with peppers stacked in the market
just like these red, green, yellow ones
displayed in the order of their bite,
a village likely similar
to one the woman left
whose sweater clings to what remains
of her where she collapsed
in a pair of sports shoes good for many
more miles with the tread on their soles
and Just Do It style. Something pulled at her hair
where her scalp peeled away
but the strap on her brassiere
is indestructible as the belt
that falls slack where the flesh has wasted
from her hips. Had she made it
to a road she might have found
her way to Phoenix, to the store
where the cakes in the cold case
are churrigueresque, and mangos
are two for ninety-nine cents.

H. Edgar Hix
THE NEW POOR

You can tell the nuevo pobre by their inability to stand in lines.
To sit on hold. To fill out the wrong forms three times.
To read old magazines in crowded waiting rooms
or just sit there because no entertainment is provided.
The nuevo pobre expect to have names
that professionals will remember.
They expect to see professionals instead of paras.
They think writing a letter from their address does some good.

Their tastes are still for the brand new,
brand name, baked fresh today.
They still think paycheck, not knowing
that dignity is behind them. Not knowing
sleeping with the roaches is the new norm
and the police can tell your accounts are overdrawn.

Paul Hostovsky
FORECLOSURE

We took it out back
and we beat the stuffing out of it,
then we stuffed it, broken, into the back
of the car, and dumped its mutilated body at the dump.

It felt good to do this. After all, the cat had peed on it twice,
and the mortgage company had sent another threatening letter,
and we felt like kicking the shit out of some bankers—
but all we could do was sit back down
on the couch, and drink another beer,
and our helplessness smacked of
cat piss.

So we dragged it outside
and bludgeoned it with the sledgehammer.
Then we took the axe to its back, its arms and legs
and middle, the springs coiled up inside like large and small
intestines spilling out in the yard as we chopped and hacked,
breathing hard from the hard work of beating
the crap out of something you might have
caressed in another life, or another
house, one without a cat with
a urinary tract infection,
or one without

an adjustable rate mortgage,
an ARM you want to break but can't—
so you look around for something else to break,
and it could be your banker or it could be your cat or it could be
someone you loved in another life, or maybe even in this life.
And it feels good to do this. But then it begins
to feel like an indiscretion. And then
like a desecration. And then
it begins, like a death—
a death with its own
life.

Candice Messina says

I got this book from the giveaway.
I just finished reading this book and it was great.
I loved the one about Customer Service and Don't Touch My Stuff. My sister even wants to read the book
now. :)

Nina says

This is a remarkable collection of poetry of witness. Honest witness to what these poets see as American
society, past and present. The co-editors acknowledge “thematic gaps” in the collection. No themed

anthology could possibly contain every aspect of the theme, especially one dealing with social and political aspects of society. The book is arranged in alphabetical order, although there is an index grouping the poems into broad themes such as economy and work, environment, inequality and justice, religion and politics, rise and fall, and violence and war.

By only quoting from a few poems, it is impossible to do justice to the skill and accomplishment of the poets included in this anthology. I can honestly say that there were no poems that left me wondering why they had been chosen. This is perhaps a reflection of my own cynical thoughts, as the majority of these poems took shots at various aspects of our society. This collection shows us the other side of the story, the side not covered by news reports.

Robert S. King speaks eloquently about the continuing trauma of a Vietnam vet.
It's jungle-hot and crowded in my mind.
Even cold showers respray the Mekong
in a monsoon of water shadows and attacking waves.
The tub fills with floating bodies,
and the ears fill with bullets thumping flesh.
(After the War, the War)

Andrena Zawinski talks about integration and tells of 2 young schoolgirls, one black, one white, sharing candy.
Don't do that the teacher whispered
like a secret, like a sin, words that traveled
from a playground of a schoolhouse long razed
in Pittsburgh all the way to Charleston
(Bittersweets for Camellia)

Several poets tackle the current economic woes in poems about job loss, foreclosure, and increased cost of living.
If I stretch a dollar far enough
George Washington looks like George Bush
(In Photoshop, Scott. T. Starbuck)

I realize finally I have no marketable skills.
Corporations, as it happens, leave orphaned words
on doorsteps
along with those who know how to shelter them
(Poem for a New Economy, Susan K. Stewart)

You can tell the nuevo pobre by their inability to stand in lines.
To sit on hold. To fill out the wrong forms three times.
(The New Poor, H. Edgar Hix)

There are poems about recent environmental events.
Barbara Crooker uses a quote from Kurt Vonnegut as an epigraph to her poem about the Gulf oil spill
Dear future generations: Please accept our apologies.
We were rolling drunk on petroleum.

The wine- dark sea was slick with oil.

Pelicans struggled in the viscous surf,
foamy waves clotted with tar balls,
an obscene green sheen.
(Summer, 2010)

Scott Owens paints a clear picture of a 4 year old learning about marriage in his poem “Conjugal Rites.”
First the child wants to marry her daddy, then her two brothers, and finally, “already thrice denied,” she asks
if she can marry her best girlfriend.
Yes, of course, but only in some places,
only where love is not prescribed by law.

Many of the poems are openly political. Lawrence Kessenich writes about how even poetry can be dangerous
in a world full of conspiracy and terrorism.
But then I think of Adnan in Basra, his poems
exploding like car bombs in the minds of his
conservative countrymen, his flight to London,
his exile in a world of poetry as pastime.
(Hazardous Materials)

In closing, I ask the many other poets to forgive me for not mentioning their work. This is an impressive
anthology, one I have already returned to several times. I am proud to state that 2 of my poems are contained
in this collection.

Tina Schumann says

Chock full of good poems including two by yours truly.
