

Supply and Demand

by Gary Hardaway

What's the poetry good for?
Even the poets aren't sure.
A mug's game. Unlikable.
A superior amusement.
The blood jet. I think
none have ever died

for lack of what's in there.
One could sell lemonade
or baked goods from a card table
in front of the house more easily.
Or chances at a rigged three-card game
down on the avenue. Poetry

is a product unloved
by any but its makers.
A showing off for a small circle
of the like-minded in a small
ill-suited room at the back
of a bar or coffee house.

There are 1.45 million readers
of poetry in the US and
2.9 million poets. The odds
of an audience are bad. The odds
of royalties, absolutely awful.
The poets persist, taking terrible

day jobs, scrambling for grants,
accepting the abuse of tech savvy
but tin-eared editors for nothing
but the satisfaction of the demigods

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who whisper phrases, un-vetted
by focus groups, whenever they like.

