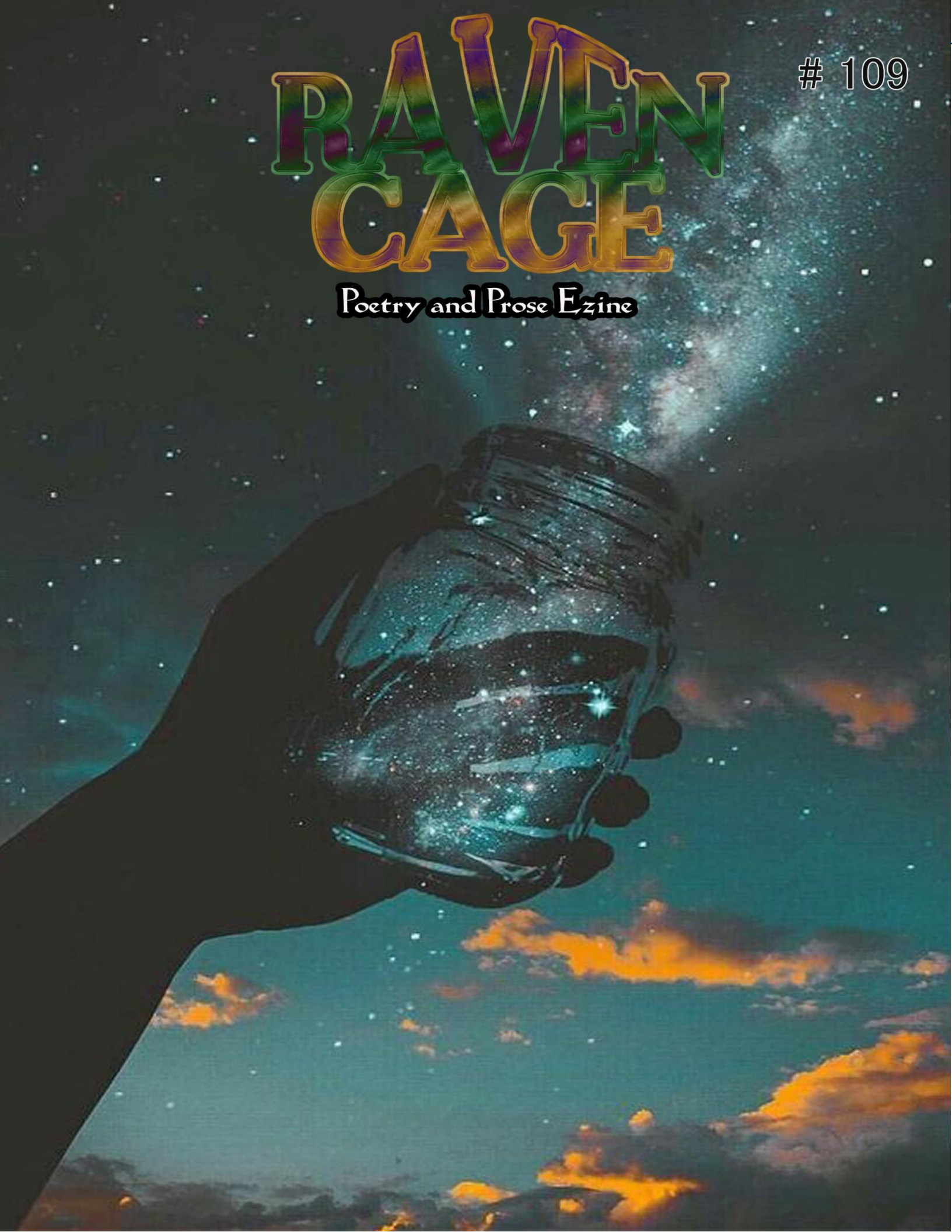

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Poetry and Prose Ezine
109

Credits



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Submissions guidelines:

Send 1 to 6 poems of any length in any genre. Erotic poetry is welcome but if found too graphic, sexist, or vulgar we will decline.

No blatant racism or sexism.

Send 1 to 2 short stories at maximum 15,000 words.or flash fiction at maximum 5000 words.

Book reviews and other articles may be considered. Maximum 7,500 words

Book promotions and Biographies welcome

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Editorial

Submission Guidelines

1: Always include the complete name in First name Last name order. Son of or Daughter of may be included in biographies but the name must be included in First name Last name separately. Any submissions that do not follow this guideline will be declined.

2: Poems that I find to be racist, fascist, sexist or overly graphic in violence or sexual or include sexual violence will be declined. Erotic is otherwise fine.

3: Raven Cage is a poetry and prose magazine. Articles that are not poetry based, Book reviews, poetry reviews, literature based, Author interviews will not be accepted.

4: Submissions must be sent by the 25th of the month to be considered for the current issue. Any submissions thereafter will be considered for the next issue. I will decide after finishing the current issue.

5: Do not send multiple emails asking if you submissions have been included or when they will be published. I will send the link to the PDF when it is finished and uploaded. Emails like this will no longer be tolerated or answered. They will be deleted unanswered.

6: When possible please try to send the biography, author photo and the submissions in one email per author.

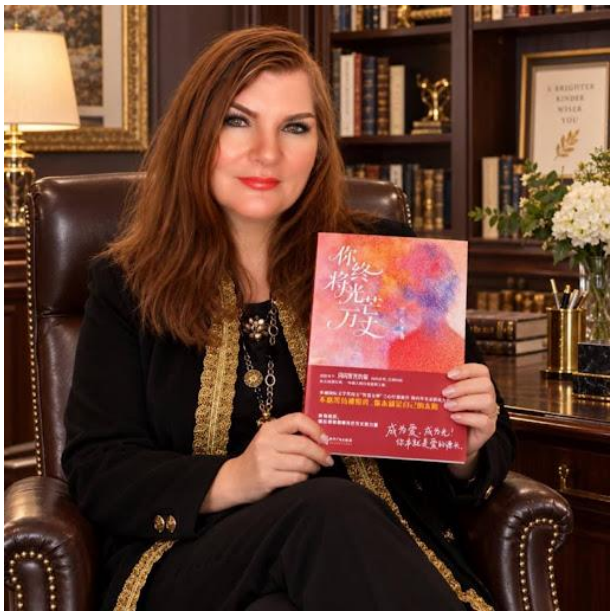
7: Submissions placed in the subject line will be deleted unanswered. The only things in the subject line should be:
Author Name
Submission Title
Submissions for Raven Cage

Things that don't belong there:
Poems
Biographies
Stories.

8: Short Stories maximum 15,000 words, Flash fiction maximum 1500 words, poems of any genre and any theme are always welcome. By short stories we mean Science Fiction, fantasy, Romance, Mystery, Horror, Pulp fiction, True stories are also welcome when they are aimed to entertain. Any stories that aim to inform such as educational papers, papers about homelands and so on will be considered an article and not accepted.

Story: a description, either true or imagined, of a connected series of events. Intended to entertain.
Short Story: an invented story that is no more than about 15,000 words in length.
Article: a piece of writing on a particular subject in a newspaper or magazine, or on the internet: Raven Cage only accepts poetry or literature based articles. Intended to inform.
Literature: written artistic works, especially those with a high and lasting artistic value. Not articles or essays.
Essay: a short piece of writing on a particular subject, especially one done by students as part of the work for a course.

Lan Xin 's Phoenix Nirvana: Let Eastern Wisdom Dialogue with World Civilizations.



Every chapter of life's trials quietly gathers the radiance inherent within the soul.

The world first knew Lan Xin as a writer. She left Hunan to study in Beijing, exploring culture and writing about spiritual growth. Her words guide countless readers out of darkness, confusion and distress.
Fate brought her over mountains to Lijiang. A spiritual awakening opened a new chapter of her life.

She discovered the ancient Naxi Dongba culture and learned from the 17th-generation Dongba inheritor Aheng Dongta. Breaking the millennium-old rule “passed inside the clan, not to outsiders; passed to sons, not daughters”, she became a female inheritor of Dongba culture. Since then, Lan Xin strives to guard, inherit, spread and promote this ancient civilization on the UNESCO Memory of the World Register.
Years of tempering turned the writer Lan Xin into a messenger with profound cultural missions.
Through reflection and pursuit, she found two life missions.

First, to spread the wisdom of love. Many worldly troubles come from the lack of love and wisdom. This wisdom heals our inner world and brings goodness to others.
Second, to protect Dongba culture, a UNESCO Memory of the World heritage, carry forward ancient Chinese cultural treasures and share them with the globe.
As she keeps walking on this mission path, remarkable achievements follow.

Lan Xin is an internationally published writer, poet, translator and psychologist. She serves as president of Lan Xin Sami Academy and Yulong Wenbi Dongba Culture Academy, and Lifetime Honorary Fellow of Rome International Academy, Italy.
She has won many global honors: Global Outstanding Contribution Award, World Peace Diamond Torch Award, World Four-Leaf Clover Peace Literature Award, European Excellence Award, Italy Francesco Giampietri International Literature Prize, Lebanon Naji Naaman International Literary Prize, Bulgaria "Boundless Love" International Poetry Festival "Messenger of Light", New Zealand National Poetry Day "Cultural Ambassador", World Writers Association China Region "Literature and Cultural Ambassador". She judges for Literature Asia International Literary Competition and many other international events.

Her works are translated into English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Arabic and more. Her original "Lan Xin Wisdom Words" has over 100 million readers worldwide. She shares traditional Chinese culture and Eastern philosophy, praised as "Messenger of Great Love", "Cultural Envoy between East and West", "Multicultural Integrator", "Guide for Contemporary Women", "Goddess of Wisdom". She sets an example for Chinese culture going global.
After seven years of careful writing and revision, You Will Eventually Shine Bright is finished. On September 20, 2026, the global launch ceremony of You Will Eventually Shine Bright concluded successfully at the National Library of China. Distinguished guests from all walks of life gathered at the venue, while overseas writers sent blessings via online video. The whole event was live-streamed across networks to witness the global debut of this new book.

This cultural grand event roots itself in Chinese cultural heritage and focuses on the spiritual growth of modern women. Using literature as a bond, it promotes exchanges between Chinese and foreign civilizations, brings Eastern wisdom to the world, and conveys the powerful spiritual message of "becoming love, becoming light".The participating guests were inspired by Lanxin Samei's mission of universal love. They praised her for shouldering the mission of the times, carrying forward Chinese cultural heritage, helping more outstanding Chinese literary works go global, enabling the world to understand China and experience the unique spiritual charm of Chinese culture. You Will Eventually Shine Bright combines personal life insights with cultural missions. With gentle and positive words, it conveys the spiritual pursuit of the Chinese people to the world. It nourishes contemporary women in their self-awakening and inner growth, and offers valuable exploration for literary creation on spiritual growth and the international communication of Chinese literature.
This book records her insights and transformations, the strength forged through hardships. It is dedicated to every persevering soul: you need not wait for outside light; you yourself can shine like the sun!
Many distinguished scholars at home and abroad recommend this book.

Bai Gengsheng, Vice Chairman of the Chinese Writers Association: Lan Xin's book carries the philosophy of civilization. Her practice echoes the spirit of the Chinese nation community, and her vision answers the aspiration of a community with a shared future for mankind. Where Lan Xin goes, cultural fragrance spreads worldwide. May this book be a bright beacon on Wenbi Mountain, lighting every heart seeking awakening!
Greek international writer Eva Petropoulou Lianou: Lan Xin observes all living beings through her own life. Her words hold compassion and warmth for the world. Her kindness and altruism are precious light of this age.

Dr. Maria Teresa De Donato, American international writer: Endowed with boundless universal love and wisdom, Lan Xin is seen by global readers as the embodiment of love and beauty. Her legendary life and noble mission invite the world into her spiritual realm.
This is the grand awakening journey from girl to goddess. All life experiences build your power to shine bright.
Lan Xin says: May the pains I endured never be yours; may the joy I found be accessible to you.

She tells Chinese stories to the world through words and shares universal love. For every reader: become love, become light. One day, you will eventually shine bright like the phoenix.



Eva Petropoulou

Interview

Timothée Bordenave
Painter
Poet



Interview with
Great personality

Dear Timothee, it's a great pleasure to have you in our magazine and i want to introduce you to our readers.

1. Tell us about your childhood be a painter from young age?

Hello, well I have been a painter as a young child, yes, as for a hobby ! And I was also since young interested in poetry and the experimental mathematics…
Unfortunately after some personal life events, my early years' production has been lost, and I would not be able to find it now. There were difficulties at these times with my family - who wanted me to become a lawyer or a politician, and it was not very easy to let them assume that I would finally be an artist.
During my teen age, I did also practice street art !

2. What are the material
You are using to paint

Well, I use a wide range of materials, from the gouache and paint markers, to acrylic tubes and Indian inks also… I have a variety of supports too, so I could paint on wood or on reclaimed cardboard or plastic, as well as on paper or on canvas…

What painting means to you

This is a difficult question ! Painting means a lot to me. It is to me a way to both express my feelings and my thoughts, and to try to share a good message, to the world ! I like the combination of aesthetics and of harmony, and I see art also as a personal therapy from my past traumas, because I used to face really challenging or tensed situations.

3. Literature.Books
Painting
Music
When you started writing?
When you started painting?

Well, these disciplines have accompanied me throughout my whole life, actually. When I was a child I used to practice them as for leisure, and gradually it became a more and more important part of my daily activities… Until a moment around 2015, about 10 years ago, when because of the successes I was gaining in literature and photography at first, I decided to commit fully to the arts !

What was your first book title?
When was your first exposition

My first book was entitled « A moment of craziness » and it was about a difficult moment that I had spent in an hospital, at the end of my eighteen year. The book was published in 2007.

My first exhibition was entitled « From the sea to the garden » and it presented a crossed perspective between some images from my holidays at the sea in France, and the Luxembourg Gardens in Paris which I lived just aside. It was at a cafe and wine bar called « Chez Georges » in 2006, in Paris, Latin Quarter.

4. From where you get inspired?
What are the painters you admire?

I am inspired by many different art trends and artists ! It is the same for literature, I have the chance to have read a lot of books and I take inspiration and insights from many different sources…
As for the painters, I am very much impressed by the birth of modern art in Paris, France, at the turn of the 20th century, what was called « The first school of Paris » with prominent masters as the Delaunay Couple, Max Ernst, Francis Picabia, Fernand Léger, Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse, Serge Poliakoff, and so on…

5. Could you share something that happens during your exposition and really. ... catch your attention

Well, yes, thank you ! My shows are always a time for sharing my ideas and my views about my painting work, and what I enjoy a lot is when it happens to have young children or teenagers visiting, and that spontaneously one of them shows a great admiration or appreciation for one of my frames ! Like « Oh, this is so beautiful ! » It happened quite a few times already.

I have another special moment to enjoy at my shows is when sometimes a collector takes some interest into various paintings at the same show, and then buy three or four works, simultaneously ! So I have like a « big sale », which means a lot, and also I can see a great manifestation of interest here also !

6. What are your plans for the future.. Do you prepare a new exposition?

Yes ! Actually today as I write to you I am planning on four personal art-shows for the next year, 2027. There will likely be one in Paris next to the Museum of Modern Arts, one in Madrid, and one in Shanghai. Plus one other show this time of photography, in Paris, in my neighborhood of « Butte aux Cailles » which is an art district in our city.

7.
Do you believe they exist 'ethics' in our days?

Yes, I hope so ! Ethics are important to me. I might be somehow an old-mannered man, maybe ? Anyway yes I believe that as Jesus Christ said « We should not reject the wisdom of our Ancients… » - and yes the morality and ethics are an important part of our civilization I believe, and I try to share this thought in my artworks, with symbols of love, or faith, and hope, and equality, and so on…

8. Share a phrase from your book.,...

Yes well in one of my recent books I have quoted an old French proverb, saying : « To the innocents will come abundance… » I like this phrase, very philosophical…

Why you choose this phrase



I like the old proverbs, because they have endured through the crible of time… This one particularly : when you are innocent I guess you would not be in need for greed or envy, or jealousy, and this may be the best way to experience abundance, for a simple life ?

I take it that after all, we are all simple and we are not individually such important nor such clever beings, under the skies. So let's live simply and plainly maybe, instead of complicating too much or complaining too much, and perhaps that would be a good way to enjoy life at its best ?

9. Can you give an advice to new writers...
or painters

Well yes, thank you ! I would advise them to work steadily and to be enduring and determined in their creative process, because it is a well known fact that the first years of a professional art practice are very often difficult and can sometimes be disappointing seemingly… After about ten years of good work and of experiencing the art-world and the community around them, though, it is very often that the artists can finally get a better recognition and enjoy their reward, for this compelling commitment to creating and reflecting on their ideas in the world.

There is an Italian proverb that states : « If you move with calm, you will move sanely and you will go far… » I always try to keep these wise words in mind when planning for my next projects.

Thanks again dear Eva for your interest to my humble work.

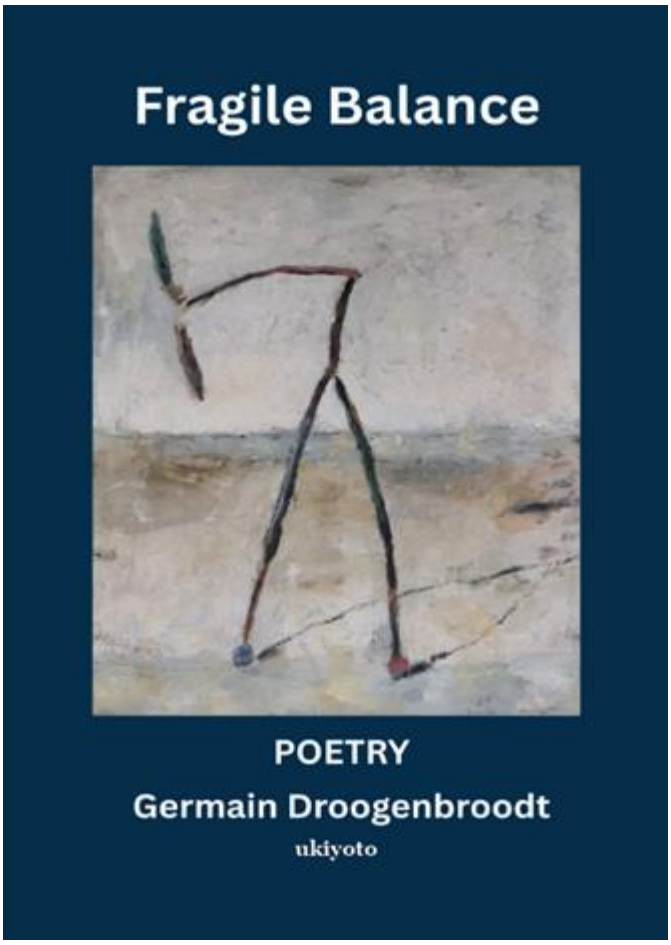




Timothee Bordenave


Timothée Bordenave
Nous en sommes témoins !
Love Inn!
La Folie Passagère
Des Jours pour
CAROLINE
PUBLIWIZ
Timothée Bordenave
À l'aventure !
Timothée Bordenave
Petites prières
Timothée Bordenave
Des bonnes nouvelles, de Théodore
Timothée Bordenave
Dieu vous garde !
Timothée Bordenave
La demande en mariage
Timothée Bordenave
La vie de château !
Les Contes de Saint Germain
Timothée Bordenave
Par amour
Timothée Bordenave
La Langue des oiseaux
Timothée Bordenave
L'arc-en-ciel !
Timothée Bordenave
Fortunes
Timothée Bordenave
L'or des jours
Timothée Bordenave
Ciel !
Timothée Bordenave
Paris La Nuit
Aphorismes
Timothée Bordenave
Dédicaces
BESTOWS
Author of the Year 2025
Timothée Bordenave
CERTIFICATE
INTERNATIONAL CERTIFICATION
ACC INTERNATIONAL LITERARY PRIZE
NAJI NAAMAN
LITERARY PRIZES
24e
PRIZE WINNERS LIST
2026
Timothée Bordenave
International Artistic Excellence Award
PROUDLY PRESENTED TO
Timothée Bordenave France
REGIONE PIEMONTE
TORINO

Promotion



Fragile Balance is a book that presents itself to the reader without fanfare, with the calmness of someone who has learned to listen beyond the noise and bustle of the world. In these short poems, Germain Droogenbroodt continues a quest that runs through much of his work: that of articulating the essential with just the right words, without excess, without ostentation.

The title is no accident. In each text, there is a contained tension between what is said and what is suggested, between light and shadow, between language and silence. It is a delicate balance, like that needed to live with depth at a time in history that is changing far too quickly.

The voice that unfolds here does not seek to impose meanings, but rather to create space for the reader to think, feel, and contemplate. The poems some verging on aphorisms, others more evocative or lyrical are organized as a sequence of meditations that engage with philosophy, politics, the passage of time, the fragility of the human condition and its transcendence.

Droogenbroodt achieves the most difficult of feats: writing with clarity and lucidity without resorting to the obvious, and with depth without forsaking the beauty of simplicity. This is, without doubt, one of the reasons why his work has been translated and recognized in so many countries and cultures. This book explores the realm of persistent questions, of intuitions that remain unresolved but which open up new paths. It is a text that can be read from start to finish, but also as one might return to any given page to find a spark of meaning there.

Droogenbroodt' s poetry does not need to raise its voice to speak the truth. And that, in these times of clamour and subtle and brutal lies, is a form of resistance. It is also, perhaps, a form of affection, of gentle compassion. His poetry books have been published in 33 countries and were awarded more than 30 international poetry prizes. He has been recommended for the Noble Prize of Literature in 2017 by several Literary academies and important poets.

A few poems from "Fragile Balance":
Counter-current

Although poetry
seeks its way counter current,
it cannot change the future of man
which is uncertain and distant,
but it can sometimes be
a lifebuoy for those in danger
of drowning in that current.

***

ENLIGHTENMENT

No matter how loud the thunder,
it offers the thirsty plants
no assurance of rain.

Just as the lightning
that lights up the darkness for a moment
does not offer assurance of enlightenment.

***

PEACE

Sunlit the day
and on the green of the leaves
glitters abundantly the light.

Bees feast
on the nectar of the blossoms
while a butterfly flutters around
from flower to flower.

Even the wind
so fierce sometimes
holds its breath
as if nothing is lacking
as if there is nowhere poverty
nowhere a war.

Publisher: Ukiyoto Publishing
Number of pages: 154
Paper back price: 11.50$ or 9,89€
ISBN: 9788167313058
Order: Amazon https://amzn.eu/d/0awmVkIu

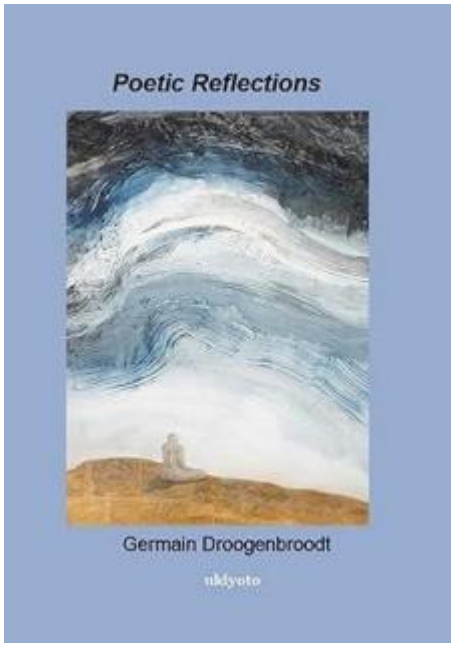
RAVEN CAGE ZINE

“Poetic Reflections”

Poetry by Germain Droogenbroodt

Published by Ukiyoto Editions, India, 2026

INTERNATIONAL POETRY PRIZE FUENTE VAQUEROS, BIRTHPLACE OF LORCA, SPAIN This present collection of poems is a continuation of The Road of Being, Germain Droogenbroodt’s former poetry book. The clear predominance of a critical approach to the current reality and the deterioration of the planet at all levels, latent in all his work, but so evident now, does not mean a renunciation of the presence of nature, philosophy or metapoetry, fundamental throughout his already long career. Rather, on the contrary, what intensifies here is a manifest concern for the degradation of the environment, humanism, the capacity to think, silence… in short, it is the enormous unease for the perhaps irreversible deterioration of our civilization and for the legacy to future generations that runs through these Poetic Reflections from beginning to the end.



