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Red Hen Press

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# *The World Began With Yes*

POEMS BY

Erica Jong

Celebrating life

Erica Jong has never stopped writing poetry. It was her first love and it has provided inspiration for all her other books. In a dark time, she celebrates life. Her title comes from the Brazilian genius Clarice Lispector who was deeply in love with life despite many tragedies. Life challenges us to celebrate even when our very existence is threatened. Never have we needed poetry more. Jong believes that the poet sees the world in a grain of sand and eternity in a wild flower—as Blake wrote. Her work has always stressed the importance of the lives of women, women’s creativity, and self-confidence. She sees her role as a writer as inspiring future poets to come.

## **ADVANCE PRAISE**

“Erica Jong’s new book of poetry is inspiring, uplifting, exciting, stimulating, engrossing—piercing. These new poems of Erica’s light up the page with tears and shouts, with wounds and exclamations, with yes, yes! That is it, that is what I feel, what I imagined, what I dreamed. Ms. Jong says she culled these poems from those she has written over the last decades, poems whose writing keeps her alive. That is what poetry is for, to keep us alive, to wake us up!! Erica has done that for me again today, kept me alive, breathing, weeping, shouting at the page, “Yes!!” This is what it takes to make a poem, to make a life. Right on the money, right on the edge, right on the heart, right on the breath, *The World Began With Yes* is the real deal.

“Get it and read it. You need it. We all need it. In this time of agitation and fear, you will fly with Erica Jong—she brings us back to what matters—the heart, the mind, the head, the imagination—the “Yes” of life.”

—Judy Collins

## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Erica Jong is a celebrated poet, novelist & essayist with over twenty-five published books that have been influential all over the world. Her most popular novel, *Fear of Flying*, celebrated its 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2013. Never out of print, it has sold over thirty-five million copies translated into over forty-five languages including Chinese and Arabic. Erica’s latest novel, *Fear of Dying*, was published in 2015/2016 with many publishers all over the world. Her awards include the Fernanda Pivano Award for Literature in Italy (named for the critic who introduced Ernest Hemingway, Allen Ginsberg, and Erica Jong to the Italian public), the Sigmund Freud Award in Italy, the Deauville Literary Award in France, the United Nations Award for Excellence in Literature, and *Poetry* magazine’s Bess Hokin Prize (also won by Sylvia Plath and W.S. Merwin). Erica’s poetry has appeared in publications worldwide, including the *New Yorker*, the *LA Times*, the *Paris Review*, *Haaretz*, and many more. Erica lives in New York and Connecticut with her husband and two poodles.



**PUB DATE:** May 2019  
**ISBN:** 978-159709-846-5  
**SIZE:** 6 in x 9 in  
**FORMAT:** Tradepaper  
**EXTENT:** 96pp  
**PRICE:** \$15.95

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**REDHEN PRESS**  
**DISTRIBUTED BY**  
Ingram Publisher Services  
*an exclusive distribution entity*

**ORDERING INFORMATION**  
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**MORE PRAISE FOR *THE WORLD BEGAN WITH YES***

Erica Jong's new collection of poetry is, as its title suggests, both affirmative and exhilarating. Whether she is writing about her grandchildren, the loss of her mother, or an Alice Munro stamp, Jong's images are always vividly evocative. Her poems are filled with an equal awareness of the sensuous nature of life and its inevitable decline. This is the work of a poet in her prime, filled with candor and wisdom.

—Daphne Merkin

**FROM *THE WORLD BEGAN WITH YES***

Child on the Beach

The Mediterranean is black with bodies  
as in the time of the Trojan Wars  
when Homer sang of bloody battles  
& heroes lay unburied  
beneath the topless towers of Troy.

But this little boy of three  
sleeps unburied on a beach.  
Where is he from?  
The chemical fog of Syria?  
The garbage dumps of beautiful Beirut?  
The chaos of civilization come undone?

He rests,  
his parents lost,  
his sisters drowned,  
his brother thrown up on another beach . . .

What shall I do  
with this dead toddler  
who breaks me open to grief?

I will adopt him,  
my nameless grandson,  
welcome him into my shattered breast,  
his death so sweet even cherubs weep  
& Nereids float him in their seaweed boats . . .

Little one,  
now you are mine—  
sleep in my arms while I sing you this lullaby . . .  
maybe you'll awaken in a kinder world

where children don't die at the edge of the sea.

Meanwhile, dream of peace  
for this broken world.



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