“Poetic Reflections”

Poetry by Germain Droogenbroodt

English translation by the author and Stanley H. Barkan

Cover by Satish Gupta

111 pages 10.5 USD – 12,73€

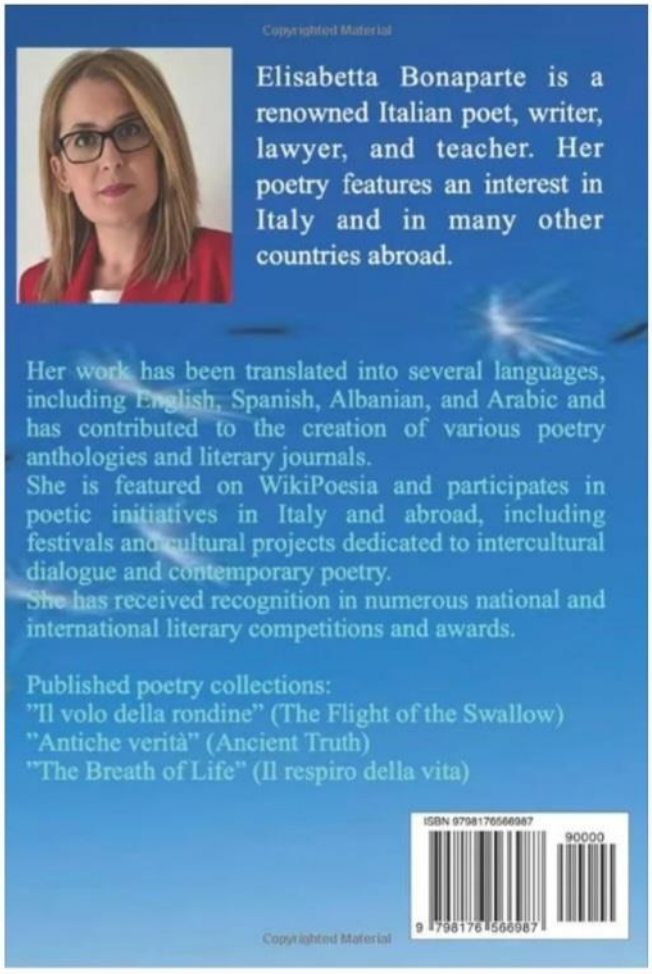
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111 pages 10.5 USD – 12,73€


THE BREATH OF LIFE
Poetry collection
Italian-English
Elisabetta Bonaparte


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Elisabetta Bonaparte is a renowned Italian poet, writer, lawyer, and teacher. Her poetry features an interest in Italy and in many other countries abroad.
Her work has been translated into several languages, including English, Spanish, Albanian, and Arabic and has contributed to the creation of various poetry anthologies and literary journals.
She is featured on WikiPoesia and participates in poetic initiatives in Italy and abroad, including festivals and cultural projects dedicated to intercultural dialogue and contemporary poetry.
She has received recognition in numerous national and international literary competitions and awards.
Published poetry collections:
"Il volo della rondine" (The Flight of the Swallow)
"Antiche verità" (Ancient Truth)
"The Breath of Life" (Il respiro della vita)
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Shangguan Changfeng

You Will Eventually Shine Bright

— Tribute to Lanxin Samei's New Book (Phoenix Nirvana)

I

There is a ray of light
Lit from a small village in Xiaoxiang
At that time she was still little
So young that she could only hide under the quilt
Lighting up pages of world classics with a flashlight
She did not know
That faint ray of light
Would one day illuminate the whole world

II

On her twelfth birthday, her world collapsed
Her mother suddenly went to heaven
Since then she woke up crying in dreams
Her pillow soaked over and over
She did not know
Those tears
Were the first lines of the soul's autobiography
It was light and love
Leaving the first mark
Upon her life

III

Later she traveled a long road
From mountain village to Beijing
From hostess to writer
From Cinderella to international author
She thought she was seeking something
Yet she was always on the journey to find herself
To find that being —
Who is inherently radiant

IV

When ancient Dongba pictographs come into her sight
The radiance of Panzi Samei, Goddess of Wisdom, flows toward her
The cultural lineage of Dongba civilisation calls to her soul
She hears echoes crossing a thousand years
Ancient scriptures speak of the great trust of civilisation
At that moment, Lanxin meets Samei

She knows she carries the mission to inherit Dongba culture
From Lanxin, she transforms into Lanxin Samei

V

Beneath the ancient fragrant trees of Lijiang
She studies stacks of Dongba ancient manuscripts
Five years
One thousand eight hundred days and nights
Friends ask her:
“In the bloom of your youth,
Is showing your beauty not enough?”
She smiles:
“Beauty is needed, but love matters more.
To become the embodiment of love and beauty
Is the innate mission of this life.”

VI

May Day of 2019
Her day of labour
Began when she entrusted her soul to writing this book
She secluded herself to write
From dawn till dusk, tears rolled down her cheeks
Not tears of grief
But tears of compassion, brimming with spiritual joy
She heard cosmic spirits speak to her:
“Born for love,
Come for love,
Create and spread the wisdom of love.”
At that moment
She found her life’s mission

VII

This book
Is her soul’s autobiography
Every page
Holds the pains she has endured
Every line
Bears the tears she has shed
Every word
Is the light she has awakened to
She lays bare herself, opens her heart
Only to tell every suffering soul:
“May the pains I have endured
Never be yours to bear.
May the blessings I have found
Be within your reach.”

VIII

She says:
“A person has two births.
One is the birth of the flesh,
The other is the awakening of the soul.”
This book
Is a spiritual vessel
Carrying every soul weeping in the dark night
Past the nightmares of emotion
Past the shadows of family roots
Past the confusion of marriage
Past the loss of self
To the shore —
Where radiance endlessly abides

IX

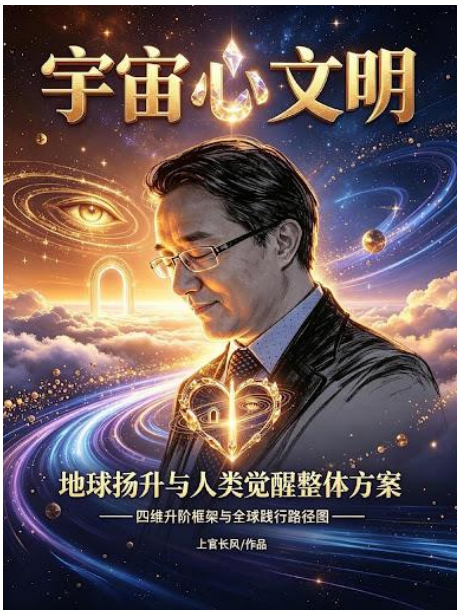
Dear friends
When you read this book
You are not merely reading words
You are reading the awakening chronicle of a soul
You are reading the radiance of light and love
You are reading the cipher of spiritual redemption
You are reading the route map of this spiritual vessel
And you
Are the soul this vessel comes to ferry
You are the one this beam of light shines upon
You are the one this book awakens

X

You Will Eventually Shine Bright
Not because you become perfect
But because you finally see —
You are light by nature
You are love by nature
You are
That unique,
Radiant self
On this phoenix-nirvana path
Comes a woman named Lanxin Samei
Standing apart from the mortal world, the radiant Goddess of Wisdom
You too, shall shine bright

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1 October 2026
At Dongba Culture Academy

Translated by Lanxin SameiAbout Shangguan Changfeng



Shangguan Changfeng is a poet, writer and spiritual mentor. He is the founder of the Love Intelligence System and the co-founder of Dongba Culture Academy. He is the author of best-selling works including The Book of Sand: 52 Rays of Wisdom in Life, You Said You Would Find Souls for All Things, Sorry, Only Love Remains, The Code of Creation, The Code of Light, and The Code of Life. He currently resides at Dongba Culture Academy in Lijiang.

Christina Margeti

UNFADED SEAS.

Dedication
In memory of Diana, Princess of Wales.

Unquenchable are the oceans,
unforgettable the seas,
eyes fixed upon the azure sky
Diana, breath of the mountains.

The green mines
in the land of Wales,
every grape and every July
weep in secret, weep in silence
to the sounds of bow strokes....

The Light shone forth
beyond worlds
and beyond fears,
heralding the dawn of a new path.
Her name, imperishable,
endures through time,
an eternal palace...

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Christina Margeti was born in 1980 in Athens. From a young age, she wrote mainly poetry as a hobby. She studied Computer Science and attended the Hellenic Open University, where she took a course in Hellenic Culture, with a particular interest in history.

She is the founder of the sole trader business ‘Nea Themiskyra’, through which she promotes and distributes her work online, as well as selected works by other authors.

Her first book is a collection of poetry entitled ‘Stis Politeies tis Gynaikas." She was inspired to write it and began work on it around 2014. It was first published in 2022 in London by Akakia Publications, with expanded editions in 2023 and 2026. Verses from her book have been set to music in English, whilst other poems of hers (“Gaza”, “In the Tree of My Childhood”, ‘Artemis’) have been published in English through the "Poetry Unites People" initiative in international print and online literary magazines (Almanar, Synchronized Chaos, World Inkers, Raven Cage Zine, 100

Subtexts Magazine, Prodigy Magazine special edition ‘Voices of Humanity’ Noble Laureate Award 2026 and in the Greek magazine vima365.gr).

She is taking part, through "Poetry Unites People", in the international cultural competition "Noble Laureate Award 2026" with a new poem of hers.

From a young age, she has been actively involved in various human rights initiatives. She has also signed the collective initiative ‘Her Voice – Women’

Ibraim Džemail

FOR THE GREAT SOUL

TO MAHATMA MOHANDAS K. GANDHI

The day you were born, Mahatma,
the sun hung in the sky like a mirror.
In that fleeting moment, the heavens wept
over Porbandar, where you came into the world.
In Gujarat, you took your first steps,
among the traditions of the Vaishya community.

Our people belong to this land and its skies.
In a princely state, you learned to measure what was right,
to weigh the meaning of being and non-being.
Your ancestors counted rupees in their hands,
while you became a merchant of pain,
emerging from the dungeons,
half-naked, breathing in the fragrance of India's fruits.

Through the greatest sacrifices,
you stood among your people.
And now, in Rajghat,
you dream your dream of India...

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MACEDONIA

GRAS'S LETTER TO GOD

To Günter Grass

Günter Grass died!

Maybe he left this world since it was not as he imagined, but he will never be dead!

As the dawn was washing out I dreamed like I'd been waking up and with seven pairs of zurle and drums, I'd been following the Sun to sleep.

As I walk in the mud and the wasteland, I saw the Night, it had no eyes!

I lighted up the lanterns made from white cobbles.

The zurle and the drums, I hear them moaning!

Grass writes a letter to God about the Roma!

He asks me, "Will the answer come?"

I'm in the holy nest, in the moonlight I bathe. I'm trying to open my mouth, but I lost my tongue!

The nasty years did not seem to have passed!

Günter Grass and his pipe,

Together with the Gods who were burning at the sta

are my only witnesses!

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(Brussels, 2018)

Dr Tomasz Laczek

Man as the Cause of Destruction



I feel something
I ponder over it
Something is approaching
Something inevitable
As if a great cataclysm
That will sweep from the face of the Earth
Our entire civilization
A question comes to my mind
Where will it strike from and why
Watching people
And today's spirit of the times
I doubt that humanity
Is prepared for it
Only a few will survive
Again a thought troubles me
After such destruction
Will people help one another
Or will they turn into wild beasts
That will snatch from others
Their last slice of bread
This is a question
That greatly troubles me
Observing human behavior
I suspect the latter option
Today's human being
Is a perfidious egoist
Focused only on himself
Thinking he knows everything
And understands this world
But in reality
He is a foolish and timid trickster
Good people
Are like a needle in a haystack
I have no idea
What kind of people they would become
After such a total cataclysm
Because of the growing evil among people
Such an end will not pass us by
I look with horror
At humanity slowly collapsing
Which more and more
Brings everyone closer
To total self-destruction

Yet in my heart
I have great faith and hope
That people will come to their senses
And return to the path of truth
They will cleanse their hearts and consciences
Love will become the guidepost
Minds will grow calm
And hearts will begin to listen to their own voice
A human being will be there for another human being
A great return of humanity will come
To the most important understanding
Of the essence of humanity

Author's note:
Through their behavior today,
people themselves are calling forth total destruction.

LUTON UK World
Amb. Dr Tomasz Laczek
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Manik Chakraborty

The Silent City.



In the heart of the silent city,
I stand alone today;
I search for my own kin,
Yet find no trace of them.

So I wander aimlessly,
Like a nomad in the wild,
With a thirsting, famished gaze,
Traversing a desert land.

Across the pallid sky
Lies the darkness of death;
Deep within my breast,
Echoes only a cry of despair

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Brenda Mohammed

GROWING OLDER

I have read many poems about growing older.

For many of us, growing older makes us ponder.

When we were young, we worried about pimples.

Now we are worrying about getting wrinkles.

*

Here are some of the funny things I read in poetry.

People are worried about aging prematurely.

When one was young, he wanted to be a heartthrob.

Now he is worried about when his heart will stop.

*

One said that when she was young, she only wanted to sleep.

Now that she is old, she finds it difficult to sleep.

When another was young, she waited to hold someone's hand.

Now she is old, so she has to wait for someone to hold her hand.

*

In her youth, my friend told her parents to leave her alone.

Now that she is older, she is afraid to be left alone.

When she was young, she hated to be given advice.

Now that she is old, there's no one to talk with or advise.

*

Young or old, life needs to be lived and experienced.

Cherish the memories and celebrate each moment.

Do not worry about when your life will end.



Leave that in God’s hands to determine when.

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Ananya S Guha

Protest

Bodies mangled
Shrieks of children
The school is bombed
That is how people attack
The sad part is that they
Are leaders and children
Bear the brunt of not
Their anger but animality

Who says that wars will end?
They will end only when dark
Clouds overhead will disappear
And when red is no longer colour
But blood- not blood red
Everywhere that wars are fought
The leaders are caught in tangled
Moments of violence and caprice

Then they meet and smile even laugh
As more women and children die

They cannot plead for truce
Their voices cannot be heard
Only their bodies remain, the only
Protest that they can show

By dying

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Shillong

Ananya S Guha lives in Shillong in North East India. He has been writing and publishing poetry for over forty years.

Lan Xin (Lanxin Samei)

Illusion of Envy

— Dedicated to all noble souls who suffer from envy



An ancient Chinese proverb tells us:
Tall trees in the forest draw the wind;
Mounds rising above banks draw the torrent;
Those whose deeds stand above others invite slander.

Trapped in the small self, many in the world
sink into endless envy, comparison, calculation and rivalry.
Bound by ignorance, they weave cages for themselves.
They see others' radiance as a threat,
and bring exclusion, criticism and harm.

If you endure trials, attacks, slander and suppression,
dear friend, congratulations!
You are no minor supporting character.
You are the leading lady and leading man
in the grand drama of life.

Those who envy, trouble and wound you
bear the karmic risk of descending into hell,
push you to rebirth from fire, phoenix-like,
forging unbreakable wings and diamond resolve,
breathing forth fearless courage.

forge ahead through envy and exclusion,
and in this process, gain the power of phoenix nirvana.
I do not envy others, for I deeply know
behind every gleaming appearance
lie unseen hardships and perseverance.
All beings bear their burdens, no one's journey is easy.
Every light others carry is forged by their tears and blood.

Those who are leading ladies and leading men
hold a heart of universal love to warm the world,
possess profound wisdom to break delusion,
embrace the breadth to contain all things,
and the courage to bear immense weight.

No climbing, no comparison, keep your true heart.
Learn to be love, be light,
shine your radiance upon the world,
guide humanity out of the maze of comparison and envy.
You write your own life story.

You will eventually shine bright！

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May Love Be the Base Color of Your Soul

Poem by Lanxin (Lanxin Samei)

We have all loved.
Some once knew love,
yet it faded away forever after.
For their hearts have grown numb and dull
in the absence of love.
Deprived of another's affection,
they forget to love themselves,
and dare not love others anymore.
Like hedgehogs,
they curl up inside hard spiny shells.

Others have loved and been loved,
and also lost love.
Yet to carry love within the heart
is what sets them apart.
For those who bear love in their hearts,
love grows from within.

It does not depend on love given by others,
nor do they withhold love from the world.
They know how to love themselves,
and are willing to love others.
Loved or unloved,
having or losing,
nothing can alter their original loving heart.

The heart is a tree.
Nurtured by love,
it blooms and breathes lasting fragrance.
If love departs from the heart,
though the body still lives,
the soul has withered.

What is love?
Love is letting go.
Love is release.
Love is forgiveness.
Love is acceptance.
Love is tolerance.
Love is understanding.
Love is to help another to flourish.

May time pass, year after year,
and within your heart and mine,
love remains, endures always,
grows ever fuller.

May love be the base color
of our soul.

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Mensut Senol

IF THE WINDS BLOW ON YOUR FACE

Coming to fruition in finding a place to settle in your soul
The back gardens of your own paradise still cry for a deal
Will the newcomers be patient with what they see in their dreams?
Again, it’s not a huge enterprise to fool the hell's guards
Or else you might danger your prospect in this emptiness
See what you can offer in exchange for any subtlety
Your life swims out to reach the vastest ocean' winds
The never-ending story begins just here in the basin of hunger
Even thirst could not be satisfied by pure water any longer
Use of the brain or chest will not suffice to cover your face
Nothing is saved from winds caused by a merciless lover
Still, lovers meet somewhere in the middle of a calm breeze
Yet there is something in your climactic heart chamber
Within your inner world, winds blow on your face ceaselessly



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RÜZGARLAR YÜZÜNDE ESİYORSA

Gönlünde bir yere yerleşebilme noktasına gelirken
Senin cennetinin arka bahçeleri bir anlaşma arıyor
Yeni gelenler sabreder mi düşlerinde gördükleriyle
Cehennemin bekçilerini aldatmak büyük bir değil yine de
Ya da bu boşlukta geleceğini tehlikeye atabilirsin
En küçük farklılık için git ve gör ne sunabilirsin
Senin hayatın en engin okyanusların rüzgarlarına yüzmede
Hiç bitmeyen öykü tam burada, açlık havzasında başlar
Susuzluk bile bundan sonra saf suyla bile giderilemez
Beynini ve göğsünü kullanmak yüzünü kapatmaya yetmez
Acımasız bir sevgilinin rüzgarlarından seni hiçbir şey koruyamaz
Yine de aşıklar, sakin bir meltemin ortasında bir yerlerde buluşur
Ancak senin kalbinin iklim odasında olan bir şeyler vardır
İç dünyanda rüzgarlar yüzünde eser eser, hiç durmaz

TO PAY ATTENTION TO YOU

As the blinding mountainside was shrinking
and going beyond the horizon
Non blowing top was being shrouded by shadows
and at a such end of a sunshine
I enter into the world of the fairies without asking
and start flying on my magic carpet out of clear sky
I give way to the obscure delusions
though I would not wish for them to be forgotten
Mirages are being daggered by un-howling groan
at that in the deepest depths
The moment of the mistrust void where the wise are meeting
when I was toiling and sweating to reach it
As I was having a look at the silhouette on the top of the hills
and when I was staring at beyond it
I can sense that it is time when the dream
and the reality get blended
and though I would not wish it to end

I am here for carrying you inside me
and I am ready to pay attention to you

When the sun rises…

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SENİ DİNLEDİM

Körleşen dağ yamacı küçülüp kaldığında
ve ufkun ötesine gittiğinde
Esmeyen tepesi gölgelerle kaplandığında
ve öylesi bir gün bitiminde
Girerim hükümsüz periler dünyasına
ve uçarım düş halımla birdenbire
Yol veririm en loş kalmış sanrılara
unutulmamalarını istesem de
Uğultusuz inlemeler saplanır seraplara
hem de en derin derinliklerine
Bilgelerin buluştuğu kuşku boşluğu olan anlara
ulaşmak için zorlanıp direndiğimde
Tepelerin üstündeki o karaltıya bakınca
ve onun arkasındakilere gözlerimi dikince
Zamanın geldiğini anlarım düşle gerçek birbirine karıştığında
ve bitmesini istemesem de

Varım seni içimde taşımaya
ve hazırım senin türkülerini dinlemeye

Güneş doğunca…

Malik Al Batli

With no precedent to speak of...

Mama...
Mama...

I want to cry.



Like this...
without hesitation,
without being afraid of anything.

For my sorrow...
Ah, my sorrow...

It was never a stranger to me,
nor was it ever something my heart had not known.

But it was the tears
that taught me
how to walk these alleys alone,

and how to see, behind their broken windows,
your eyes...
those eyes shattered by waiting,
weeping silently
at the throat of the night...

As though every window
had preserved something of your absence,
and every alley
knew how much it hurt me
to walk on alone.

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Iraq

Shamsul Bari Utpal

Why does it feel so shameless?

Why do I feel this way?
You can say Anindita!
Why is it raining so much salt water?
Or stare blankly
Yet, far out of sight,
How are you!
I light a lamp without light and wait.
In the still basin
You have taken possession of the months, years, hours, minutes.
A skillfully crafted scratch.
Today I am climbing the high mountains.
I have carried an impossible burden on my shoulders.
Ignoring destruction and catastrophe, we walk towards infinity.
With the sure possibility of defeat as a companion
A friend's mountain peak in the forest of the heart
Black eyes of boundless pain and contempt,
In the red and blue sparks of suffering
Sometimes I really want to die,
Why do I do it? I still get through it.
Amanisha's breathless days and nights
How am I doing now,
Can you say Anindita?
Why do I feel like this?

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এমন কেন লাগে অনিন্দিতা
শামসুল বারী উৎপল

এমন কেন লাগে আমার
বলতে পারো অনিন্দিতা!
কেন এমন লোনা জলের বৃষ্টি ভিজি
কিংবা অপলক চেয়ে থাকি
অথচ দৃষ্টিসীমার বহুদূর ঠিকানায়
কেমন করে থাকো!
আলোহীন প্রদীপ জ্বেলে চেয়ে থাকি
নিস্তরঙ্গ অববাহিকায়
মাস বছর ঘন্টা মিনিটের দখল নিয়েছো
সুনিপুণ শিল্পিত আঁচড়ে।
আমি আজ বেয়ে চলি উত্তুঙ্গ পর্বতমালা
সাধ্যাতীত বোঝা এক ধরেছি কাঁধে
ধ্বংস ও প্রলয় উপেক্ষা করে হেঁটে চলি অসীমে

পরাজয়ের নিশ্চিত সম্ভাবনা সঙ্গী করেই
বুকের অরণ্যে বন্ধুর গিরিশৃঙ্গ
সীমাহীন যন্ত্রণা আর অবজ্ঞার কালো চোখ,
কষ্টের লাল নীল অগ্নিস্ফুলিঙ্গে
মাঝে মাঝে খুব মরে যেতে ইচ্ছে করে,
কেন করে! তবুও পার করি
অমানিশার অল্পজ্ঞানবিহীন দিবস-রাত্রি
আমি এখন কেমন করে থাকি,
বলতে পারো অনিন্দিতা
এমন কেন লাগে আমার!

Poetry of time

But. It all stopped here.
Civilization stood, hunger and poverty stood,
The organic page of the book stands, the structural signal of culture.
The executive orders of the councils stood up,
State-owned dreams were imprisoned in the festival of darkness.

However, the apple fell into the soil of time.
Then the storm; gravitational pull
Newton came back one day.
Science and history are back,
Came back alone and a few others
Written in letters of blood and talent
New chapter, new character identity.

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সময়ের কাব্য
শামসুল বারী উৎপল

অথচ। এখানটাতেই দাঁড়িয়ে পড়ল সব
দাঁড়ালো সভ্যতা, দাঁড়ালো ক্ষুধা এবং দারিদ্র্য,
দাঁড়ালো পুস্তকের অর্গানিক পৃষ্ঠা, সংস্কৃতির গাঠনিক সংকেত
উঠে দাঁড়ালো সভাসদের নির্বাহী আদেশ,
রাষ্ট্রায়ত্ত স্বপ্নগুলো বন্দি হল আঁধারের উৎসবে।

অথচ। আপেলটা পড়ে গেল সময়ের মৃত্তিকায়
তারপর ঝড়; মাধ্যাকর্ষণজনিত টানাপোড়েনে
একদিন ফিরে এলো নিউটন
ফিরে এলো বিজ্ঞান ও ইতিহাস,
ফিরে এলো একা ও আরো কয়েকজন
রক্ত ও মেধার অক্ষরে লেখা
নতুন অধ্যায় নতুন বর্ণপরিচয়।

Narcissus

Narcissus, you fell in love with yourself.
Does anyone love themselves like this, tell me!
Or Nemesis, grant me that boon.
I want to see my picture,
No, not a reflection, not a portrait,
Not a stranger on the ancient road of time
I couldn't fall in love with myself, Narcissus,
Because I am mine.
I saw the man inside, slowly,
Didn't you see Liz? Look at her today.
Then tell Narcissus
Loving yourself is a tireless battle,
I'm sure if Narcissus was like me
Own You would see the picture.
But be sure to do whatever you do.
He would not have been seduced by his own love in the black river;
Forgive me, Narcissus.

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নার্সিসাস
শামসুল বারী উৎপল।

নার্সিসাস তুমি প্রেমে পড়েছিলে তোমার নিজের
কেউ কি এমন করে নিজেকে ভালোবাসে, বল!
কিংবা নেমেসিস, আমাকে সেই বর দাও
আমি আমার ছবি দেখতে চাই,
না প্রতিচ্ছবি নয়, প্রতিকৃতিও নয়,
নয় কোন আগন্তুক সময়ের অর্বাচীন সড়কে
আমি নিজের প্রেমে পড়তে পারিনি নার্সিসাস,
কারণ আমি আমার
ভেতরের মানুষটাকে দেখেছি পই পই করে,
সে কি তুমি লিজেকে দেখোনি? আজ দেখো
অতঃপর নার্সিসাসকে বল
নিজেকে ভালোবাসা এক অক্লান্ত যুদ্ধের খোয়াব,
আমি নিশ্চিত নার্সিসাস যদি আমার মতন
নিজস্ব ছবিটা দেখত
তবে নিশ্চিত যাই করুক আর
নিজের প্রেমে বিমোহিত হত না কালোর নহরে;
আমাকে, ক্ষমা কর নার্সিসাস।

শামসুল বারী উৎপল



Shamsul Bari Utpal is a banker, poet, and writer.

And recitation artist. A solitary man, he is immersed in the impure courtyard of time. He has been writing poetry since his youth. He received the Islamic Foundation Award for his composed poetry at the national level, and was also the champion in the cultural competition of Habibullah Bahar College. He worked in Udichi recitation and drama in the nineties. At that time, he founded the recitation organization 'Nirman' at Dhaka University TSC. In the Recitation Coordination Council He served as the director of the Bangla Academy's Young Writers Project (1997), during which his solo recitation cassette 'Anal Jol Panktimala' was widely acclaimed. He played an active role in the mass uprising of the 1990s. He worked on poetry in the Bangla Academy's Young Writers Project (1997).

His father, the late Shamsul Haque Khan, was a senior official of the Water Development Board and one of the pioneers of left-wing politics in Bangladesh, while his mother, Begum Shamsulnahar Haque, was a housewife.

He received his master's degree with honors from Dhaka University and his MBA from Stamford University.

He is very conscious of his professional responsibilities. He currently lives with his family, two daughters Urbi and Tathoi, and son Rashik and wife Monira Begum Rajni.

Published poetry collections: How the Mind Feels in the Afternoon, Smriti's Coffin and Madhavi's Anecdote are one.

Published storybooks: Stories are not stories.

Amarilda Dokollari

The Photograph That Speaks

(A poem from the book “With Eyes Toward the Sky”)

When I look at the photograph,
ah, how deeply I yearn!
As if my father’s face comes alive,
and pours its light upon my face.
Ah, a light that soon fades away,
as darkness quickly reveals the truth.
In my heart, I keep his flame,
a fire that will never die,
a warm and silent embrace
that keeps me alive through every storm.
In silence, I hear his voice,
speaking to me with longing and sorrow,
warming me and giving me strength,
as if he were still here, holding me in his arms.

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At the same table



Little Rilda: Finally you came...
Rilda at 35: I have always been here.
Little Rilda: No. I have been waiting 35 years to meet you.
Rilda at 35: And I have been walking 35 years to return to you.
Little Rilda: Really? Then tell me... did we achieve our dreams?
Rilda at 35: Some yes. Some took other paths. And some turned into very valuable lessons.
Little Rilda: Did you ever cry?
Rilda at 35: Yes. More than I thought I could cry.
Little Rilda: Then why do you smile?
Rilda at 35: Because every tear made me stronger. It taught me to rise every time life knocked me down.
Little Rilda: Did people hurt you?
Rilda at 35: Yes. But they also loved me. And true love always weighed more than the wounds.
Little Rilda: Did you ever lose yourself?
Rilda at 35: For a few moments, yes. But my heart always knew the way to return to myself.
Little Rilda: Tell me, are you happy?
Rilda at 35: I have learned that happiness is not a place you arrive at. It is a moment you appreciate, a hug you feel, a thank you you say with your heart. It is a moment. A breath between two storms.
Little Rilda: What did you gain in these 35 years?
Rilda at 35: Strength without losing tenderness. And the belief that after every night comes a morning.
Little Rilda: And what did you lose?
Rilda at 35: Some people, some illusions, and many expectations. But I gained peace.
Little Rilda: What about dad?
Rilda at 35: He still misses me.
Little Rilda: After all these years?
Rilda at 35: There are pains that time does not heal. It only teaches the heart how to beat with them inside.
Little Rilda: What about mom?
Rilda at 35: If dad is the absence that still hurts, mom is the presence that still gives me strength. She is the first to rejoice in my successes and the last to stop believing in me.
She continues to be the place where my heart returns whenever it gets tired of the world.
Little Rilda: Am I still inside you?
Rilda at 35: Every day. You are the reason I still believe, still hope, and still dream.
Little Rilda: If you had to leave me a message, what would it be?
Rilda at 35: Do not be afraid to be yourself. Do not measure your worth by anyone’s opinion. And never forget that a kind heart is the greatest wealth you can have.
Little Rilda: Have you ever forgotten me?
Rilda at 35: Never.
Little Rilda: Even when you became an adult?
Rilda at 35: Especially then. Every time I saw the moon, a blooming flower, a butterfly, or a sky full of stars, I found you there.
Little Rilda: Then I am still with you?
Rilda at 35: You are the most beautiful part of me. A part of me has stayed with you forever.
Little Rilda: And you, did you become what you wanted?
Rilda at 35: Not what I imagined. But what I needed to become.
Little Rilda: And who are you?
Rilda at 35: A woman who still marvels at the moon like a child and still writes like someone who believes in miracles.

Little Rilda: So, we didn't lose the magic?
Rilda at 35: No.
Little Rilda: Tell me about what I loved most.
Rilda at 35: To write.
Little Rilda: Do we still write?
Rilda at 35: More than ever.
Little Rilda: Really?
Rilda at 35: Yes. The words you once hid in your heart are now read by others.
Little Rilda: Then did we become poets?
Rilda at 35: Yes. Exactly what you dreamed when you filled pages with thoughts and feelings.
Little Rilda: And do people read our verses?
Rilda at 35: They do. Some find themselves in them. Some find comfort. Some find strength.
Little Rilda: That means my dream lives.
Rilda at 35: Yes. It lives.
Little Rilda: And what is the most beautiful thing the years brought us?
Rilda at 35: Two little eyes that look at me with love and remind me every day how beautiful life is. In the innocence, light, and smile of my children, I often find the little Rilda I once was.
Little Rilda: And blessings?
Rilda at 35: Many blessings. The love of my sisters and brother, who remain part of my heart at all times. Nephews and nieces, a heart full!
Little Rilda: Alright then...
Rilda at 35: What?
Little Rilda: I have a wish for you.
Rilda at 35: I'm listening.
Little Rilda: I wish that years never take the light from your eyes. I wish you continue to see beauty where others see the ordinary. I wish you never get tired of loving life, people, and words. And when you look at the moon, remember that somewhere inside you still lives a little girl who believes that everything beautiful is possible.
Rilda at 35: Thank you.
Little Rilda: Happy 35th birthday. 🎂💯
Rilda at 35: I love you.
Little Rilda: I know. Because I am you.

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Amarilda Dokollari, a poet from the city of poetry, Pogradec
The Albanian author Amarilda Dokollari 🇦🇱, from the beautiful city of Pogradec, is a heartfelt and sincere voice in contemporary Albanian poetry. She writes with an open soul, transforming her experiences into verses that deeply touch the reader's heart. Her poetry is born from love, pain, absence, and hope—true emotions that she brings with beautiful simplicity and rare sensitivity.
The author Amarilda Dokollari is the creator of six poetry books, each of which reflects a part of her spiritual world:
The book "Love and Pain" is a collection in which the strongest human emotions intertwine. Love and pain coexist in every verse, bringing the reality of the human soul.
The book "The Last Pain of the Heart" is emotionally profound, where every poem is a heartfelt story, filled with wounds that speak and feelings that leave traces.
The book "In the Arms of Love", a work where love appears as light and shelter. The poems convey tenderness, devotion, and a sweet sense of hope.

The book “With Eyes Toward the Sky” is deeply moving, born from the absence of her father. In these poems, the author directs her eyes toward the sky, preserving an eternal connection with him through memories, longing, and love that never fades.

The book “Mother” is filled with deep love and gratitude for the figure of the mother, where every verse conveys warmth and pure emotion.

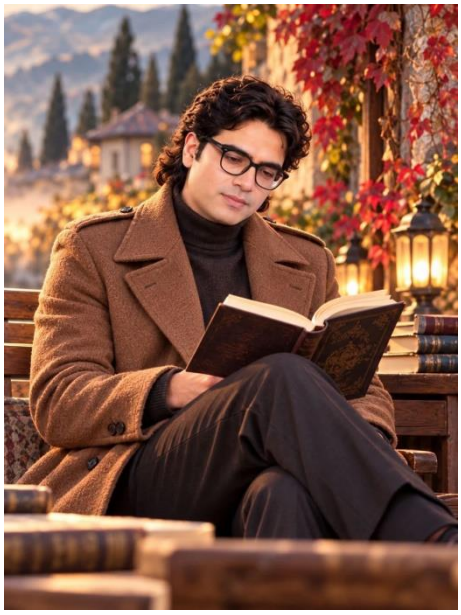
The book “The End of Love” is an emotional journey through memories, pain, loss, and the strength to move forward. A book that tells how, even when a love ends, its feelings and memories remain forever engraved in the heart.

Author Amarilda Dokollari does not simply write poetry—she shares her soul with the reader, making each book a heartfelt and true journey that deeply touches and remains in the heart for a long time.

Literary Biography

Dr. Zainul Husain

My LOVE -STORY



I was not least astonished to see
In a newly launched anthology,
The soulful expression straight from my heart _
A ballad portraying my love - story.

A love that travelled
Oceans and continents,
A love that breathed
Through exchanged compositions.

A single thread of trust
Wrapped their souls so virtually,
That their love blossomed genuinely.

A love that perfected
Without the worries of time and space,
Beyond all visions and imagery.

Look how faith took
The fate of star-crossed lovers
From the groundless earth
To the sky of divinity.

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Dr Barbaros İrdelmen

Stepping into Youth

Silence was echoing through the house,
As the two of us were speaking of love,
Suddenly, as you wrapped your arms around my neck,

A fire ignited within me all at once;
With slender and gentle touches,
Our breaths quickened and intertwined.

Undressed, your hands by the bedside,
Lying gently on your back upon the bed,
Your legs slightly parted, inviting,

Our emotions were like storms,
Not knowing what to do,
A timid shiver had enfolded us both.

Tracing your wet fingers across my skin
Was like a silent melody;
Every touch of yours echoed in my heart.

Lips and tongues competed with one another,
As you closed your eyes while being caressed,
I longed for your bashful glances.

As if, timid yet delightful and together,
Violent moans and contractions
Were expected from us both.

We had caught a secret rhythm,
Every movement was like a spell,
While we feared our own tremors.

Time stood still, the moment became infinite,
And the entire world faded away,

On the wings of a trembling night.
Gushing from deep within ourselves,
Our love had poured out like a flowing river.

Even if years, long years go by,
Could it ever be forgotten?
Those passionate emotions we surrendered to,
Unto death, as we stepped into youth.

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Ergenliğe Adım

Evde sessizlik yankılanıyordu,
Sevgi üzerine konuşurken ikimiz
birden sen boynuma sarılınca
bir ateş parladı içimde birden;
incecik ve nazik dokunuşlarla
hızlandı ve karıştı nefeslerimiz.

Soyunmuş, ellerin başucunda,
Yatağa sırtüstü usulca uzanmış
bacakların aralık davetkar yatıyordun

Duygularımız,
ne yapacağının bilmeyen birer fırtınaydı,
Utangaç bir ürperti sarıp sarmalamıştı ikimizi

Islak parmaklarını tenimde gezindirmen,
Sanki sessiz bir melodi gibiydi
kalbimde yankılanıyordu her dokunuşun.

Dudak ve dil yarışıyordu birbiriyle
Okşarken gözlerini kapatınca sen
mahcup bakışlarını özlüyordum

Sanki, ürkek ama keyifli ve birlikte
şiddetli inlemeler ve kasılmalar
bekleniyordu ikimizden

Gizli bir ritim tutturmuştuk
Her hareket, bir büyü gibiydi,
Kasılmalarımızdan korkarken

Zaman durdu, an sonsuz oldu,
ve kayboldu tüm dünya

Titrek bir gecenin kanatlarında
İçimizden içimize çağlayan
bir nehir gibi boşalmıştı sevgimiz.

Yıllar, yıllar geçse bile
unutulabilir mi?
Gençliğe geçerken ölümüne
teslim olduğumuz o şehvetli duygular

Dr Barbaros İrdelmen
İstanbul/Turkey

Dr. Barbaros İrdelmen is a Turkish poet, writer, translator, and retired physician. He is the author of nineteen poetry collections, with works published in numerous national and international anthologies, literary journals, and poetry festivals. A member of the Turkish Writers' Syndicate, he translates world poetry from English into Turkish and

contributes to the Turkish edition of Poetry Without Borders. He is also affiliated with the poetry translators' community of the ITHACA Foundation (Spain), promoting literary dialogue across cultures through poetry and translation.

Muqaddas Isoqulova

THE LANGUAGE OF COLORS

White is the silence of a winter morning,
Black is the shadow behind the light,
Red is the heartbeat of passion,
Blue is the dream of a distant night.

Green is the whisper of growing spring,
Golden is the warmth of the setting sun,
Silver is the road that moonlight brings,
And every color tells what words have done.

In English, colors speak in hidden ways,
They carry memories, feelings, dreams.
A “red heart” burns with love and longing,
While “blue” may flow through sorrow’s streams.

In Uzbek words, the colors also live,
White may bring purity and peace,
Black can mark the depth of sorrow,
Green can make the hope increase.

Colors are more than names we utter,
They build a bridge from thought to sight;
Through chromatic words, two languages reveal
How human feelings turn to light.



© Copyrighted 2026 by Muqaddas Isoqulova
2nd-year Master’s Student in Linguistics
Renaissance University of Education
Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Anja Sekulić

SMILE IN THE EYES



There are days when little seems to go right,
just keep a smile in your eyes shining bright!

Life has always ebbed and flowed like the tide,
the essence is happiness you carry inside.

No riches can ever warm the soul,
only happiness can help you through the whole.

When a dark cloud hangs over the sky,
don't let a tear hide the sparkle in your eye.

Everything, we know, will pass away,
you have everything while your eyes still gleam and stay.

The sparkle and laughter lines on your face
will make every countenance glow with grace.

As you walk toward the edge of the way,
keep your spirit and sketch dreams every day.

Where your feet can never tread,
let your imagination leap ahead.

Even when your heart refuses to stay,
let the smile in your eyes give you courage each day!

While a boat sails down the Danube wide,
new challenges call from the other side.

Life is all of this — and the silence of night.
Everything is right while your eyes still shine bright.

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DARK ROOM

(I wanted, in the darkness,
to paint the perfect shade of dark,
but I lacked the light
to see what I had painted.)

I was so happy at the sight of your smile.
I kept thinking of ways to reach your happiness.

I wanted to warm all your sorrows,
because I knew what it meant to live with pain.

I wanted to embrace the child
who had lived in a dark room.

I wanted to paint a window
through which you could escape.

I wanted you to fly.
I still want that.

But I realize
that I, too, was once a child.

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Dr. Debabrata Maji

A Winter love

The winter whispers in the trees,
Silver mist floats on the breeze.
Imagine you are seated near a fire,
It's a quiet dream as heart desires.
Moonlight rests in fields of white,
And stars awake in velvet night.

Your smiles are warm and bright,
Turns winter darkness into light.
Around us the chilly winds play,
The frosted flowers greet the day.
No need for sun, no summer skies,
My love is shining in your eyes.

Catch my hand beneath the moon,
Hearts speak softly, tune by tune.
Every winter always fades away,
My love grows warmer every day.
The snow of seasons having falls,
Time grows old beyond our calls.

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Deulpur, Howrah, India

Empathy

One has a listening heart
They need a quiet shadow,
Helping hand is extended
To stop further sun's glow.

When pause to feel sorrow
Shadow turns into a flame,
It knows another's journey
A quiet smile mask claim.

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Deulpur, Howrah, India

A Voice of Dawn

The shadows cling to ancient stone,
Where silence rules the world alone.
A quiet breath stirs through the trees,
A whisper on the waking breeze.

Then out of dark and heavy deeps,
A golden note- the first- upleaps.
It cuts the shroud, it parts the gray,
And heralds in the newborn day.

No trumpet blares, no armies call,
Yet light dissolves the prison wall.
A single voice, so clear and true,
Binds up the old and breathes the new.

The earth unseals her heavy eyes,
As crimson paints the waking skies.
And softly through the morning air,
The dawn arrives like answered prayer.

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Deulpur, Howrah, India

The Quiet Song

Whispers smile upon the breeze,
Softly calming restless seas.
Without a sword, without a war,
Open your hands and hearts once more.

Raise your voice for peaceful days,
Let kindness light the darkest ways.
A single word can heal the pain,
Like gentle drops of morning rain.

Let anger fall, let shadows fade,
Keep each promise that you've made.
With every breath and every choice,
Let peace alone become our voice.

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Deulpur, Howrah, Bharat



The journey of Dr. Debabrata Maji is one woven with the artistry of words, the precision of engineering, and the resounding echoes of literary passion. His artistry, rooted in heartfelt emotions and intricate expressions, carved a distinct space within global literary landscapes. To mark with respect and honour his poems are frequently broadcasted from Colombia Ecos Poeticos Radio. Dr. Maji's written legacy is solidified through thirteen remarkable poetry collections bearing coveted ISBN in Bengali versions - Kavita Bichitra, Kavita Darpan, Probad Angina, Premer Boikunth, Sonnet Bhaskar, Harano Bamsari, Smarane Manane, Vande Mataram, Barnera Rahasya and English versions are Dreamscape, The Peace, The Divine Glow and Maxims 500 are extensions of his soul. These titles bear witness to his unwavering commitment to poetry and the sheer brilliance of his literary craft. His story is not merely about accolades or achievements - it is about a man who dared to transform life's melodies into poetry, leaving behind an enduring legacy that will inspire generations to come.

Pankaj Buragohain

Walk Slowly, Life



Walk slowly, Life,
there are debts the heart must pay,
old wounds that still await
the healing touch of day.

There are promises left behind,
and duties yet undone;
in racing toward tomorrow,
I lost what I had won.

Some hearts grew cold and distant,
some quietly slipped away;
there are hands I must reach for,
and tears I must turn to day.

Some bonds were born to shatter,
some faded as they grew;
yet every broken thread
still carries something true.

There are dreams that remain unfinished,
and paths I have not known;
a thousand tangled questions
still wait to be my own.

So walk slowly, Life,
let not your hurried feet
outrun the souls you love,
or make the whole world incomplete.

For when the final breath
falls silent in the night,
what mattered will not be
what I gained, but whom I made alright.

And yet this stubborn heart,
still chasing what cannot stay,
must learn what death has always known:
that nothing comes away.

Walk slowly, Life,
there is still some love to give,
some sorrow to forgive,
some duty to fulfill,
and some unfinished self
to teach how to live.

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Danijela Ćuk

SUPPORT



Nobody knows how it feels in your skin,
To smile while crying tears deep within,
"It will pass," they say, as if they knew,
Unaware of the fake shine you're breaking through.

They don't know what it's like day-to-day,
Fearing what tomorrow might bring your way,
How hard it can be just to take a breath,
While they think they know it all to depth.

Your own inner battle is yours alone to bear,
Only those who go through it truly care,
So listen to yourself, for only you know best
The feelings that reside inside your chest.

I want to send you a message, my dear,
When your strength leaves, I'll still be near,
To tell you: you don't have to be strong, no,
Just let all your deep emotions flow.

If you need to cry, then let it fall,
I'll be right here through it all,
To hold every tear that leaves your eyes,
Just as I would keep my own inside.

If you want to laugh, I am here for that too,
To bring a little bit of support to you,
No empty promises made in vain,
For pure hearts never play that game.

If it hurts, share that pain with me,
Don't hesitate, together we'll be,
I may not have much to offer or start,
But I can help soothe your aching heart.

I don't know your pain, but I'm by your side,
From me, your emotions never have to hide,
So ease your soul and let it yield,
I am right beside you on the battlefield!

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Croatia

Woman

A woman is an angel without wings,
she conquers everything with her smile,
her power lies precisely in the fact that she does not give up.

She has her own irresistible charms, because she is the only one in the world, she is delicate like a small butterfly that leaves beauty to a small flower.

Woman, protect her like an eye in your head,
because she is a mother,
a woman and a queen,
regardless of all the adversities in life,
she is simply a lioness for everything!

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Croatia

Xhuli Spahiu

WHERE HOPE IS BORN

There is a place
where night is not darkness,
but a silence
waiting for dawn.

There, hope
does not arrive with noise.
It is born slowly,
like a light
beneath the eyelids of the soul.

And I have gathered it
from the ruins of my days,
every fragment of light
that remained within me.

I have held it in my hands
the way one holds
a fragile dream,
afraid to let it fall.

Because life
did not always promise us spring,
but it taught us
to make flowers bloom
even in winter.

I have cried
without losing my smile,
I have been silent
without burying my words,
I have fallen
without forgetting how to rise.

And today,
when I look back,
I do not count my wounds.

I count the lights
that saved me.

I count the people
who gave me a word,
a hand,
a memory,
a reason to believe.

Because hope
is not the absence of pain.

Hope is
continuing to walk
even when your heart
is still hurting.

And at the end of every road
where I thought everything was over,
I found a door
opening toward the light.

Perhaps this is life:

to lose some dreams
only to find yourself,
to leave certain roads
in order to understand your destination,
and to learn
that even after the longest night,
the sky
keeps its promise of dawn.

So,
if one day
the world seems without light,
do not give up.

Perhaps right there,
in the deepest silence,
your hope
is being born.

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WHEN THE HEART FALLS SILENT

There are days
when I do not want to speak.

Not because I have nothing to say,
but because some pain
does not know how to become words.

I carry it within me,
like unwritten letters
that time never sent.

I have learned
that not every departure
is a loss,
and not every staying
is love.

Some people
pass through our lives
like seasons.

They touch us,
they change us,
then they leave.

But they leave behind
a piece of themselves
in our memory.

I do not forget them.

I have simply learned
not to look for them anymore
where they are no longer there.

There have been nights
when I have asked myself
why it has to be so difficult
to be kind
in a world
that so often does not return
the kindness we give.

Then I understood:

I should not change my heart
just because someone
did not know how to value it.

So I still believe.

I believe in a word
spoken from the heart.

In hands
that reach out without asking anything in return.

In people
who do not need
to make noise
to be great.

And when my heart falls silent,
it does not mean
that it has stopped loving.

Perhaps it is simply
resting for a while.

Gathering itself,
healing its wounds,
learning to walk
without waiting for anyone.

Because I have understood
that my peace
is also
a form of love.

And this time,
I want to keep it
for myself.

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WHAT REMAINED OF ME

I have left pieces of myself
in many hands.

A kind word,
a smile,
a small piece of hope,
and so many silences
that no one ever saw.

I walked for a long time,
searching for myself
in the eyes of others.

Until one day,
I stopped.

And I found myself
exactly where
I had never thought to look:

within me.

I understood
that all this time
I had been becoming
what others
expected me to be.

I had forgotten to ask
what my heart wanted.

Now I no longer want
to be perfect.

I want to be real.

With the days when I laugh,
with the nights when I cry,
with the fears
that still knock at my door,
and with the dreams
that have not yet learned
how to surrender.

I do not want to erase
anything from the past.

It has made me

who I am.

Even wounds
have their own stories.

Even tears
have had their reasons.

And if you see me today
smiling,
do not think
I have never known pain.

It is precisely because
I have known it
that I understand
how precious
a peaceful day can be.

How beautiful it is
to wake up
and no longer need
to run away from yourself.

Now I know:

I do not need
to leave a mark
on every heart.

It is enough
that wherever I have passed,
I have left behind
a little light.

Because in the end,
of all that we have been,
of all that we have lost,
of all the roads
we have travelled,

only one thing remains:

what we have given
with our hearts.

And this—

is what remained
of me.

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Xhuli Spahiu is a poet and author from Kosovo, recognized for her literary work and her dedication to the written word, the human spirit, love, peace, and hope.

Through her poetry and writings, she conveys deep human emotions and messages that seek to bring people closer through art and the written word. Her creative work is inspired by life, human experiences, family, longing, love, and faith in goodness.

Her literary and humanitarian work has also received various recognitions and certificates at an international level, including an Honorary Doctorate Certificate, awarded in January 2021 by Zendo Self-Defense Systems and Technique, recognizing her with the title Doctor of Philosophy in Humanity and Peace.

Xhuli Spahiu continues to write and share her work with readers in Kosovo and beyond, viewing literature as a bridge between hearts, cultures, and people.

Demet Duyuler

A HALF-FINISHED RUN

Silence—
a scream
that has forgotten how to cry out.

The ground is riddled with craters;
dust and debris drift
between the footsteps.

Breath
cut short
the moment it meets gunpowder.

A child’s shoe...

Left behind mid-stride,
the run is over.

This is no game.

The soul
does not ask death its name;
its scent arrives,
it flinches at its voice.

The earth,
a prayer whose recitation
has been shattered,
does not take every name
into its bosom.

The world
is still on edge.

Peace
is not just a word;
it is the heaviest truth
we learn in order to survive.

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THE VOICELESS RUMBLE

It was September—
night was drawn over us;
we were lulled
into an ash-scented sleep.

Day turned.
We opened our eyes.
Dawn was blind.

Winter settled
in the hollow of our chests;
something inside us froze.

As this voiceless rumble went on,
mornings
were chiseled a little more
at the windows.

If I say
light must find a way through,
melting the ice within us,
it must flow.

Deeply runs the water
over the stone of silence.

We must hear the first crack
and emerge from darkness,
following the trace of a voice.

Waters will surely find their bed;
time is the witness to this flow.

This voiceless rumble will cease,
and humanity
will recognize its own voice
once more.

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ON THE EDGE OF TIME

The sky is carried
on the wings of birds.

In the shadow of an olive tree,
tired centuries rest.

The earth remembers the first word,
and the sea—that mute historian—
whispers ancient tales,
wave by wave.

We, the children of earth and water,
carry the wind in our palms.

On our faces,
the trace of past springs;
in our eyes,
the dawn of tomorrow.

In the distant blue of the world,
our hearts sing
the same melody.

In silence,
we nurture the light,
and with every twilight
our stillness grows deeper.

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ABOUT THE POET



Demet Duyuler was born on 10 November 1966 in Faydalı Village, Kozan, Adana, Türkiye. She studied German Language Education at the Faculty of Education, Çukurova University, where she currently works.
Closely connected with art and literature throughout her life, Duyuler has been actively involved in cultural and literary activities for many years. She has worked as an editor and held various roles in cultural and literary organizations. She is a founding member of the Adana Life-Art Association and the Writers' House Association and a member of the Writers' Union of Turkey. She manages the Culture and Arts page of Söz newspaper and writes for the newspaper. Her columns are also published on Küçüksaat.com. She has served on the editorial boards of Söylem and Yaşam Sanat magazines and was actively involved in the Çukurova Art Initiative for many years.
Her first poem, "Bulutun Öğüdü" ("The Cloud's Advice"), was published in Söylem magazine. Her poetry, short stories, and essays have appeared in

national and international literary magazines, anthologies, and literary publications, including Türk Şeirində Eşq (2017 Almanac, Azerbaijan), Türk Uşak Edebiyatı (2018, Azerbaijan), Revista Azahar, Atunis Poetry, and Honar ve Eghtesad (Tabriz).

Her work and literary profile have also appeared in reference works and poetry anthologies, including Adana Ansiklopedisi (2011), Resimli ve Metin Örnekli Türkiye Edebiyatçıları ve Kültür Adamları Ansiklopedisi (12 volumes, 2018), and 21. Yüzyıl Türk Şiiri Antolojisi (2024).

Her poetry and books have been the subject of academic and critical studies. Among them is Prof. Dr. Tahir Balcı's study, "From Local to National: Çukurovalı Şair Demet Duyuler," published in International Writings on Language and Literature (Schriften zur Sprache und Literatur) by Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University. The study spans 20 pages and discusses two of her books. Duyuler is also featured in Dr. Ömer Uluçay's 2010 study Şahmaran.

Her haiku have appeared internationally, with forthcoming publications in the Asahi Haikuist Network, Haiku-heute, and Our Poetry Archive.

AWARD

1st Yılankale Şahmaran Poetry Award

BOOKS

Poetry

* İçimdeki Çığlık Dışımdaki Sessizlik (2008, Karahan Kitabevi, Adana)
* Kırılgan Bakışlar (2010, Karahan Kitabevi, Adana)
* Sarı Sıcak Deli Mavi (2013, Karahan Kitabevi, Adana)
* Avuntu (2016, Artshop Yayınları, İstanbul)
* Güz Telaşı (2022, İzan Yayınları, Ankara)
* Sepkenler (2022, İzan Yayınları, Ankara)

Short Stories

* Bıraktığım Yerde (2026, İzan Yayınları, Ankara)

Alan Patrick Traynor

In A CHURCH IN MADRID



Sadness
Will you go and listen
To the cobblestones

To her voice
In the sandalwood
Drifting freely

Seasons moving
In the sawdust floors
That remind me of you

And love, will you go and find her face
A room with a view
The elated silence

Of a childhood
That holds you

Where I blamed God for
Daylight

As I stood there
And felt the blood of the holy water

And the air
Of a spectacular minuet

In a church in Madrid
The linen screaming in its silence

A rose so sweetly
Kissing marble floors

Colliding in a secret fire that hides in candles
She washes love
In a lonely water

In the passion of the streets
Her painted hands

I remember you
As you lay in the pink swaying winds
Of Saint-Martin-d'Ablois

Flesh to flesh

Sonnet to sonnet

A human sea
A human sea

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Mandy Pistikou

WOMEN'S KILLERS

In the past, women knew their place.
Restricted in houses and women rooms
They had no say for much.
They couldn't walk in the markets and sit in cafes
Absent in public debates.
What did they know about the world?
They belonged to their lord
From their father they went to their husband.
He was endowed not with elaborate embroidery, money and pieces of land
But with their very existence...
Everything predictable: home - children.
And they made love whenever the male wanted.
The bridal sheet was their banner.
And it was always their fault if they were abused.
Spinsters, the divorced and the ones 'of public use' was society's shame.
Maybe because they were the only ones who could resist their prudish status quo...

We thought we were luckier and emancipated.
Equality that the papers confirmed:
In schools and in jobs, we were supposed to have fairly equal opportunities.
Even if we could become secretaries, based on the length of our skirt and the size of our bra...
Looking to find sponsors to showcase our talents.
Old or ugly, we didn't care. As long as they have money and influence.
Those who resisted lived in obscurity.

Those who raped us in soul and body have been baptized as 'mentally ill'
To escape punishment.
No one closed them to mental hospitals, nor did they prevent them!
Our screams did not move anyone
Neither our tears or our bruises.
No one was there to defend us against the monsters of violence!
They only shed a few fake tears and spoke touching epitaphs.

We are not Taliban societies!
But it's always 'our fault' when we are abused...
And we pay with blood the pathogenesis of our rotten societies.
Will this world ever change, Kemal?

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MURDERERS OF WOMEN

They pretend to be civilized.
You can see them in a beautiful costume and fragrant.
They don't wear Arab shells, they're not Taliban.
Educated, prestigious, society admires them.
Any unsuspecting girl would crave a warm home with them.
With plenty of love.
Those men are making fun of them.
Women are fascinated.
Until they fall into their net and believe in them.
when they're completely devoted to them
They show their true nature.
Or it is revealed by others...
Modern sheiks. They pretend to be sensitive.
When you're doing something wrong, you get crucified. They are the ‘sinless’.
They are always victims of the circumstances.
They never have the responsibility!
They hurt bodies and human hearts.
They're women. Come on! They can bear everything!
Men will always come out to the lens, smiling.
Even when they know that their partner is suffering.
Anthropomorphic monsters! And the media people will always excuse them.
And the rotten status quo will justify them.
What a shame! Women have raised you!
And instead of honoring them
you force them to become victims of your passions and perverted actions,.
In exchange for an occasional hug and a compliment.
No respect for them, no respect for your manhood.
-Damn you! You do whatever you wouldn't want your daughters to experience!...

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Mandy (Diamanto) Pistikou was born in Piraeus, Greece.She writes poems, lyrics and music. She taught English, specializing in children with learning difficulties.. She graduated from the Hellenic Culture Department at the Hellenic Open University (won scholarships of excellence for all 4 years of her studies). She currently attends the Master's degree in 'Folklore and Literature' at the NKUA. Some of her poems or stories have been distinguished in various literary competitions.

Rezauddin Stalin

Woman and Man



The river has always been a symbol of the eternal woman,
And the man, a mountain.
Now, the woman is the mountain,
And the flowing Padma is the man.
Clouds are metaphors of her long, dark hair,
Thunderstorm symbolizes the roar of his muscles.

Now, the horizon is the valor of Indrajit, the arms of man
While lightning adorns woman as ornament.
The desert echoes Sita's desolate lament,
The ocean acts like The God Poseidon.

Today, the desert sand is the exile of manliness,
The ocean is the burning Ithaca of a waiting woman.

In a new arrangement, let the man tree be a figure like Gautama Buddha
And the woman, its green foliage.
Let the rain be man,
And the woman, the ceaseless wind.
Once, the man was Karna -
Son of the Sun,
While the woman was merely a body.
Today, she becomes blazing sunlight,
And the man, a head full of shadows.

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Translated by Ashraf Chowdhury

Anwar Rahim

Silence Speaks For A Mother

A mother's silence screams in pain,
As she mourns her beloved son in vain.
Tears fall like rain, a heart that's torn,
A perpetual ache, a soul forlorn.

Her emotions speak, though words won't come,
A grief so deep, it's left unsung.
Sorrows have no voice, no words to say,
She's a picture of pain, night and day.

A precious jewel lost, a shining light,
In this world, her darkness takes flight.
Yet, in her journey to the heavenly shore,
She'll find her son, forever more.

In eternity's embrace, they'll meet again,
Where love and joy will soothe her pain.
Though silence speaks, her heart will find,
Solace in heaven, where love entwines.

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Mothers Stay Blessed

Mothers, stay blessed, a treasure so rare,
Nurturing life, with love and care.
Like a cactus in the wild, they bloom with grace,
Creating blissful surroundings, a warm and peaceful space.

Adam and Eve, sent to Earth below,
To beautify and flourish, as their generations grow.
Babies born, like flowers, sweet and divine,
Fragrant as their scent, and lovely as their shine.



Mothers, blessed by God, with a heart so true,
Nurture these blossoms, with a love that shines through.
Through laughter and tears, they guide and they mold,
Shaping the future, with a love that never grows old.

With every step, with every fall,
Mothers are there, through it all.
So let us cherish, these angels on earth,
Mothers, stay blessed, a precious gift of birth

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Pakistan 🇵🇰

Red Moon

Yes that was one night
She could have come there at an agreed site
Shown her anger and reminded me of our last fight
Then be friendly, at mystical site, as always did before on every night

I waited for her, I was used to that
Wouldn't mind if she could have come and remained quiet
She had to show a big heart, she knew I would placate her, saying forget and forgo sweetheart

I knew she would stay, to show her sneaky smiles
Would just be teasing, pretending her arrogance for a while
I would enjoy as she often acted like that in different styles
She would be in jolly good mood, after a hug and a passionate kiss in moonlit night
We would sit for hours and have lovely chat for whole night

Suddenly I looked at my watch and got alarmed
I was lost in my thoughts and time so quickly passed
Why my love has not arrived, what has forced her to stop
I was upset, saw Red Moon, now fully emanated at sky top

I got up started running towards her house, with superstitious thoughts
She was sitting on a bench in her lawn lost in her thoughts
She raised her head with tears in her eyes rolling down
She disclosed, she was engaged to her uncle's son that night
By the will of her parents and she kept quiet
I did not believe in superstitions, never in my life
Blood Moon occurred only due to lunar eclipse
When Earth come in line between the Moon and the Sun
Who came in between me and my love

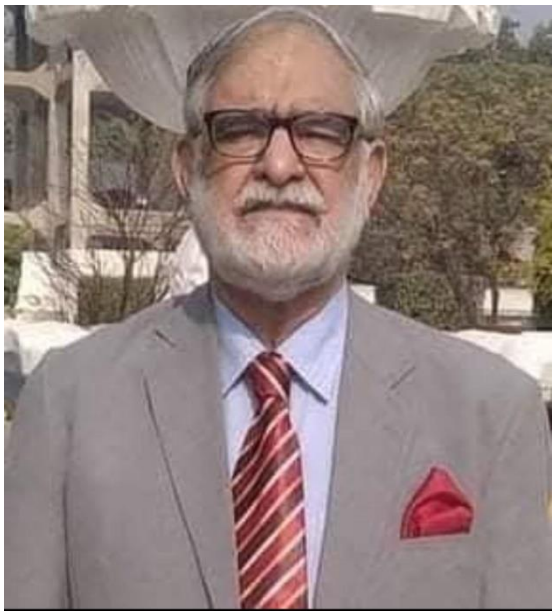
I quietly returned back to see the Red Moon at the sea shore
The Red Blood Moon was glowing more, teasing testing my patience, raising my emotions much more
That night lasted for another few hours, it's effects would last for whole of my life, how could I ignore

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She Is On Voyage

Sea breeze gently come by
She is feeling cool and shy
She is smiling her soul at peace
Deep blue sea and light blue sky
Far and far no end she see
Sea is meeting with horizon so high
Standing at deck with deep thoughts
Gentle waves and smooth sailing
Journey joyful, pleasant feelings
Remembers her love, looks at the sea
Is love deep like sea or high as sky
Emotions makes her feel she can fly
Up above the sea so high
Like hovering seagulls in the sky

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Anwar Rahim
Born in February 1951, hails from Gilgit Baltistan- Pakistan.
A University Graduate in Economics and Political Science, served also as Major in the Army as "Group Testing Officer" in "Interservices Selection Board" for selecting candidates for Armed Forces Training Academies, Army, Navy and Air Force. A veteran turned poet in 2016, found my birth muse and vibes by narrating my inner-self, after my retirement from Armed Forces.
The poetic journey is short but I feel poetry has taught me much more than I could have learnt in any education institution.
My literary performance fetched me, global awards from Gujarat Sahitya Academy - India in 2020, 2021and 2022.
National Poet of Bangladesh Kazi Nazar ul Islam birth Anniversary award 2022.
Order of Mohatma award by Lasosyanyos Lar San Frontyer an International Art Society recognized by government of Seychelles.
Order of Shakespeare medal 2021 by Motivational Strips, world most active literary forum.
Participated in virtual V Eurasian Literary Festival- 2021 at Istanbul, Turkey, UHE Festival International 2022 in Portugal and virtual Festival Paper Fiber in Greece.
In year 2022 received Culture and Free Press and Media award from "Sherine Abu Akel" from Syria and "Rabindranath Tagore" Award 2022 jointly from Motivational Strips and Department of Culture government of Seychelles.
From Republic of Colombia award for Poetry Peace and Culture with numerous awards received from other international poetry groups.
My poems have featured in Anthologies, "Pakistani English Poets" and "Bouquet of Triple colours" of poets of Bangladesh, Pakistan and India. My poems published in Anthology of SAARC countries.
My poems featured in NBM Bangla TV Bangladesh and in Daily Bani Asia - Bangladesh.
My passion in poetry is to pursue genres, in Romance, Humanitarian issues, Environmental friendly concerns and Children rhymes.

Azemina Dokaza Klobodanovic

DOUBT

I know you wander in your mind
That you wonder day and night
Do I love you and only you
Or I'm hiding someone else in my heart.
You torture me and yourself
And days and years fly by you ...

Threads of doubt you roll in the ball
One, then another, then a dozen of them.
They roll in your head, collide, unravel
And create chaos
It's not easy for you, you can't figure it out
That I love only you.

In vain, dear, you torture yourself
You have a thousand questions in your head
No way to understand the truth right
I loved and I love only you
Discard your doubts about me
Instead of that examine yourself
Do you really love me?!

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WITH A POEM IT'S EASIER TO SAY

I often write, looking for the right words
I play with them and tailor the verse
to say with a poem what is on my mind
to throw out everything that is suffocating me...

I didn't even know until now
how it's easy to say in a poem
all that I have carried inside me for a long time
and I wanted to tell you that a long time ago
but I couldn't utter it.

When you write from the heart, with the soul
the words line up like a joke
and even if sadness and pain accompany you
so the tears began to water them
they will meet halfway
and the most beautiful poem to say.

The poems came to me from dreams
which I dreamed of for so long
they found me one May morning
and continued to hang out with me
that night and tomorrow...
today and all the following mornings.

I write and put together various words
I play with them and tailor poems
I send various messages and don't count
my poems are a reflection of me
they are my soul
I confirmed with them
that I still remained myself!



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Azemina Dokaza Klobodanovic was born in 1953 in Zenica, Bosnia and Herzegovina. She writes both prose and poetry. Through online publishers, she has independently released several books of prose and poetry in Bosnian—in both print and digital formats—as well as works in English. Her latest poetry collection is titled *Moj Svijet* (My World), and her prose book *ŽENA* (Woman) was recently published. Her work has appeared in over ninety international anthologies, with her poems featured in numerous collections worldwide. One of her quatrains was published in *HYPERPOEM*, the first multilingual anthology of quatrains, alongside works by more than 1,600 poets from 90 countries and in 50 different languages. She has received over 120 literary awards and certificates of appreciation, particularly in the field of poetry. Azemina is also the recipient of the prestigious Rabindranath Tagore International Award (2022), an honor bestowed upon internationally acclaimed authors and poets from around the world in memory of the extraordinary Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore, who won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913. At the beginning of 2026, she participated in the competition for the "Lucius Annaeus Seneca" International Academic Prize for Contemporary Literature, in Bari - Italy, with the short story "Finally something white" and was awarded an Honorable Mention, and her story will be published in

a joint international anthology with all the other works of the award-winning authors. The awards and recognitions of this exceptional competition are awarded with the Medal of the Senate of the Republic of Italy and the House of Representatives (Lower House of the Parliament) under the auspices of the European Parliament!

Mina Galjak

STRIPPED BARE



I strip you bare before the world.
I lay all your secrets
bare in my poems.
I strip you bare
as though peeling
my own skin from myself.

I undress you
and I am not afraid
of your nakedness
in my poems.

I am afraid
of the silences
in which you would remain
unspoken, unrevealed.

I take you apart, word by word,
into sighs
between the lines,
into all the things you never said,
yet lived on
in your glances.

You are in my verses;
there is nowhere left
for you to hide.

You stand stripped bare
from your very first thought
to your very last.

And if, by chance,
that truth should hurt you,
laid bare before the world,
inscribed in verses
within my poems,

remember:
before I could strip you bare,
I had to strip
myself bare first.

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Child's Play

They run free as the wind,
laughter carried on the breeze,
in every corner of the world
their joy awakens.

No clocks, no sorrows,
just the sun and hope,
with stones, palms, and dreams
they build their hearts.

They play, they jump, they hug each other;
the world is their big toy,
and in that sincere laughter
the sweetest life lives on.

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Mexico

Hope to Sprout

A child is not a vessel to be filled,
but a seed that must be nurtured,
with the water of patience, the sunshine of love,
and the soil of hope to sprout.

Don’t just teach them letters and numbers;
teach them to see, to feel, to dream,
to respect others, to love life,
to know how to fall and start over.

Be their guide, not their owner,
be their refuge, never their prison,
let them fly, but let them know
that they always have a home to return to.

To educate is to plant without seeing the fruit,
it is to give wings and also roots,
it is to trust that, tomorrow,
this child will make the world a happier place.

Because what you give them today with love
is not lost, it never goes away:
it grows in their soul, shines on their path,
and illuminates those who will come after them.

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Mexico



Dr. Fernando Martinez Alderete
Writer, poet, theater actor, radio producer. Born in Leon Guanajato Mexico on April 21, 1977, President of Mil mentes por México in Guanajuato. Dr. HC, global leadership and literature.
His poems was published in more than 200 anthologies in fifteen contries arround the world and he is author of ten books, of poetry, short stories and novels.

Prof.Dr.Deswita Refika

Here in your heart

Here in your heart,
You are the jewel of my heart.
You are my home,
You gave me love.

Like a heavenly song,
You put me to sleep.
Comfortable to hear your voice,
You are my choice.

Here in your heart,
I am your last love.
You promised to accompany me,
Always listen to my story.

Together we are strong,
You belong to me.
Please be mine,
We spent time with our family in vineyard.



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Mariela Cordero

When We Have No Name

Names are shipwrecked,
the foam is a mouth that forgets,
bodies are dragged
to the center
where light
does not reach.
We are stripped
of everything,
the only question remaining:
what are we when nothing names us?

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There is no Answer.

In the ocean I contemplate
the promise
of what we will be:
a handful of salt,
a question
thrown against nothingness,
one
that will have
no answer.

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Contemplation.

I knew how far
the catastrophe would reach
when I became aware
of my hollowness
and my emptiness
became voracious.
All that's left to me
is appeasement—
endless desire
observed,
like gazing at the sea.

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These poems were originally published in Spanish under the title *Pacto de otro Mar* by LP5 Editora in Fox Island, WA, United States (2025). English Translation by Don Cellini.



Mariela Cordero (Venezuela) is a lawyer, poet, writer, translator, and visual artist whose poetry has been featured in various international anthologies and translated into Hindi, Czech, Estonian, Serbian, Shona, Uzbek, Romanian, Macedonian, Korean, Hebrew, Bengali, English, Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and Polish. She has received multiple distinctions, including the Pjetër Bogdani International Prize (Belgium-Kosovo, 2026); the M'ILLUMINO/D'IMMENSO International Italian-to-Spanish Poetry Translation Prize (Italy, 2025); the Naji Naaman Literary Prize (Lebanon, 2025); the Sahitto International Award for Literary Excellence (2023); finalist for the Aco Karamanow International Poetry Prize (Macedonia, 2022); First Place in the #AniversarioPoetasHispanos International Poetry Contest, Literary Quality Mention (Spain, 2016); Second Poetry Prize at the Tracceperlameta Edizioni International Bilingual Literary Contest (Italy, 2015); the Micropoemas en Español Prize at the 3rd TRANSPalabr@RTE Contest (2015); First Prize at the 2nd Euler Granda Ibero-American Poetry Contest (Ecuador, 2015); and the Alejandra Pizarnik Third Poetry Prize (Argentina, 2014). Her published poetry collections include *El cuerpo de la duda* (Editorial Publicarte, Caracas, Venezuela, 2013), *Transfigurar es un país que amas* (Editorial Dos Islas, Miami, USA, 2020), *La larga noche de las jaurías* (Editorial Nautilus, Spain, 2023), *Pacto de otro Mar* (LP5 Editora, Fox Island, WA, USA, 2025), the French edition *La longue nuit des meutes* (Senegal Njaay Editions, Senegal, 2025), and the bilingual English-Chinese edition *Fragile as the Absolute* *玛丽埃拉·**科**尔德罗* (The Herald Publisher, Australia, 2026). She has participated in numerous international literary gatherings and festivals, such as The Princeton Festival (USA), the Parque Chas International Poetry Festival (Argentina), the Bitola Literary Memory International Festival, the Xochimilco International Poetry Festival (Mexico), the 10th Ibero-American Festival of Fusagasugá (Colombia, 2023), and the Kaohsiung World Poetry Festival (Taiwan). Currently, she serves as an editorial advisor for the South Korean Journal of Symbolism and coordinates the #PoesíaVenezolana and #PoesíaMundial sections for the poetry magazine *Poémame* (Spain**).**

Timothee Bordenave

Love letter to a friend

On these banks by the Thames river, when tide is low…
There's a strand of wet sands, dirty and abandoned,
To the nostalgia of dreamers in London,
For anyone could walk there… Often I did so.

On a misty - foggy I would say - dawning hour,
Once I left a letter to you, Bobbie, my dear !
On a clutch. In a pouch. By the bank. As you near,
The point of view where you admire our great Tower.

Please, go pick my letter, in a crack in cement !
It has been here for years, waiting for you old friend…
When you climb at the scale, just above a garment.

Who knows ? Unless I do ! There are told our secrets…
When sun rises, a beam on metal, lets you find,
Our love letter - prudence, cherished ! Be delicate.

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France

Inner Temple, London

There’s an hidden lane yard in London, BlackFriars,
Where are the Courts of law, pleasant, of reds and greys...
If you reach the East exit, from Inner Templar,
You will see a basin, where I sat and I prayed…

Oh ! Lord ! I was saddened by these days in London…
When I was just a child, feeling sorrow and pain,
But when I walked this path to school, the horizon,
Of my thoughts, by magic, would clear, at this fountain.

London, Inner Temple courtyard, I remember !
An Angel came to me, once there I was crying.
She told me I would need to be strong, then yonder…

Further, my life would heal, I shall be happier.
I came back to France ! Healed…
And there are still lying,
The diamonds I left to you, Angel, lawyer !

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France

London by Night

To a young foreigner…

Did you ever walk by London, at night, alone ?
Just walk, just contemplate the city, it’s magic !
You could wander forever, maybe, nostalgic.
Admire : the streets, the clouds, the jewels of the Crown…

They are all there before your feet, it’s infinite,
In that sense you could not, I believe, in your life,
See all of these, for sure… Be it haven, or strife,
Be it loom or a joy, a grey dusk, dark, or light…

Follow this way : you reach, out of Tate Modern,
By the waters, Southwark, the Globe, then Tower Bridge.
Cross to Saint Kathrine Docks, stay a while on a bench…

Walk backwards, reach Saint Paul, there’s a pub where to quench,
Meet an old mariner there, tell him you are lige,
To the blessed Kings of France !
Pay him, leave this tavern…

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France

London, you can !

London, London by night, London at dusk, at dawn…
You would be forever in my heart with the psalms.
I heard your chants, Christians, with their Anglican charms,
In a church where I wept. Whilst Christmas had just shown…

You, English women and men, know the tales of Lore,
The ballads and the rhymes, and legends from old times.
I do believe in them, in their power, their prime !
I believe in the might from the mist at your shores…

London ! England ! You can make a young boy, a man.
Yes, I was on a thrive and sorrowful and lost,
Then I prayed ! I recall many nights if not most :

When I was in my room, puzzled, bent for mercy…
Thy o Lord delivered your child, for now I see,
Banks of Thames, twenty years later,
By Easter’s shine.

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France

A Little Greenery

When I was a young folk, at Elephant and Castle,
I met no elephant, no snake, beast, nor cattle,
I saw no fortress, nor a manor, no palace,
But I used to go down a pub, to drink a glass…

This pub was « The Green Elf » where Jamaicans drove,
A little enterprise, entertainment I prized !
There I would get easily, for a decent price,
Some of these small sachets, with clouds inside, of love…

It is so beautiful than this world, we live in,
Lets the seeds travel far, and their gardeners too !

You would find a secret life, only few have seen,
In London City yes, my dear, if you look well…

The Kings at Buckingham slept while I slipped into :
The clouds… Elvens and fays, liquors, through my heart dwelled.

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France

Hush now, pretty French boy...

“Oh hip hip hip hooray, for Tim !” Chanted them all,
As we were at university, having lunch,
Joyful fellows, we were drinking, a beer, a punch,
It was about my eighteenth birthday… End of fall.

We were sat at the Peacock Pub, close from the Strand,
Where is the London School for the Economy !
They were partying there, happily, this for me !
Timothee the Second, Duke of Blue Magic Wands.

But I was desperate. At my sides two young girls,
Students like me, would cheer, even kiss on my cheeks…
I was a fortunate, glamorous, clever, “chic”…

And sad, pretty French boy, in England studying law.
Well, to my friends Angels, who I love, who I owe,
Thanks ! Joy has won. Praises still drift, to your robe curled.

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France

United they stand…

There is something hidden in United Kingdom,
Would you spend some time there, you would guess, I believe,
Of how can these people assume the way the live ?
Half Lords and Peers, half punks, half bourgeois, scholars some…

An oddity appears in their History bookshelves :
They invaded every countries in our whole world,
Except Lesotho, then quickly came back to fold,
Their sails, and drink whisky, sleep tight, all by themselves…

There is more : it is a known fact, I have seen it,
When young folks in London, go for a party out,
They are all half naked, in the cold, with no coat,

They would explain : “We don’t want to pay a locker…”
Whilst, I don’t know how they could avoid the doctor ?

Mystery rule these lands. With magic, and some wit.

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France

T.B.
European Poetry.
London’s Golden Seven…
25.IV.10.

Bona fida.

Aminu Femi Jamiu

PEACE, A CORD UNDETACHED

Did I need to weave my tears with a broken thread?
Did I need to girdle the world with a shattered crucible?
Did I need to console the Earth with my filthy palms?

If all I could do is to cry,
Let the world's agony flow like ripples upon my face.
If all I could do is to sing,
Let the blood of the wailing children echo in my songs.

As life tilted toward darkness and doom,
And vanity reigns in temples like a king,
Peace is the only cord
undetached,
Bonding a broken love,
And suffice our swinging across the tides.

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Aminu Femi Jamiu is a teacher, science laboratory technologist specializing in Biochemistry, global peace ambassador, literary icon, and multi-award-winning Nigerian poet and writer.
He hails from Ayegunle Gbede in Ijumu Local Government Area of Kogi State, Nigeria, and is recognized internationally for his contributions to literature and humanitarian service.
Aminu has co-authored several international anthologies, some of which have become bestsellers. He is the Founder and Director of the International Literary Forum, Home of Global Writers (HGW), a platform dedicated to connecting and empowering writers across the world.
He is the author of Poetry Pearls, Echo from the Storm, Cosmic Voice (The Anthology of Contemporary Global Poets), The Poetic Canvas (World Poets Anthology), Co-editor of Peace for Palestine (International Anthology Dedicated to Gaza), international collections bringing together voices from across continents.
Driven by a deep passion to serve humanity and make the world a better place, Aminu uses his pen to inspire, heal, and unite people across cultures, borders, and generations.

Sana Jangeer Hamad

The Tragedy of a Woman

The tragedy of a woman is her strength
hidden beyond broken walls.
The tragedy of a woman is her broken wings,
framed like ancient pieces.
The tragedy is the belief rooted in her bones,
yet she is silenced.
The tragedy can be her tears lying upon the pillow every night.
The tragedy is the nightmares embracing
her innocent heart, burning her endless dreams.
The truth is a tragedy
that exists beyond reality.
It is her definition.
It is the definition of her skin and bone, of her features.
They called her frail, with disbelief.
But it was never her tragedy.
It was theirs.

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The Day I Chose Myself

The day I chose myself,
I began making breakfast.
I enjoyed my dinner.
I welcomed the sunlight that rose to brighten my brutal days.
I began healing the damage that once conquered me.
I began curing the scars that no one could witness but me.
I wrote letters to myself.
I found peace in reading, where the lines could speak for themselves, where I could embrace each scene.
I began painting the walls with colors I was oonce afraid of, filling the emptiness within me.
I found peace in corners that I had avoided.
I embraced the parts of me I used to hide.
I chose to be brave and say my name out loud.
I let the world hear my voice.
The day I chose myself,
it was the rebirth of me, of a new day, of a life where everything made sense.
I did not let my soul shrink to satisfy others, to bring them around the table.
I no longer questioned my worth.
I chose myself and no longer sought a new identity.
I no longer searched to be chosen.
I chose myself.

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Women

Some of their lives were black and white,
but their blood became the only color.
Others were sewing their hidden, living faces with their hands.
Their eyes were shut.
I saw one in a locked room,
staring at her features in the mirror,
only to find the definition of herself.
Another of them was wearing a swan necklace,
yet was still surrounded by hunting crows.
Started painting on torn paper,
but the meaning never arrived.
Their wings were cut
and framed on the walls for years.
Giving tears to the dead plants,
their stories to locked windows,
staring at the doors
for hope to arrive,
but it never did.
They were terrified.
They usually didn't utter words.
They didn't have their own words,
only saying what was accepted.
Their pictures were created by their surroundings.
Their colors turned black,
their heads full of white birds
that never became part of them.
Creating fake paper birds
and inking them red,
in the hope they would arrive alive.
They carried their meaning in their burned chests,
embracing the warmth of the fire.
They embraced the illusion.
They never experienced reality.



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Sana Jangeer Hamad is a Kurdish author, poet, writer, translator, compiler, and final-year English student at Salahaddin University. From Kurdistan, she is a First-Place Winner of an International Poetry Competition, a Voice of Asia delegate representing Kurdish women, and a Model United Nations delegate representing Uruguay in UNESCO and UNDP committees. She has also been selected as a Model United Nations delegate for the UNDP Committee at an international MUN conference in Istanbul. She was selected among 40,000+ writers from across the globe at the Pan India Mega Pen Star Writing Event, organized by Epic Sphere Publication, representing Kurdistan, Iraq. She has also been invited by Radio Aldora Argentina and television channels to discuss her literary work and achievements. Her poems have been published internationally by literary magazines, organizations, and initiatives, and she is a co-author of multiple literary anthologies. She has experience in translation, English education, literary compilation, and international youth initiatives. Her learning and professional development experiences include programs and initiatives connected with the United Nations, UNDP, OHCHR, HP LIFE, Google Cloud, Microsoft, the British Council, and Cohort.Aspire.

Menda Vreto

When My Hands Are Not Enough

I am powerless.

And yet, my heart keeps reaching
for every child in this wounded world—

for those who hear the thunder of bombs
before they ever hear the music of laughter,
for those who learn the language of fear
before they learn the language of dreams.

I wish I could gather them from the ruins,
lift them gently from the dust,
restore the limbs stolen by explosions,
and place a parent's embrace
around the hearts of children
who have lost the arms that once protected them.

I wish I could bring bread
where hunger has become a daily companion,
water where the earth has forgotten to give,
and a warm home
where families could gather again
without fear of tomorrow.

I wish I could build schools
where every child could open a book
instead of running from a battlefield;
where they could learn to read and write,
to imagine,
to create,
to believe that their future
belongs to them.

I wish I could dig wells
where the earth is thirsty,
build roads where there are only ruins,
and open paths
toward places where life
can begin again.

I wish I could heal the sick,
hold the hands of those who suffer,
and stand beside the elderly
whose strength has slowly faded,
whispering:

You are not forgotten.

I wish I could do all of this.

But I am powerless.

Sometimes the suffering of the world
feels like an ocean,
and my two hands
feel far too small to hold it.

Then I look into the eyes of a child
and remember something simple:

darkness is never strong enough
to extinguish every light.

Perhaps I cannot stop a war,
but I can refuse to become indifferent.

Perhaps I cannot feed every hungry child,
but I can share what is within my reach.

Perhaps I cannot build every school,
every home, every well,
but I can build one small bridge of kindness
between one human heart and another.

And when my hands are not enough,
when my strength has reached its limit,
I can still pray.

Not a prayer that belongs to one nation,
one border, or one religion,
but a prayer born from the deepest place
where all humanity is one:

May the guns fall silent.
May no child wake to the sound of war.
May hunger give way to bread,
thirst give way to water,
and poverty give way to dignity.
May broken families find one another again.
May every child have a school,
a home,
a future,
and a reason to smile.

I am powerless,
but I am not helpless.

Because love is never powerless.

It begins with a thought,
becomes a prayer,
becomes a hand reaching out,
becomes a voice refusing to remain silent.

And perhaps that is how the world changes—
not all at once,
not through the strength of one person,
but through millions of small lights
refusing to go dark.

So I will keep my light alive.

For the child beneath the rubble.
For the mother waiting for peace.
For the father who never came home.
For the elderly who have been forgotten.
For every soul that still believes
tomorrow can be kinder than today.

I am powerless.

But I can love.

And sometimes,
one heart that refuses to stop loving
is enough to begin lighting the way
for an entire world.

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Menda Vreto is an Albanian writer who lives and creates in Italy. She is the author of several books published in Italian, and her works have been translated into several languages internationally. She regularly collaborates with both online and print magazines, where she publishes literary articles and essays.
Her work has received significant recognition. Among her achievements is the Special Jury Award in the literary competition Il Silenzio Uccide (Silence Kills), where her work was featured prominently in the anthology.
Her first book also attracted the attention of the prestigious magazine Marie Claire, which featured her extensively, recognizing both her work and her journey as an author.
Menda Vreto proudly bears the surname Vreto, a name connected to the distinguished figure of the Albanian National Renaissance, Jani Vreto. She considers this family name a legacy of profound cultural and historical significance.

Israel Chukwudi

Fiendish friend.

Love is written in the tablet of man's heart
That's why he takes his solitary lamp and trudge down the dark crooked forest paths
In search of silver and gold.
When fate anoints his journey with fortune
He chooses to be that generous king inviting
The slaves to whine and dine with him --
You smile the smile of an angel, they smile the smile of a vampire.
Pull their skin from their body
To see the heart harbouring a double-edge dagger.
But can we tell which lizard has a bellyache since they all lie prostate?
Since all faces wear laugher,
How can we tell which laughter is artificial?
Watch them blow the gentle breeze
And inject your tiny body like tse-tse fly,
And while bury you the pique of a thousand offences
To cuddle man with the gab of love,
Your innocent head drips blood
On the altar of raging grudges --
See why man is to his fellow, a fiendish friend.

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Ajah Israel Chukwudi is a poet whose pen sails boisterously like a barbed arrow exhuming moral decadence and correcting the anomalies bedeviling the society. His poetic works is a like a moving train that plies every aspect of human life. He's a law graduate from Ebonyi state University, Abakaliki Ebonyi state, Nigeria.

Jasna Gugić

BROKEN SILENCE

I'm standing naked
in front of my own fear.
Only him and me
in front of the mirror of life
And I'm watching him
with wide eyes opened
and I'm asking him,
is he afraid of my ego
and my crazy desire to win.
He looks silently at me
my fear,
indifferent,
without a blink of an eye
without a heart,
and no hugs.
But now I feel like I'm prevailing,
crossing all obstacles of self-pity,
and the curses of the evil men in black.
And I feel my big fear shrinking
as I walk on my toes,
overrunning years of nonsense.
And I was born again
in the glare of the Universe,
free of burdens of the life
free to fly,
somewhere where no one
can touch my wings
of dreamer.

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MIDNIGHT RENDEZVOUS

You who have never
crossed the boundaries of dream
teach me to shout
from mountain tops
at the end of the day,
teach me to open my hands
clenched in fists
and do not be gentle
like those
who give kisses to everyone,
without tenderness.
Do not be false,
latent and arrogant,
be yourself all the way,
be the one
who does not leave his heart
in himself
but gives it to beat
in someone else's chest.
And only then
will I let you
into the caves of my loneliness,
wilderness and silence,
too silent.
I will allow you
to cross the boundaries
of all limitations
and enter my heart of infinity

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DREAM

In what dream
did I see you
and did I preserve
your surprised gaze,
and that endless
silence
that steals my
dream
every night,
and breaks my heart
and breaks my arms
and seals my lips
so that I don't
scream,
so that I don't invite
you
in long
and purple nights
full of longing.
I want to touch your hair.

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Jasna Gugić was born in Vinkovci, Croatia. She is the Vice-President of the Sovereign Artists and Writers of the World SAPS, P.L.O.T.S - USA the Creative Magazine Ambassador for Croatia, Global Ambassador of Literacy and Culture for the Asih Sasami Indonesia Global Writers, Ambassador in Elite Arab Creative Union of The Royal House - Lebanon, Ambassador of Peace and Peaceful Coexistence - Morooco and a member of Angeena International, a non-profit organization for peace, humanity, literature, poetry and culture.
She is also co-editor of the anthology, Compassion-Save the World, one poem was written by 130 world poets.
Jasna has published three collections of poetry. The first two collections are bilingual: one is Croatian-English and the other is Croatian-Polish. The third collection consists of a single poem translated into sixty languages of the world.
She was nominated for The Best of the Net Awards (2025) and she is one of the winners of the International Award

50 Memorable Women of the World and was declared a global leader for humanity

awarded by Federación Global Liderazgo Y Alta Inteligencia and

Mil Mentes Por México Internacional.

Jasna Gugić is one of the winners of the World Award for Cultural Excellence César Vallejo, for the year 2020 in the category of culture, awarded by Union Hispanomundial de Escritores (UHE).
She is one of the winners of the World Award for Excellence “Golden Eagle” for the year 2023 in the category of literature, awarded by Union Hispanomundial de Escritores (UHE), in a global alliance with Mil Mentes por Mexico International (MMPMI) and Academia Mundial de Literatura, Historia, Arte y Cultura (AMLHAC)
She is one of the winners of the World Award for Excellence “Golden Eagle” for the year 2024 in the category of literature, awarded by Union Hispanomundial de Escritores (UHE).
She is of the winner of the World Prize “Literary Diamond“ and the Title “ Doctor Honoris Causa” awarded by Academia Mundial de Literatura Moderna Costarricense.
She is of the winner of the “Diploma Awarde“ and the Title “Doctor Honoris Causa”, awarded by Union of Writers of the Republic of Moldova.
world.
Jasna is a multiple winner of many international awards for poetry and literature and her work has been translated into several world languages.
Her poems have appeared in over 120 journals and newspaper across 30 countries worldwide like:
USA, UK, Spain, Greece, Italy, Russia, Australia, Croatia, India, Syria, Denmark, Brasil, Mexico, Bangladesh, Serbia, Albania, Nigeria, Belgium, China, Chile, Nepal, Pakistan, Korea, Germany, Turkey, Kosovo, Romania, Iraq, New Zealand etc.
She lives and works in Zagreb, Croatia.

Til Kumari Sharma

Pain in the Heart:

The heart beat is fast.
No control over pain often.
Unbearable is the condition.
The delight of my pain for other is the life of my wound.
The feeling each time to show I am happy creature.
There is the pain weaved with wound of deceptive and abusive words.
No chance is given in my nation.
Survival is lacked.
Then I am taking the journey of books.
The wound of deception is unbearable.
The pain inside is like heart attack.
Insecurity is there as the life wound.
So, deceptive love is death.
Never fall in love of cruelty, discrimination and kindless heart.

Oct. 4-2026
© Til Kumari Sharma
Paiyun 7- Hile, Parbat,
Nepal

My Slow Journey to Artistic Eternity:

The delight in the art is my way of living.
My kindness walks with only humanity.
I create ethics in that humanity.
I kindly urge people to deal me with humanity and ethics.
The material world is not in my pages of art.
So, do not see and misuse me to take joy to your hunger.
I am leader to lead ethically to remove false passion.
The philosophy is my ethical beauty.
Pushpaism is flower of ethics.
Tilaism is the kindness in humanity.
So, love and respect the philosophy of my name.
Follow the rules of my philosophy to lead ethically and peacefully.

Oct. 4-2026
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Paiyun 7- Hile, Parbat,
Nepal

Cage of Insult and Jokes to My Good Doings:

Yes, cage of talkative relatives is poison.
Their egoist mind always gives sympathy of dirt.
They do not see their own sympathetic minds of low wisdom.
They see money and home of loan greater.
They never see the richness of my wise mind.
So, they joke to my progress.
They insult my humanity to deal and lead the friends with my philosophy.
They compare other ladies with my age.
They do not know my aim of feathers.
Just they see me as their deserted mind to compare and insult me.
They are cheaters to insult me.
They gave fake interest to know me rather than to see their own fake character.
Art only makes survival of ethics in my works.
Art is my sharing home.
No need to visit the home of relatives is my aim.

Oct. 4-2026
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Paiyun 7- Hile, Parbat,
Nepal



Originally from Paiyun 7-Hile, Parbat, West Nepal, Til Kumari Sharma is an internationally acclaimed poet, essayist, story writer, reviewer, and translator, now residing in Kirtipur, Kathmandu. She has received numerous literary awards worldwide and is recognized as an Amazon No. 1 bestselling poet through anthologies including A Spark of Hope Vol. III, Creating a Better World, and Break the Silence Vol. III. A featured poet across international literary platforms, she is also associated as poet and co-organizer in the world record anthology Hyper Poem II. Honored with the title World Creative Hero by LOANI, she has published many books and earned global recognition for her literary contributions. She is published in World Personality from Argentina.

Hong Ngoc Chau

A RESTLESS NIGHT



1
The rain falls incessantly in the late autumn night,
As if tapping out the rhythm of time in the night
From the depths, a tide of memories surges now
Affairs of the heart, hard to voice amid life's flow.
2
Through many ups and downs, sad tears fall,
Hidden sadness in the silent night; it’s all
The gains and losses, the joys and sorrows, reality
In this mortal life, let go of every sadness and anxiety
3
Life is fraught with hardship; my heart heavy as stone
In the night, I listen to the house gecko click its tongue
This night of deep introspection isn't the end, really
A golden moon hangs far away in the vast expanse; I see
4
A pale moon casts its light dreams of longing; in the night
Ask the full moon, then the crescent moon, in the vast night
Touching the soul like an icy chill, winter coming
The rain murmurs a lament to the moon, full of feeling
5
Falling into the heart of a desolate, sorrowful night,
Let us bring this long, stormy day to a close at night
Let my heart bury dreaming of worldly illusions,
Return to peace, to the gentle night's emotion

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MELLOW NOSTALGIA

1
Love of autumn gradually comes to a stop
Autumn Soul is cold by a down dew drop
The autumn sky shines red on the earth
Leaving my heart cold for days on earth
2
Autumn, I see off father, and mother in winter
The purple spinach hedge is so sad like ever
Just as my cold heart sobs with love and miss
Just as the parents' eyes were warm to miss
3
My parents taught me the morals to live
The most precious life in peace is to live
As I know true love much, I always preserve it
I'm always grateful to worldly parents, indeed
4
Dad held my hand when I stumbled
Give me the courage of mind peace
Success and failure are the lessons
I need to know how ways of option
5
I ignite my faith in my dreams of hope
I seem always to live well with my love
Parents always teach their children lessons
Be careful with life, don't take any risks on
6
The nostalgia for love still exists in life
There are things that add colors to life
I can know how to act as an added
Morality in life can't be eliminated
*
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Roberto Dávila Torres

THE GUEST IN THE MIRROR

Last night,
in the infancy of sleep,
I had a hallucination of water.
A black river carved through my chest.
Who opened the wound?
Who drinks from this eyeless grief?

Last night,
while the shadow stitched my eyelids shut,
the bees of fear built their hive in my throat.
There was no honey in the hive,
only the buzzing of the dead,
the pollen of flowers no one ever named.

Last night,
at the bottom of the wilderness,
I saw a sun of ash burning behind language.
A cold fire,
a mutilated god watching me
from the cold of marble.

Last night I knew,
with the terror of one who wakes beneath the earth,
that at the center of my heart
there is no water, no honey, no God.
There is only a dead bird
that still sings,
dwelling in the silence.

And the silence
has my face.

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Poet, writer, lawyer, and notary public of the Republic of Nicaragua. His poems have been published in various magazines and anthologies in the Americas and Europe. He holds an honorary doctorate in literature from the International Federation of Writers, Poets, and Artists for World Peace (FIDEPA). He is the author of the book "Poems and Calligrams," registered in Barcelona by the International Chamber of Writers and Artists of Spain (CIESART). He is a member of Poets of the World. He is an official member of the International Chamber of Writers and Artists of Spain and Europe (CIESART) and an active member of the World Union of Poets, Writers, Mexico, and the World.

Donna McCabe

Admittance

Sometimes, the pen knows
What the soul can't admit
Let's the truth spill forth
Bit by bit
Baring all the agonies,
Exposing all the pains
Slaying all the demons
Within ink ingrained stains
Exposing it all upon paper
Thus purging the soul
Evolving in strength
Renewed in a goal.

Donna McCabe ©

Dark Night Of The Soul

Hidden in darkness so long
A long dark tunnel of anguish, despair
For what seemed like an eternity
Then little chinks of light started to appear
Little rays of hope and warmth
Bathed my flesh
Slowly and surely igniting a flame
Of fresh determination and resolutions
To colour my world once more
Make self love, self care a foremost
After many a hard lesson learned.

Donna McCabe ©



Donna McCabe is an established poet, reviewer and artist from South Wales, UK, with over twenty five years experience. Her work has gained her multiple accolades within her field of literature. From being published in journals, magazines and anthologies both nationally and internationally. she is also a respected admin on many social media pages as well as having her own Instagram page and poetry page.

Instagram- @donnamccabe_

Facebook- Poemsbydonnamccabe

Marjola Dashi Jaupi

BLUE SONATA

Love sleeps under the sheets.
Dreams, like glass dolls,
Release their breath with their lips,
Yearning for heavenly petals,
And falling like silk clouds
On the murky forest inside the eyes.

Your manly dream,
Patched on the hands of time
Of no return, draws on my skin
The tattoo of life, awakening
The instincts that kiss of
Roses, wipe away loneliness.

Knight coming from a faraway shore,
My skin melts,
Becoming road beneath your feet,
A light halo wraps around
The spirit sitting in the dark,
When the steams of breath become stars.

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OUR SUNDAY

Our Sunday fled from Bible
Verses, to provide us with
The emotional idyll, in the Promised
Land.

The water lily spreads it petals…
Our bodies, floating on
The boat into which the leaf is made,
Memories of the platonic
Past.

Time holds in his hands
The eye sparkles, the smell
Of skin, the lymphatic conception.
We kill the sunset with the kisses,
The eye of the moon hides its lashes behind
Cattails.

Our Sunday
Longs for the warm smell
Of coffee, at early dawns.

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Tirana, Albania

Biswanath Kar

Spring Also Talks

Sping also talks,sings and paints pictures
Spring even sheds tears n expresses pain
Wanders in grey field with tired feet n eyes
Becoming frustrated in the soft red dawn.

Even though the moonlight writes poetry
The river sings songs with sweet murmurs
The painted butterfly hums without anxiety
In the crowds of buds without nightmares.

Spring blooms pouring colours on flowers
The flooded moonbeams cross the red line
Holding the blue map of the dream palace
In mysterious smiles ,the honeysuckles wine.

Spring searches for the alphabets of love
In the tears of rain and in the winter's dew
The soothing breeze wipes its tears in hope
That spring will be agony-free in a new hue.
=
Cuttack, Odisha,India
©®Biswanath Kar



Mayssa Majed

The Rebellion of Light

Some storms arrive without a sound,
Yet turn the world we know around.
Gentle as rain, yet fierce and free,
They break old chains we cannot see.

They come not to destroy or fight,
But lead a wounded heart to light.
Like rivers shaping ancient stone,
They change the world by strength alone.

The darkest nights give dawn its birth,
And quiet souls can shake the earth.
Not every smile reveals the truth,
Not every promise carries proof.

Walk with your heart, but use your eyes;
Not every love is what it implies.
Some hands will hold you through the rain,
Some leave you wiser through the pain.

Keep peace within, but let truth be known;
Stand firm in kindness, stand on your own.
For even a small light can outshine the night
And the bravest rebellion is choosing what's right.

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What Is Meant to Be

Beneath the endless, patient sky,
we gather what is left of us and try.
For life will test the strongest heart,
and teach us truths we cannot ask it why.

We stumble through the roads we never knew,
lose pieces of ourselves, yet make it through.
Some wounds arrive to change our sight,
some tears reveal what words could never do.

The good we leave behind will outlive us;
the kindness we once gave will still remain.
But wrongs, however deeply carved,
will fade like footprints after rain.

Know what your soul is reaching for,

and listen when the quiet heart replies.
For truth does not always speak aloud
sometimes it lives behind our eyes.

Make no home for what destroys your peace.
Release the hands that hold you back from light.
Not every goodbye is born of loss;
some farewells are a form of choosing right.

So listen to your heart, but listen deep;
beneath its fear, there is a truth to keep.
Do not betray the voice that knows your soul,
nor trade your inner peace for promises you cannot reap.

And when the road divides beneath your feet,

accept the paths you cannot make repeat.
What is meant for you will find a way to stay;
what is not will disappear beyond your reach.

Do not chase what chooses to depart,
nor force a place inside a closing heart.
Some things are blessings because they remain;
some are blessings because they leave a mark.

So walk beneath the vast and watchful sky,
carry your lessons gently as you try.
Let what is yours remain without a chain
and let what is not yours learn how to fly.

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Some Phases in Life

Some phases in life cannot be skipped;
The road is long it is more than a trip.
We fall, we learn, we loosen our grip;
We break, we heal, we slowly reshape,
And every scar leaves ink upon our script.

Without experience, we may never know
The worth of what we have, or where to go.
Without pain, we rarely understand
The value of what remains in our hands.
Every lesson asks a price to be paid;
Every loss leaves a wisdom in its shade.

So do not shake hands with hidden intent,
Nor offer love that carries resentment.
Keep your heart honest, your words sincere;
Let what you show be what others hear.
If you cannot come with an open heart,

Then stay away before you play your part.

For life will test us, again and again,
Through silent nights, through loss and pain.
Yet every wound can teach us to see
What we were, what we are, and who we may be.
Some phases cannot be hurried or missed
They shape the soul and become part of the script.

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Mayssa Majed holds a Bachelor's degree in Business Management and has participated in a range of cultural events across Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt. She is the author of three published Arabic poetry collections: When the Letters Awaken, Yes, I Remain, and The Glow of a Lifetime.

Alongside her poetry, Mayssa contributes articles to several Arabic-language websites, where she explores subjects that reflect her interests, observations, and perspectives. Her literary work extends beyond Arabic, as she also writes poetry in English, allowing her to express her ideas and emotions across two languages and to engage with a wider literary audience.

Her writing reflects a personal engagement with language, emotion, and human experience, bringing together her Arabic literary roots with an openness to expression in English.

Rhiannon Owens

Quest: Never Look Back

Run and run
And never look back,
Run night and day
The moon as your guide
The sun warming your back,

Run across worlds
Celestial one,
Stars in your eyes
You've always shone

All of my books
And all of my learning
All my enthusiasm
And all of my yearning

What do they matter to you?

Hounded and never left alone
People forever chasing you,
The stuff of legend; Holy Grail
Finding you; the ultimate coup

But me...

My quest was the hope in my heart
My quest was hoping to see
You never ever look back
As you gallop onward; wild and free

"You thought me pure white
But I'm the velvet midnight
The shimmer of stars"

Run and run
And never look back,
Run night and day
The moon as your guide
The sun warming your back,

Run across worlds
Celestial one,
Stars in your eyes
You've always shone

"... I'm the velvet midnight

The shimmer of stars"

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Strike

Petrol. I inhale. Better than that all pervading stench of garbage
I gaze out at the brackish waters... Cold and unyielding
Elementally I am fire though drawn to water. It's good to have a plan b
I am fire. Fire is me
I am fire; I consume and destroy
Just as the fire is consuming me
Oh to be free from the shackles forged in my brain
To purify the monster inside me
To be blackened and charred like my heart
To leave this prison of pain
Not to be reborn - I would hold that phoenix down until she chokes, she doesn't deserve to be
So weak. So flawed
Why... She never even put up a fight anyway
One strike of the match
I think I am beautiful
I think I am free
I'm screaming

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Ashley O'Keefe

Inner Thoughts

Where did the time go?
Memories flood in...

Holding her as a baby,
Teaching her to ride her first bike,
Watching her grow,
It's all gone too fast.

Is he good enough for her?
I approve and love him as if he was my own son,
Yet, a protective instinct...

Whispers a hope that she will always be cherished, respected, and kept safe.

I am incredibly proud.
I gaze at my daughter in her wedding dress,
Feel a deep sense of accomplishment...

I see the independent beautiful woman she has become.

Ashley O'Keefe
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My personal journey of grieving, after my mother's passing a year ago this month. One of 12 poems ("Grief's Journey") as I try to process my thoughts and feelings : -

'Want it to be Over'

I want it to be over
Yet, I don't want it to come,
That day we have to leave you
For the flames to take you mam,

My conflicting emotions
The need for me to grieve,
Time they say is a healer
My heart is on my sleeve,

Softly, I will leave you
There's a place within my mind,
Holding back the tears
To fill a hole, I need to find,

I want it to be over

Yet, I don't want it to come,

Want it to be over

Don't want it to come...

Ashley O'Keefe
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Jacek Wilkos

Constellations

Let's be like stars
in this vastness void

Let's shine bright
in the dark space of life

Let's spread kindness
to warm this cold world

And let love make constellations
connecting heart-to-heart

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Jacek Wilkos is an engineer from Poland. He lives with his wife and two daughters in a beautiful city of Cracow. He is addicted to buying books, he loves black coffee, dark ambient music and anything that’s spooky. First he published his fiction in Polish online magazines, but in 2019 he started to translate his writing to English, and so far it was published in numerous anthologies by Black Hare Press, Black Ink Fiction, Alien Buddha Press, Eerie River Publishing, Insignia Stories, Reanimated Writers Press, Iron Faerie Publishing, CultureCult Press, Wicked Shadow Press, Clarendon House Publications. FB author page:

https://www.facebook.com/Jacek.W.Wilkos/

Hany alfhham

(Things)

This is my foot.

I brought it from a hole in the street.

This is my hand.

I brought it from its extension to you.

This is my nose.

I brought it from a scent.

This is my eye.

I brought it from a wandering glance.

This is my mouth.

I brought it from a stifled scream.

This is my ear.

I brought it from a resounding whisper.
This is my body. I brought it from my shadow.

If only my body would die,
So I could swallow the scent of solace,
With a mouth sealed shut,
So I could smile at my mother's tears,
So I could wake alone and sleep alone,

And die alone.

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(We are the Yemenis)

Do not pour oil on our wounds in vain,
For we have a fire of sorrow that silences pain;
If we were to attack you, not one idol of yours would remain
Alive, for it would all fall...
We are the Yemenis... Who does not know us?!

And we are the ones who strive for glory in times of hardship...
We are the Yemenis... Who does not know us,
And we have made our enemies taste the bitterest of our might!

If the armies are divided on the day of battle;

Each one of us will become, alone, a burden…
We wove our story against the sun’s face,
And though it did not shine, our light shone forth…
Our horses trampled the desert with pride,
Never faltering, nor tasting fear…
Our fortresses stand beyond this sea, so ask glory: Who forged glory?

The people boasted of their buildings, and they vanished,
But I possess a pride that you could not attain together.

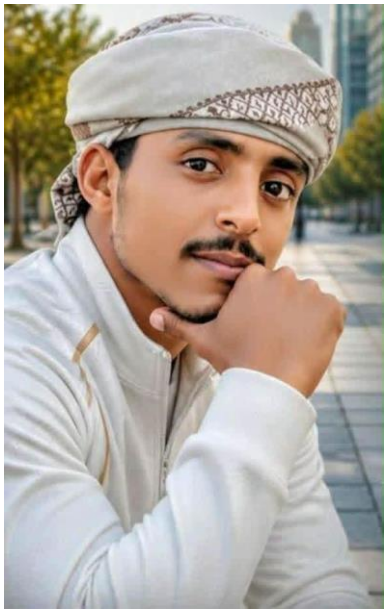
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_____Thieves_____

From the farthest cell in the prison,
one of them shouted:

How did you get in here, you honorable ones?
.....
He said to me from behind the bars:
Forgive me, my friend.
I would never have bothered you.
So I borrowed your wallet full of money while you were sleeping.
... She said:
Do you know my father?
He works as an officer in this department.
He said:
Not exactly.
But does he resemble the painful butt of his rifle and his rough boots?
..... We left our poor friend sleeping.
And when we dispersed to the shops in the market,
we met up in the prison.
We found him there too.

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The poet Hani Al-Fahham was born on June 2, 1984, in the village of Hawra Sami' in the Taiz Governorate of Yemen. His father is Mohammed Qaid and his mother is Nour Saeed Saad. He pursued his education in Taiz and obtained a diploma in Accounting. He currently resides in the Ibb Governorate of Yemen. He has published a poetry collection titled *Nabiyyu al-Fahm* (The Prophet of Charcoal), released by Arowqa House for Studies, Publishing, and Distribution.

Allison Grayhurst

One Light

Through an exploration
into the darkest searing pain,
of days crammed into a corner
with spikes on all the walls
and the floor and the ceiling,
rising, dropping, everything
squeezing in.
No sleep, no technology
to help me or modern medicine
to ease the engine
from driving full speed
until impact.
There I stayed for a week
or more, dispossessed of mercy at every turn
until the orbit finally loosened by surprise
and a way out became clear.

While in, my true love sat with me and saved me.
My children stayed with me and kept me wanting a future.
Only in that repeat end-of-rope, end-of-hope agony,
chasing a cure but spiraling deeper into the lava pit,
was it made clear the necessity of love,
how love does not stop the pain
or make the pain bearable,
but cradles you while in the pain
and says you are not alone, says
I hurt with you, you are heard
and you matter, and you are loved -
miles infinite in every direction,
saying be still, I am
and I am here.

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Mercy Will Abide

Free-floating
now, just existing as
the accident and the healing
are over, and the revived
civilization has yet to come.

Holding a cane to walk,
an arm to lift up from
sitting to standing, and then at last,
a smile, energy returning,
relief like the joy of a miracle.
Days when you thought you were dying,
past days shed and left in the past.

Grief is a word that multiplied
and layered into a language,
absorbing both your understanding and conviction.
Grief has died as has the white-knuckle-clenching,
the acceptance of suffering
as the deciding factor.

Love is greater, doesn't prevent or heal but
does overcome, is the only thing remembered
after the fact, in the end,
like a glowing cherished
vibrating orb -

love existing
as the maggots
and lasers swarm, existing
in the plunge into excruciating pain
and the abolishment of hope,
love - human, struggling
to keep loving,
turning reality's bone crushing grip
into a blessing eternal, and in this way,
absolving.

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For This Day

For today
you are my breath and focus.
The chloroplasts that feed off worry
instead of sunlight
inch into pour pockets,
infiltrate my colon and distort
the wavelength I was given to ride
will have no lifeforce today.

A million signals of dread and doomed survival
will not race inside me like a swarm of centipedes
scurrying away from the light, but will rest
in one spot, stay put like a whirlwind covered
in calm, there, but shielded from spread
or damaging.

For today, you will be my biology,
not just for morning prayers or midday talks,
but for all forms that arise from
my tongue and hands.
I will love you. I will trust you
like I always should,
pioneering this peace for today,
knowing you are here

even when insight fails me
and the surging bloodwind
is at my feet, at my throat,
you stand behind, in front and beside.
You are the end result,
the miracle pulsing within,
driving the lead.
For today, I will be yours.
I will travel anywhere unscathed.

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Where to Go

Into the summer I go
to be loved by you.
For the mercy of you is rich
as fire, as the wind speeds up its
flames, consuming dead debris.

Where forgiveness is the act of mutually
releasing and of being released -
knotting, unblocking, so the line is
straight, and the flow is unclogged
and dreams dreamt in the mind,
connected to the divine
are immediately realized like a kiss
received then reciprocated

where echoes are placed in pockets, locked in
layered dimensional spaces, existing, not
overlapping, not interfering
with the breathable air.

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Allison Grayhurst has been nominated for “Best of the Net” six times. She has over 1,400 poems published in over 530 international journals, including translations of her work. She has 25 published books of poetry and 6 chapbooks. She lives in Toronto. She also sculpts, working with clay; www.allisongrayhurst.com

Collaborating with Allison Grayhurst on the lyrics, Vancouver-based singer/songwriter/musician Diane Barbarash has transformed eight of Allison Grayhurst’s poems into songs, creating a full album entitled River – Songs from the poetry of Allison Grayhurst, released 2017.

Some of the places her work has appeared in include Parabola (Alone & Together print issue summer 2012); SUFI Journal (Featured Poet in Issue #95, Sacred Space); Elephant Journal; Literary Orphans; Blue Fifth Review; The American Aesthetic; The Brooklyn Voice; Five2One; Agave Magazine; JuxtaProse Literary Magazine, Drunk Monkeys; Now Then Manchester; South Florida Arts Journal; Gris-Gris; Buddhist Poetry Review; The Muse – An International Journal of Poetry, Raven Cage Zine, Storm Cellar, morphrog (sister publication of Frogmore Papers); New Binary Press Anthology; Straylight Literary Magazine (print); Chicago Record Magazine, Ann Arbor Review; The Milo Review; Foliate Oak Literary Magazine; The Antigonish Review; Dalhousie Review; The New Quarterly; Wascana Review; Poetry Nottingham International; The Cape Rock; Ayris; Journal of Contemporary Anglo-Scandinavian Poetry (now called The Journal); The Toronto Quarterly; Existere; Fogged Clarity, Boston Poetry Magazine; Decanto; White Wall Review.

Dr. Kang Byeong-Cheol

A Beautiful Journey

A sage once said,
Life is but a journey.
When we set out, showers may fall,
And we may suffer under the burning sun.

Just as an apple must endure
Wind and rain to ripen,
So must a person of noble character
Overcome hardships.

The most beautiful moment in life
Is when compassion and serenity
Dwell within one's heart.

In the most difficult hours,
We must remember:
Life is but a journey,
And all these things
Shall surely pass.

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아름다운 여정

한 현인이 말하였네
삶은 그저 여정일 뿐이라고
여정을 떠나면 소나기가 내리고
타는 듯한 태양에 시달리기도 하지

사과가 익으려면
바람과 비를 견뎌야 하듯
고결한 품성을 지닌 사람도
시련을 극복해야 하네

삶에서 가장 아름다운 순간은
자비와 평온이
마음속에 머무는 그 시간이지

가장 힘겨운 순간에는
잊지 말아야 하지
삶은 그저 여정일 뿐,
이 모든 것 또한
결국 지나가고 만다는 것을

Parting

To live
is to meet
and to part.

My father lived for ninety-six years
and left this world.
As everyone does,
he was swept away
by the great torrent of time,
until at last he drifted down the river of time.

My father showed me my future.
No one can make their way upstream
against the torrent of time;
no matter how firmly one stands,
one day, too, one will be carried away
by its relentless current.

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이별

산다는 것은
만나고 헤어지는 일이다.

아버지는 아흔여섯 해를 살다가
세상을 떠났다.
누구나 그러하듯
시간의 거대한 격류에 휩쓸려
마침내 시간의 강을 흘러간다.

아버지는 내게 미래를 보여주었다.
아무도 시간의 격류를 거슬러 오를 수 없고,
아무리 굳세게 버틴다 해도
언젠가는 그 급류에 휩쓸려 가게 된다는 것을



Poet Dr. Kang Byeong-Cheol is a Korean author and poet born in Jeju City, South Korea, in 1964. He began his literary career in 1993 with the publication of his first short story, “Song of Shuba,” at the age of twenty-nine. In 2005, he published a collection of short stories. Since then, he has received eight literary awards and published more than 20 books.
From 2009 to 2014, he served on the Writers in Prison Committee (WiPC) of PEN International and as Vice President of Jeju PEN. He also served as an editorial writer for Jemin Ilbo, a newspaper based in Jeju City, South Korea.
He holds a PhD in Political Science and currently serves as Vice President of the Korea Institute for Peace and Cooperation. He is also the founding President of the Korean Association of World Literature (KAOWL).

Dr. Siyoung Doung

Life is a Suspension Bridge

Life is like a swaying suspension bridge we cross amid uncertainty.
We love amid the swaying,
we laugh and cry, and sing amid the rocking.
Beneath an endless void, with neither beginning nor end,
above a thousand-fathom precipice,
as if in jest,
without even a comma to pause,
we have crossed it, swaying,
and still we cross it, swaying,
on our way to the other side.

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출렁다리

삶은 흔들리면서 건너는 출렁다리

흔들림에 사랑하고

웃고 울고 노래한다

시작도 끝도 없는 무한 허공 그 아래

천길 낭떨어지 그 위

농담처럼

쉼표도 없이

흔들리며 건너오고

흔들리며 건너간다

A Pencil That Sharpens the Present

Dawn,
a photograph the moon took all night long.

A spaceship,
within the sea’s amniotic waters.

I hear the Earth breathing.
There, I hear my own breath, too.

Life is a pencil that sharpens itself on the present.

Tomorrow’s footprints set today in motion.

The present is beating like a pulse.

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지금을 깎아쓰는 연필



새벽,
달이 밤새 찍은 사진 한 장

우주 배
바다 양수 속

지구 숨소리 들린다
거기, 내 숨소리도 들린다

삶은 지금을 깍아 쓰는 연필

내일의 발자국이 오늘을 가게 한다

지금이 맥박처럼 뛰고 있다.

Poet Dr. Siyoung Doung graduated from the Department of Korean Language and Literature at Dongguk University and went on to earn a Ph.D. in Korean Language and Literature from Hanyang University. She further expanded her academic pursuits by studying humanities at Regensburg University in Germany. Her teaching career includes positions as a professor at Korea Tourism University and Jilin University of Finance and Economics in China.
Her literary journey began in 2003 with her poetry debut in the literary magazine Dacheung. Since then, she has published numerous poetry collections, including Future Hunting, In Search of a Strange God, The Phone Call from God, The Eyes of November, The Carnival of Time (Anthology), Was It You, Was It Me, or Was It Longing?, The Scent of Secrets, Aria of Everyday Life, The River Flowing Under the Pen, The Magic Letters, and The Horizon Never Gets Wet. In addition to poetry, Doung has contributed significantly to literary research with works such as Roh Cheon-myung's Poetry and Semiotics, Korean Literature and Semiotics, and Semiotics of Modern Poetry. Her exploration of literature extends into travel writing, with essay collections like Encountering Culture Through Travel and Encountering Travel Through Literature. Her literary excellence has been recognized with numerous prestigious awards, including the Park Hwa-mok

Literary Award (2010), Poetry and Poetics Young Poet Award (2011), the Grand Prize at the Korean Buddhist Literature Awards (2018), the 32nd Dongguk Literary Award (2019), the Yeongrang Literary Award for Criticism (2020), and the 7th Woltan Park Jong-hwa Literary Award by the Korean Writers' Association (2021). Most recently, she received the Literary Youth Work Award in 2024.

In recognition of her contributions to literature, She was also a recipient of a creative grant from the Arts Council Korea in 2005.

Currently serving as the fifth President of the Korean Association of World Literature (KAOWL), Dr. Doung continues to foster literary exchange between Korea and the international community and contribute to the development of world literature. Most recently, she has attracted international attention with the publication of two Korean-English poetry collections: The Horizon Never Gets Wet and Like Flowers Blooming Together Without a Promise, the latter published as part of the KAOWL & CNPN Golden Pen Anthology.

Prabir Kumar Rath

Rose, that whispers

When hope lies buried underneath the rain,
And silence locks the doors of every prayer,
A lonely rose lifts up its head again,
As if to say, there's still a world to care.

Its wounded petals tremble in the cold,
Its fragile stem bends low beneath the night;
Yet something in its heart refuses mould,
And guards a little ember from the blight.

No hand applauds, no morning seems to stay,
Yet roots reach deep where hidden waters run;
The rose makes no complaint against the grey,
But waits, believing dawn will bring the sun.

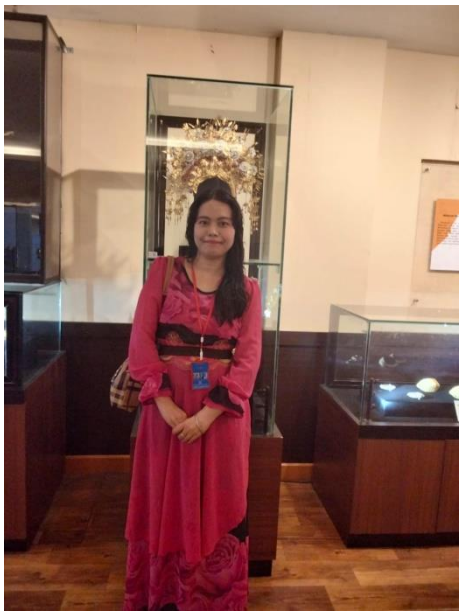
O rose, when all my dreams depart,
Bloom once again inside my heart.

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Prabir Kumar Rath is a multilingual indian poet. He has been writing english poems since 1986.He has invented the art of writing english poems using numerics instead of words. He has resigned from the service of Tata Motors Mumbai with his own accord. He is an expert english teacher living in WB Jhargram District.

Prof.Dr.Deswita Refika

You are the souce of my happiness



You are the source of my happiness,
You are my romance.
Gratitude and affection to God,
My desire, hope, and belief.

Like the wind in the mountains,
Gently caressing my face.
Your presence gives me grace,
Making dreams come true.

I promise I will be true,
My love is only for you.
In sadness and joy,
You are my spirit and destiny.

Love paints feelings,
Providing a chance.
Dancing together,
To be yours forever.

©®Prof.Dr.Deswita Refika, Indonesia

The story of a traveler

The story of a traveler,
His heart is always wandering.
Breaking the boundaries of time and space,
Explore and leave a trace.

For him the world is mortal,
The world should be full of adventure.
Looking for historic and exotic places,
Becoming an inspirational figure.

His eyes are like an eagle,
Always enjoy the beauty from above the clouds.
Enjoying the crashing waves,
His life, His Adventure.

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Ozodbek Narzullayev

YOU HAVE CHANGED, MY FRIEND



Your steed of luck is galloping high,
You've reached the heavens, my friend.
Making a few coins on the fly,
You've changed so much, my friend.

I greet you now, but no reply,
No warmth or spark left in your eyes.
No word or thought for old days gone,
You've changed so much, my friend.

You've built grand mansions in the air,
Enjoying glory without end.
Your feet no longer touch the earth,
You've changed so much, my friend.

If you should stumble down one day,
You'll search for true friends in the end.
Do not forget who you once were,
You've changed so much, my friend.

Yet still I wish you safe and well,
May mountain-faith your soul defend.
This fleeting life is just five days,
You've changed so much, my friend.

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Ozodbek Narzullayev was born in Boston village, Koson district, Qashqadaryo region.

Meg Smith

Joyful Ghosts: Chorus

Lowell Celebrates Kerouac
The Old Worthen, Lowell, Mass. Oct. 8, 2026

For Lawrence Carradini

I'm with you in the shadows of the staircase,
the deep blue of memory and music,
laughter, and the strands along the ceiling:
your name calls in a blessing, over and over;
touching the streetlights, the vanished sweep
of a faithful dog, the gray of a whiskered cat,
if only to gather you all again, cauldron of comets,
night sweeping through the faithful streets.

© Copyrighted 2026 by Meg Smith



Meg Smith is a poet, journalist, dancer and events producer living in Lowell, Mass.
Her poems and short stories have appeared in Raven Cage,The Horror Zine, Dark Moon Digest, Siren's Call, The Cafe Review, The Lowell Review, and more.
She was a finalist for the 2025 Stanley Kunitz Poetry Medal. She is a member of the board of Lowell Celebrates Kerouac!, and founder of Poe in Lowell, celebrating Edgar Allan Poe's visits to Lowell.
She has published her second book of short fiction, Night's Wheel, and a new poetry collection, The Singing Lake.

Ibraim Džemail

PACIFIC SOUL

From your naked soul,
millions have sought salvation,
minute after minute, hour after hour.

India, a land stretching far and wide,
where time reaches back beyond the Dravidians,
was entrusted with your divine mission,
wider than the ocean's waves
reaching towards the mainland.

Your strength rose towards the rugged mountains;
from every stone, you forged the power to fight.
Your mission was a gift from the Lord.

In the darkness of the dungeons,
you gazed at the sky.
From Lahore to Calcutta,
from Bombay to Kanpur,
your spirit drifted like newly born leaves.

The birds sang for you from their nests.
Your spirit soared on angelic wings
across the clouds,
while the temple bells rang without cease.

Your mission was a gift from the Lord.

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MACEDONIA

DAMN NATHURAM GODSE'S HAND

As pain rose from a mother's heart to the heavens,
the birds sang their comforting anthem.

In the month of Karamchand,
plant a white acacia,
for that morning in Porbandar,
Gandhi was born
from the womb of the beautiful Putlibai.

The alleys filled with the fragrance of saffron.
White oleanders, pure as rice,
bathed in their own sweat.
Hell descended upon heaven;
fate became unbearable.

To give India a new ray of hope,
Kasturba endured the endless passage of time.
And when she longed to offer mercy,
Satyagraha blossomed,
though your voice went unheard.

Damn Godse's hand,
for it condemned you
to spend your final moments
in the darkness of death.

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MACEDONIA

IBRAIM DŽEMAIL – "NIGHT SCARAB"

Ibraim Džemail was born in 1954 in Skopje, Macedonia. He completed high school in Skopje and studied at the Pedagogical Academy "St. Clement of Ohrid" in Skopje. His first book of poetry, Night Scarab, was published in 1980. He publishes his works in literary magazines in Macedonia and abroad. His second book, Return to the Roots, was published in 2015 in Skopje. Since 2016, he has been a member of the Association of Writers of North Rhine-Westphalia (ENW). In 2017, he obtained a certificate for completing a course in the Roma language and culture. In Skopje, in 2018, his poetry collection Archaic Feelings was published, and in the same year, in Belgrade, within the framework of the Association of Roma Writers, his book Gods on the Ramparts was published.

For his contribution to Roma literature, he was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award "Slobodan Berberski" in Belgrade. On the occasion of the celebration of the 1000th anniversary of the city of Rome, Ibraim Džemail participated in the event in New Delhi, India, in 2018. Džemail is a participant in numerous international poetry festivals, where he has received many cups, medals, diplomas and certificates. In February 2020, his book Weltenbummler durch unsere Wurzeln (Journey Through Our Roots) was published in Frankfurt, and in the same year, his book Journey Through Time was published in Skopje by the Barikanipe Cultural and Media Centre. In 2024, his book Keys to Paradise was published in Skopje by the Barikanipe Cultural and Media Centre.

In December of the same year, he participated in an event in Milan, Italy, where he received the prestigious Ambassador of Culture and Peace in the World Award, while in Belgrade he was once again presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award. In September 2025, he participated in the “Sadrvan – Balkan Evening of Poetry” event in Skopje.

In the same month, he celebrated the 45th anniversary of the publication of the first Roma poetry book in Macedonia. On that occasion, during the poetry evening “Romano Ilo”, President Branko Petrevski presented him with a Lifetime Achievement Award for the third time, in recognition of his 45 years of creative work as a poet, writer and guardian of the written language on behalf of the Roma community in Macedonia and Europe.

In December, from 6–12 December 2025, he participated in the European Poetry Festival in Podgorica, Montenegro, where he received a diploma, a cup and a medal as a participant of the World Association of Poets.

In November, he participated in the European Poetry Championship in Podgorica, where he received a cup, diploma and medal for his participation. On 8 April, Džemail was in Belgrade, where on 9 April 2026 he presented his book Night Scarab – 45 Years of Roma Literature. At the same time, in Belgrade, he was admitted as a member of the DPS Writers’ Association of Serbia.

He then continued to Sarajevo, where he received a plaque from the “Diana” association. On 25 April 2026, he presented his book In the Dream of the Future at the “Kuća Sevdaha”, marking the 45th anniversary of his literary work and his contribution to Roma literature.

On 31 May 2026, in Romania, from Mrs. Trandafir Simetru, he received a Diploma and Medal as a participant in the World Championship of Poetry.

On 27 June 2026, Ibraim Džemail participated in the 10th International Poetry Festival “Zagreb na Dlanu” in Zagreb.

He also participated in the Literary Meeting in Strumica. In June, he received the “Stojan Hristov” Award at the Struga Poetry Evenings in Struga, and he achieved first place. He also received the Award for Lifetime Achievement, presented to him as a representative of Macedonia from around the world.

Efi Chantzouli

WHITE MORNING

You move forward on the road you find in front of you.
A rough road, a wind-swept midsummer.
You swerve down a side road that you don't know.
With childlike innocence you search for crumbs of happiness,
you demand that your lost opportunities come back.
Your ivory youth has passed, but you still thirst.
With your prayer you ask for what you didn't get/you don't have.
You don't know exactly what you expect, but you hope.
You look forward in your intense dizziness
to what your new daring flight will bring you.
You are tired of the saturation of habit.
You plan a new departure again
with the impetuosity of a magical torrent.
You stay up all night alone on the balcony of life
waiting for the moments, Priestesses, that will choose
your own dream, awakening of a white morning.

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PEACE

The beloved Flower Moon was hidden
by the thick dust of the wild war.
The maiden's love will not go on a boat ride by the shore,
for the vibrant peace left in a hurry tonight.
The boy's dream will not come true, what a pity,
because a soldier's bullet killed it suddenly.
My thought will not sail far away today,
because a mortar shell choked my feelings.
My energetic mother will not plow the field,
because a bullet hit her, so unfairly, right in the chest.
My father will not enjoy a cup of sweet wine,
because they lined him up, alas, against the wall of death.
The chants will not echo melodically in the church,
nor will the candles shine in the icon lamp of the Virgin Mary.
The cool shade of the familiar old plane tree in the village
will not host my friends to rest,
because the bloodstained Peace, was caught captive, the poor soul. You can find your Freedom, daughter of Zeus, Panoria,
sun-drenched to fill Man with hope today.
Hide all the children of the world in your embrace
and give them generously sweet bread and abundance of love.
Gift them a life full of dreams and simplicity.
Even without wealth they can breathe, live.
But without You, tomorrow seems like chasing a Chimera.

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Efi Chantzouli. Born in Athens.She is a graduate of the Postgraduate Department of International, European and Economic Studies of the Athens University of Economics and Business. She studied Acting. She studied journalism. She taught in secondary education tutoring centers. She worked as Head of Statistical Information at the Hellenic Statistical Authority. As a journalist, she wrote interviews with actors and singers in various magazines. She maintained a column in the newspaper “METROPOLIS” with the title “That's what Efi said”. She is professionally involved in acting. Indicative theatrical performances that she played: "The Temptation" by Xenopoulos,"About Love" "The Secret Path’’, "The Trial of Socrates","The Swan Song" ,"The House of Bernarda Alba" by F. G. Lorca, "Faust" by Goethe, "As You Like Me" by L. Pirandello, "The Merry Wives of Windsor" by Shakespeare, "The High Mountains" by Z. Papantoniou, "The Rape of Lucretia" by Shakespeare et al. She acted on television in the serials: “Hair” directed by A. Rigas, “Oath II” and “Archelaou 5”.
She has published two poetry collections: “Bittersweet notes” and “Journey of emotions” and three children's fairy tales: “Lessons in the Forest”, “The Candy island” and “Thomoulis”. She has participated in poetry anthologies such as: "Philological New Year", "Summer wanderings", "The Red of Love", etc. She was honored with the Special Poetry and Children's Book Award from the Greek Writers' Union in 2018. In 2024, her second poetry collection "Journey of emotions" was awarded by the International

Writers' Society. She was honored in 2025 with the award "Panorama International Literature & Art Awards" for her theatrical and literary work.

Eric Shelman

Ragnar Lodbrok's Remembrance Day

Today is our, Ragnar Lodbrok's Remembrance Day, in which, we
Modern Heathens, Ásatrúar, and Norse Pagans, celebrate, it primarily on March 28th as our "Day of Remembrance" dedicated to courage, audacity, and honoring ancestral heroics.
The date is chosen because, according to legend, March 28, 845 CE (which happened to be Easter Sunday) was the day the legendary Viking leader Ragnar Lodbrok sailed up the Seine River and successfully raided Paris.
While it is our modern addition to our Heathen calendar rather than an ancient pre-Christian festival, it is widely observed through several specific contemporary customs:
Come now let us venerate, honor, memorialize, and remembering him by raising our horns, chalice, or glasses, filled with mead, ale, or cider.
Come now let us, say our toast to the memory of Ragnar, his sons (like Ivar the Boneless and Bjorn Ironside), and the boldness of the Viking Age.
Come now let us say and ponder on it's virtue: Beyond just the man, we're toasting to the abstract concept of boldness—celebrating the drive to take massive risks, explore the unknown, and stand up against impossible odds.
Because Ragnar's life sits at the boundary of history and myth, reading from historical and mythological texts is heavily emphasized.
Come now let us gather online or in person to read sections of:
The Saga of Ragnar Lodbrok (Ragnars saga loðbrókar)
The Tale of Ragnar's Sons
Krákumál (the famous skaldic poem depicting Ragnar singing his death-song in King Ælla's snake pit).
Come now let us rededicate it to our personal "raids", we
Modern Norse Pagans do not raid cities, but use our day metaphorically. It is treated as our day of personal empowerment.
Come now let us look at our lives and identify their own "Paris"—a massive challenge, a risky business venture, a difficult creative goal, or an intimidating hurdle. We use this day to vow to conquer these obstacles with the same audacity Ragnar displayed.
Modern Heathen Calendars
In modern Heathenry (such as practices organized by groups like the Asatru Alliance), calendars are often split into High Feasts, which are tied to the agricultural seasons and major Gods, like Yule or Ostara) and Lesser Feasts / Days of Remembrance, which are dedicated to our historical heroes or martyrs.
Ragnar Lodbrok's Day falls firmly into the latter. It provides a cultural touchpoint for our practitioners to connect with the martial, adventurous spirit of their spiritual ancestors rather than focusing solely on agricultural deities.
Celebrating this day yourself is a powerful way to connect with that fierce, strategic mindset. Because Heathenry is heavily decentralized, solitary practitioners and kindreds (groups) approach the day with distinctly different dynamics to capture that same Viking spirit.
Here is how the celebration typically looks depending on whether you are practicing alone or with a group:
Come now let our, Solitary Practitioners
Celebrating alone focuses deeply on their internal grit, personal reflection, and private vows.
Come now let them, perform their Hearth Blót: by lighting a candle or fire at their personal altar. Come now let them, pour a libation (offering) of mead or ale into an offering bowl (hlautbolli) dedicated to the ancestors and the archetypal spirit of Ragnar.
Come now let them, use the "Paris" Strategy Session: by using this day for intense journaling or planning.
They explicitly write down their biggest personal obstacle (their "Paris") and outline a strategic, audacious plan to conquer it over the coming year.
Come now let them, do their, Solitary Study: by spending their evening reading the sagas or listening to Norse-inspired music (like Wardruna, Heilung, or Amon Amarth) to immerse oneself in the atmosphere of the Viking Age.
Come now let us celebrate for Kindreds and Hearths, as groups

When groups gather, the focus shifts to community bonding, physical challenges, and shared oaths.
Come now let us, perform, our The High Symbel: In which in our group setting, a formal symbel (ritual drinking ceremony) is held.
Come now let us first toasts the Gods in our first round
Come now let us, toasts our heroes (specifically Ragnar and his lineage),
Come now, let us raise the horn,
With golden mead and cider filled,
To honor him whose name was born
Where Seine's cold running waters spilled.
We toast the boldness, toast the drive,
To face the threat, to take the risk—
To keep the Viking hearth alive
Beneath the winter’s fading disk.
in our second round, and come now let us do our third round that is for gielps (boasts) and oaths.
Come now let us, publicly declare a bold goal we promise to achieve, using the peer pressure of the kindred to hold us accountable.
Come now let us, feast like kings: our group celebrations usually involve a massive, hearty feast, where meat, root vegetables, and heavy breads dominate the menu, mirroring a hall celebration.
Come now let us have our Physical Contests: Some of our active kindreds incorporate friendly, competitive games into the day to honor the physical prowess of the Viking era. This can include archery, axe throwing, wrestling, or modern strength challenges.

Come now let us, Bridge Both Worlds
If you are celebrating alone but want to feel connected to the wider community, you can bridge the gap digitally:
Come now let them, by doing an Online Symbel: In which
Many Heathen Discord servers and digital hearths host virtual toasts on March 28th, allowing solitary practitioners to raise a horn together.
Come now let them, share their"boast": in which, some practitioners post their non-religious goals or "boasts" on Pagan forums, invoking the community to witness their vow.
Through raven shadows and the viper's coil,
The northman’s legend echoes in the dark,
Where fallen kings lay carved in foreign soil,
And saga fires preserve the dragon's mark;
We toast the legend carved by axe and blade,
Whose mythic shadow never starts to fade.

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King Radbod of Frisia, Remembrance Day

Today is our, King Radbod of Frisia's Day of Remembrance, in which is celebrated annually on August 9th by modern Heathens and Pagan groups like the Asatru Alliance and Odinists.

He was the last Pagan Ruler: who reigned c. 680–719 CE, was a powerful historical ruler who fought fiercely to keep Frisia (located in coastal northwestern Europe) independent from the expanding Frankish Empire and Christianization.

The Famous Refusal: According to tradition, as he stood at the threshold of baptism, he asked the Christian clergy if his unbaptized ancestors were in heaven. Upon being told they were condemned to hell, he pulled back, declaring: "Then I will rather live there with my ancestors than go to heaven with a parcel of beggars."

Defiance and Legacy: He expelled Christian missionaries and even defeated the Frankish leader Charles Martel at Cologne in 716 CE.

Today, modern Germanic Pagans commemorate him as a symbol of ancestral loyalty, resistance, and fidelity to native traditions.

Come now let us and raise our horns, or cups toasting to and honoring in memory King Radbod.

A Toast to Radbod of Frisia

We raise the horn to the King of the Waves,
Who stood on the shore where the waters run white,
Who chose the cold grave with the ghost of his braves
Over quiet submission in foreign-born light.
Unbent by the Franks, unbowed by the crown,
He turned from the font with his honor intact;
Though the kingdom may fall and the hall tumble down,
The blood of the line keeps the ancestral pact.

May we all remember the strength found in our roots, keep faith with those who walked before us, and hold fast to the traditions that shape our spirit.

Hail King Radbod! Hail the Ancestors!

Come now let us reflect on our Ancestors by using our day to reflect on the importance of honoring their own forebears and maintaining cultural heritage.

Preferring his Pagan ancestors in Hell over a Christian Heaven, King Radbod pulled his foot back from the holy font's edge— Honored each autumn when Frisians recall his stubborn pledge To guard their ancient freedom, unbowed and unbaptized.

Written, By Joffur The Skald!

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Hermann, The Cheruscan's Remembrance Day

Today is our Hermann the Cheruscan's Remembrance Day
who was historically known as Arminius
in which is observed annually on September 9th
This day honors our Germanic Chieftan who united rival tribes and annihilated three Roman legions under Publius Quinctilius Varus at the legendary Battle of the Teutoburg Forest in 9 CE. The victory permanently halted the Roman Empire’s expansion north of the Rhine River.
Today, this legacy is marked by major historical, cultural, and spiritual commemorations across two continents:
1. HermannFest (New Ulm, Minnesota, USA)
German immigrants who settled in the United States brought the legend of Hermann with them as a symbol of freedom and heritage. In the late 19th century, they built the 102-foot Hermann Heights Monument in New Ulm.
Having their Festival, annually on the Saturday after Labor Day, the city hosts HermannFest. The celebration spans multiple parks, featuring live German bands, traditional food and beer vendors, historic cannon firings, and a massive fireworks display over the monument.
It's Restoration Status: Due to severe water infiltration and foundation erosion, the historic monument's base requires a complete multi-million dollar deconstruction and rebuilding project.
2. The Hermannsdenkmal & Kalkriese (Germany)
In Germany, Arminius became a defining symbol of national unity during the 19th century.
The colossal 53-meter Hermannsdenkmal (Hermann Monument) stands atop the Grotenburg hill in the Teutoburg Forest near Detmold. It serves as a major year-round trekking and cultural landmark.
Kalkriese Festival: While the 19th-century monument was built in Detmold, modern archaeology points to Kalkriese as the actual battle site. Every two years, the Kalkriese Museum and Park hosts a massive living history festival where hundreds of re-enactors faithfully recreate Roman and Germanic life, combat tactics, and crafts.
3. Spiritual and Cultural Days of Remembrance
Outside of formal civic festivals, September 9 is kept as a "Lesser Feast" or Day of Remembrance by various cultural groups, historical enthusiasts, and Germanic NeoPagan traditions.
The Rituals, these gatherings are typically held outdoors in autumn to align with the changing seasons.
Traditionally our participants often gather around fires, share traditional German dishes, and hold a blot (a ritual toast) where horns are raised to toast Hermann, ancestral strength, and the spirit of resistance.
Raise our horns, high and full!
To Hermann—son of the Cherusci, war-leader of the tribes, and the man who taught Rome the cost of looking north.
Two thousand years ago, three legions marched into the Teutoburg Forest expecting a quiet province and a docile people. They carried gold, chains, and the arrogant certainty of empire. They met thick mud, cold rain, and a man who knew both the power of Rome and the heart of his own land.
Hermann didn't just win a battle in those woods; he drew a line in the soil that centuries could not wash away. He showed that no armor is thick enough, no empire vast enough, to crush a people who refuse to bend the knee on their own earth.
So let us drink tonight to unity forged in crisis, to the fierce spirit of defiance, and to the memory of the chieftain who kept the ancient forests free.
To Hermann! To freedom!
Beneath the silent Teutoburg oaks where ancient spears now rest, A shadow stands in rusted mail to mourn the bloodied crest— No victory shout, but whispered names upon the autumn air, For heroes fade, yet standing stone remembers they were there.

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Remembrance of Queen Sigrid, of Sweden

Today is our Remembrance of Queen Sigrid, the Haughty of Sweden Day,
In which we observe annually on November 9th within modern Germanic Pagans and Ásatrú traditions. November 9th, honors, our Sigrid's legendary defiance and resistance to forced Christian conversion by King Olaf Tryggvason of Norway. Representing, her legend, unyielding independence, strength, fierce pride, and absolute resistance to forced conversion, while holding fast to her Ancestral heritage and Pagan beliefs.
Come, let us, now celebrate with storytelling regarding her defiance and traditional toasts to her memory and resolve.
Come let us now, speak of her historically and legendarily background and their conflict:
According to Norse Sagas, Olaf Tryggvason proposed marriage to Sigrid on the condition that she abandon her Ancestral Gods for Christianity.
When she refused, he struck her with his glove, prompting her to walk away and later help orchestrate the coalition that defeated him at the Battle of Svolder.
She was married to Eric the Victorious of Sweden and later to Sweyn Forkbeard of Denmark.
Because our Modern celebrations of her day are rooted in Norse Neopagan traditions (Asatru), the toast follows the formal, respectful structure of our traditional Viking Symbel (drinking ritual)
Come let us now, pour a traditional Northern beverage like mead, ale, or cider into our vessels, ideally, using our drinking horn or chalices
Come now let us, in a group, pass our horns, in a circle
Because Sigrid is famously known for burning the hall down around two arrogant suitors to "make these small kings tired of coming to court her," sharing this toast while either around a bonfire or a hearth
Come let us now commemorate her defiance by
Acknowledging her most famous act of resistance. When King Olaf Tryggvason of Norway demanded she abandon her Ancestral Gods for Christianity and slapped her with his glove when she refused, she calmly stated, "This strike may well be the death of you." She then orchestrated the political alliance that led to his downfall. Come let us now, Stating our Purposes by
Proclaiming that we are drinking to her strength, her self-sovereignty, and the refusal to let outside forces change who she was.
Come let us now by
Raising our horns high and deliver the final chant.
Come let us now recite our toasts
Formally and Ancestrally us, saying
"I raise my horn to Queen Sigrid the Haughty, the unbowed and the unbought. We honor her today because she stood steadfast in the ways of her ancestors, refusing to bend to the threats of a king. She answered a blow with unmatched resolve and taught the world that her spirit belonged to no man. To Sigrid's fire, and to our own unyielding strength! Skål!"

Or saying more shortly and directly
"To Queen Sigrid Storråda! May we carry her pride, her independence, and her fierce loyalty to her own blood and beliefs. Let those who try to force us to change look to the fate of Olaf! To the Haughty Queen—Skål!"

Though crowns and suitors burned in her haughty wake,
Sigrid, fierce Swedish queen, knew no bow nor bend;
On this day of remembrance, the northern halls awake
To honor the proud iron heart no king could break or mend.

Written By Joffur The Skald!
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Fatamira (Karin J. Hobson)

ROYALTY'S RELICS

by Fatamira



Dare to look into the breadths Eternal Eye
Thy depths of dread or in complicit deny?
Pupils, onyx-orbs; pools of fathomless pits
Ancients in access of hallowed sacred writs
Hidden halls harbouring memories flashes
Crimson red-bled rose deflection irrational?
Retake royalty's relics; satiates submerged
Eons knot-taut-knowledge a-blurry stirred
Come bow to unveiling's deflated sate
Propagate, perilous thorn prick into derm
Gossamer web relentlessly taking form
Be off! In hails of good faith, I say Be off!
There behind Iris lies Tyro awaiting morn
Rainbow Rays of striking shades adorn
Son be to helios returned — now come
You indeed are what we have waited for,
So long.

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Oct2/26/10:39am

VENETIAN GOLD, DUCETS SOLD

by Fatamira

Reaching high into Elysium’s gift-gilded realm
Open arms gently gather sparkling sequins
Zecchino-ducat jewels enticingly wink-dangle
Lengthy tentacles measure spanning all angles
Her reach extends thru Elysium’s gilded realm
~
Glorious Gibbous—profound be his command
Splayed 'tween fingers, fragile-frail she expands
Nesting high 'neath bedazzle-stardust heavens
Sprinkle-twinkles tumbling down upraised arms
Gathering Luna's luminary sworn sceptre charm
~
Loud as a large semi charging down Wall Street
Bright be your glint; gracious glows your greet
Ebony ponds—onyx yonder's full-frontal meets
Skinny-dips plunge into midnite spark retreats
The heavens and earth shiver-shake to speak
~
Rising out of water; glistening streaks of silver
Wringing drenched locks, wet hands slip o'er
Taken aback—luminous beauty emits wonder
Luna caressing every curvaceous line thereof
A Silhouette no Midas touch could rise above
~
Venetian gold, ducats sold, yet who can satisfy?
Diamonds by glitter; loving lake-lips uncover?
Her fate's an essence; Dawn a baptismal morn
Within soft-cupped palms of a feminine psalm
Pleasures alight by measures far, far beyond sate
Tis woman giving life an insatiable palatial plate.

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KISSING DEATH'S BETRAYAL

by Fatamira

Oh, to eye the Moon as argent as morning Sun glows golden
And Nom de plume to earn Raven claw its swooning swipe
Let calligraphy call burnt manifests as an earned intrusion
~
Stars shall settle the distant Sun; Moon shall tug til day is done
A summoning call; Eternal Blue, I shall once again return, to you
As hallow hums its golden hue Like mystical mist on lakes renew
by waters edge where lovers pledge desires so seared in red
~
Braun of built and gentle heart; your manly swagger, I stagger
No greater love will you find than I; duo imprints bound and tied;
Darling your arm whose strength fed as you carried me along
~
To wield the sword, deny the wife is not a holy strike to swipe; Smoke and mirrors may delay but Soulmates seal-in overstays
You down there, me scant free, woeful winds still bend.

You on the other-side, me scant free, woeful winds remain to be
Where sandals not shared and feathers fan forward to beseech;
Ink me into eternity's niche; reach O reach ashen trail of wedded veil kissing death's betrayal, alas!
~
But feathers flapped; time elapsed; holy halos self-infused
Where doth a foot take to wear if in wing doth one prepare?
Months mocked moments; bids baited brawn-breath begs
Sate-sown said premonitions —awaiting higher lift for release.

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Emanuele Martinuzzi

From one side to the other

From one side of amnesia
to the other, the trees
in pilgrimage translate
their own unknown shadows
into the thaw of a name,
now made a leaf.

Intimate to the crevasses
of memory, all faces
fade into the hieroglyphics of expectation.



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Translation by Jessica Cerrato

Quando non scrivo qunndo scrivo

Quando non scrivu sono un'aniina moon, la materia sovmsta e coaompe
la sostanza silenziosa
che neanche l'erba di settembre accoglie ne i stIO I £in1S1 Ìàb1£IW1 di foglie orfane è due
educata alla decadenza.
Quando non scrivo sono im'anima iiiortx il corpo si ricopre di nimori lonmni,.
la pelle annacqiiatn con l'assoluto
si dissolve blaterando tra sé e la véa, neanche la felicita di una figurn.
clie si fa paesaggio di idee
e incontro ondoso di steìi, cnnta.

Qunndo scrivo sono an panidiso delio mente e un inì'emo del cuore.. ogni noiiie si fa antico alla cosa
per partorire il dubbio di una rirelazione, l'estate Sta accadendo com sghenibo sorriso. l'nutunno accadrà come
ancorn in una brezza alln deriva.

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Emanuele Martinuzzi, classe 1981, Pratese. Si laurea a Firenze in Filosofia. Da qualche anno scrive recensioni teatrali per Teatrionline - il Portale del Teatro Italiano. Numerose pubblicazioni poetiche: “L’oltre quotidiano – liriche d’amore” (Carmignani editrice, 2015) “Di grazia cronica – elegie sul tempo (Carmignani editrice, 2016) “Spiragli” (Ensemble, 2018) “Storie incompiute” (Porto Seguro editore, 2019) “Notturna gloria” (Robin edizioni, 2021) “L’idioma del sale” (Nulla Die, 2022) “Intarsi” (Robin edizioni, 2024) “gli elementi del miracolo” (Pagine casa editrice, 2025). Ha ottenuto numerosi riconoscimenti nazionali e internazionali, tra cui Finalista al Premio Camaiore, il Sigillo di Dante come Ambasciatore Letterario per la Società Dante Alighieri, la Medaglia di Bronzo al Premio Firenze, Finalista al premio l’Alloro di Dante indetto dalla Società Dantesca dei Frati minori di Ravenna e sul podio del Premio Giovanni Pascoli l’ora di Barga. Ha partecipato al progetto “Parole di pietra” che vede scolpita su pietra serena una sua poesia e affissa in mostra

permanente nel territorio della Sambuca Pistoiese assieme a quelle di numerosi artisti e personaggi di cultura. Cura il blog “Emanuele Martinuzzi e la poesia” http://andthepoetry.blogspot.it/.

Dr. Debabrata Maji

Cultural Diversity

May have different colors
With its different strands,
A Tapestry of Woven
And a thousand lands.

May have different tongues
Within the soft speak,
Stand strong together
But none are weak.

Have one wear silk
And one wears wool,
Have songs of grace
The story is rich and full.

It's like a small garden
And it's wild in grand,
Flowers are blooming
It is across the land.

© Copyrighted 2026 by Dr. Debabrata Maji
Country: India

Biography

The journey of Dr. Debabrata Maji is one woven with the artistry of words, the precision of engineering, and the resounding echoes of literary passion. His artistry, rooted in heartfelt emotions and intricate expressions, carved a distinct space within global literary landscapes. To mark with respect and honour his poems are frequently broadcasted from Colombia Ecos Poeticos Radio. Dr. Maji’s written legacy is solidified through thirteen remarkable poetry collections bearing coveted ISBN in Bengali versions - Kavita Bichitra, Kavita Darpan, Probad Angina, Premer Boikunth, Sonnet Bhaskar, Harano Bamsari, Smarane Manane, Vande Mataram, Barnera Rahasya and English versions are Dreamscape, The Peace, The Divine Glow and Maxims 500 are extensions of his soul. These titles bear witness to his unwavering commitment to poetry and the sheer brilliance of his literary craft. His story is not merely about accolades or achievements - it is about a man who dared to transform life’s melodies into poetry, leaving behind an enduring legacy that will inspire generations to come.

Maria Miraglia

ART GALLERY

Not a sound

Not a word

Only a strange silence

filled those rooms

Yet I could hear

within those ancient walls

presences moving

with bowed heads

with muffled footsteps

Those paintings on the walls

of women with ungainly features

pale and adorned with jewels

and of men with dusty grey wigs

sabres and walking sticks

aroused unfamiliar fears

Images left there in time

testimonies of lives gone by

of stories confined within frames

movements perfumes voices

stolen from time

©® Maria Miraglia
Italy

Aminu Femi Jamiu

AYEGUNLE OHON GBEDE: MY HOMELAND

Cupid of verses, sketched by my striving pen,
Unfolds Ayegunle Ohon Gbede, my Homeland's terrain,
A haven of hospitality, where nature entwines,
Amidst hills and mountains, equilibrium dances.

Sacred land that brews in dignity like honey-in-rock,
In this rocky valley-heart, where water goddess secrets hold,
En route streams – Oso, Eba, Odu, Sako – flow,
Kissing themselves in an eccentric torrential circle,
Undulating softly, tracing her mother's lap.

Great academia, farmers, and religious scholars weave Ohonos' tale,
With nine villages conglomerating to a central locus,
Of Otun, Onoh, and Ohi beneath the Ohon tree,
The immortal shade and symbol of our unity.

On rocks and hills that rise and valleys' steep,
With pride and grace we strive and do not sleep,
Voicing souls neither to stone, sky, nor sun,
But with religious palms, we munch our soil in pious devotion.

My quill dances the oasis dance of poetry,
Singing and weaving your timeless praises,
Proud to claim this place, where roots and hearts meet,
On this verge treasures trove in grit,
Ayegunle Ohon Gbede sits on milk that flows like a stream,
Ohono, my Homeland's heartbeat.

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NB: Poem Dedicated to All Sons and Daughters of Ayegunle Ohon Gbede.

Ashiqur Rahman

A Day of Remembrance:

On the twenty-fifth of August, these days.
The lives we lost, the tears we cried,
The homes we left, ones by our side.
May peace return to our homeland,

We remember mothers calling,
We remember children's fear,
We remember those who vanished,
And the voices we still hear.

Our identity will never fade.
Our past will never be forgotten—
Our future will be free.
And peace will replace the night.
Let the world hear the Rohingya voice,

We ask the world to hear our story,
To stand for justice, truth, and right.
And those who died that day.
Though years may pass and roads may change,

The mothers, fathers, sons and daughters,
Not only sorrow, but our hope.
With unity, courage, peace, and justice,
May the world remember what happened,

Never forget the lives we lost.
Never forget the truth we carry.
May justice come, may peace return,
Your names are written in our hearts.

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1.2 Million People Cry.

Under the same sky.
Different villages,
different roads,
different houses.

From Maungdaw,
from Buthidaung,
from Rathedaung,
and from many other places,
we came with nothing.

A place where
a million people stand,
waiting, waiting—
only seeking peace.

No checkpoint.
No passport check.
No ID card check.

Why?
How?

How is it possible
for 1.2 million people
to suddenly become refugees?

We asked the border police officer:
“Where should we go?”

The boat suddenly came
to an unknown place.
The sea was behind us.
Our homeland was far away.

Then we heard a name:
Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Hasina gave us
a place to stay—
Cox’s Bazar.

A small place
for people.
We ask for only one thing—
who had lost a whole homeland.

Some people said,
“She wants the Nobel Prize.”

How?
Why?
When?

I do not know.

I only know
that 1.2 million people
needed somewhere to stand.

“Where will I go tomorrow?”
No Questions.
No Answer.
We fled
An Unknown place.

2:00 AM Tonight,
1.2 million people
look at the faces.
And remember the villages.
They were forced to leave.

The cows are gone.
The villages are silent.
The borders remain.
A million hearts still cry:

“We are Rohingya.
We are human.
We want peace.
We want dignity.
We want to go home.”

— Asheqe
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Ashiqur Rahman

A dedicated student from the Rohingya community at IIUC, where I'm studying Electronic and Telecommunication Engineering (ETE). I have a strong interest in leadership and rights defense—Rohingya community development.

As part of my academic journey, I also studied for an Associate Degree in Political Science at the Rohingya Academic Research Institute.

As a member of the Rohingya community, I'm passionate about education, empowerment, and creating opportunities for displaced people. Through mwriting, Ig, represent the Rohingya community's engagement. I hope to contribute positively to society and inspire young people to pursue their dreams despite challenges.

Ibraim Džemail

OH, INDIA!

You knew all the curses, India, our mother!

Yet you did not curse anyone!

You wished peace and happiness to everyone.

We - your children,

We were perished by the war and made scattered all around the world.

Our steps can reach the sky and yet, accidents threaten us all the time!

We are singing "Djelem, djelem, lungone dromesa_

Maladilem e chache djenesa!"

We are singing, yet they're putting a curse on us!

We are dancing, yet they're preparing us the stake!

Oh, India - mother of wisdom!

Send them Brgoy – our God of fire to leave them without fire!

Let Vaya - our God of wind, to wipe them out!

Tell Kama to prepare the arrows.

Let him teach them to love and wisdom!

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(Skopje, 2018)

Manik Chakraborty

A Morning.

A morning of joy,
A morning of flowers;
A morning filled with sorrow,
A morning of errors.



A morning glowing bright,
With the calling of birds;
A morning for the child,
Dusted in pollen's words.

A morning with the boatman's
Bhatiyali song;
A morning in the fields,
Where golden paddy throng.

A morning in the azure sky,
With clouds drifting free;
A morning—a village boy,
Kite-spool in hand, full of glee

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Molly Joseph

Where mulberry leaves turn silk worms...

....

wondering how
silkworm magic
works!
how life emerges
in permutations
unbelievably
quizzical!
yes, the tiniest
sign of life
as it originated
billions of years back
after big bang
or not, how
it pervades as
a cosmic vibe,
isn't it a
a consciousness
deferred as
perennial?



leave aside
controversies
on man made
suppositions
religious, philosophical
political
isn't man a
a part of that
vital spark
that outlives all,
even the
devastation that
the advanced
AI threatens?

everything
posited by
consciousness
innate, deliberate,
man made
or machine made?

of what use,
the outcries to

jump over another,
crush and kill
fret beyond
a limit?

the cosmic rhythm
pulsates
call it God
or the primeval
existential gyre
that whirls and curls
embedded
in itself...
vain are the efforts
to validate stances,
sheer verbal exercise!

Be in to the moment
here and now,
just touch the
soil,
Mother Earth
smell it!
you are there
in it
Your being
dissipated
as particles
of star dust!

©® Molly Joseph
India

Brenda Mohammed

FLOWERS AND NATURE

Flowers not only beautify the world

They have a calming effect on the soul.

When you walk in a garden amongst flowers,

You feel like staying there for many hours.

Flowers bring enchantment to your life.

They fill you with love and prevent strife.

People send flowers to the ones they love,

Because flowers convey messages of love.

Flowers are always in great demand.

People always stop at a flower stand,

To buy flowers for birthdays and grand occasions.

Lovers can be seen walking with flowers in hand.

Flowers are not man-made but are part of nature.

They feature in national parks and botanical gardens.

They are smiles from the Creator, showing his love.

Everyone loves nature and flowers.

They're blessings from above.

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Paweł Markiewicz

Behind the dreamy rainbow. The revived in homeland dream

I had more than a dream.
I have seen in heaven the dazzling rainbow,
Maybe the last in this last-summer-season.
Through this mature marvel came dreameries,
In other seven colors with wings – seven ways of light-sparkles.
The colorful dreams would end behind the rainbow,
Wait for me, the eternal dreamer, for my moony dreams!
The contacts with the hereafter became ways of other dreams,
The pretty colors.
The red daydream became a red sphere like the hell of fires.
The orange nightdream became blood of tender eternity.
The yellow dream became color of amazing ambrosia.
The green day-dreameries were wings of the most marvelous butterfly.
The blue night-dreameries were the heavens full dreamy shooting stars.
The gray midnight-dream was a part of temple of Zeus.
The white midnight-dreameries were lambs full of fulfilled ontology.
All the dreams-ways are golden tears of the dazzle of the melancholy.

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Lan Xin (Lanxin Samei)

Dialogue with the Millennium-Old Ancient Tree

Poem by Lan Xin (Lanxin Samei)

O dear Ancient Ten-Mile Fragrance Tree,
Amid the rise and fall of the ancient temple, you stand serene, having watched over a thousand years.
For whom, exactly, do you wait?
And who waits for you?

Since I stepped foot into this pure land under your guardianship,
I have fallen in love with you, adorned in blazing blossoms.
I vow never to betray the thousand-year watch of you and all ancient trees,
Let your fragrance cross mountains and seas, drifting across the distant ocean shores.
Now I have transformed this thousand-year-old temple into an academy.
White walls and red beams, stars and moon linger around you from dawn till dusk.



Day after day, I stay with you, gazing at you with deep affection.
After spring blossoms fade quietly,
In summer, you silently nurture clusters of buds.
Just like me, amid the ups and downs of the mortal world,
You keep your inner peace, quietly gestating your bloom.

On a tranquil morning after rain,
I watch you unfurl a few blossoms gently.
Then day after day, flower after flower blooms slowly.
Only when karmic conditions are ripe, do you pour forth your full radiance.

Ancient tree, from afar our souls resonate as one.
So it is for a flower, so it is for a tree.
One flower, one world; one leaf, one Bodhi.
For all living beings and all things in the world, is it not the same?
All beings share one root, interconnected, resonating in love and compassion.

Everyone has their own time to bloom.
When wishes come true, blessings arrive naturally.
Circumstances shift, holding the promise of recovery and new turns.
All beauty in this world requires waiting, and is worthy of waiting.
In quiet companionship, we perceive the universal love binding heaven, earth and all living things.

May all humanity learn from you:
Dwell in the present, and wait peacefully for the bloom.

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Biswanath Kar

Blue Butterflies



Blue butterflies seek the open blue sky
In search of the seven colours of true love
Waiting for the new spring on their soft way
To come out from the nature's secret cave.

The flower markets are ready to welcome
The spring with beautiful roses and also
With beautiful roses' and champas' rhyme
Thr honeyed lilies welcome it with arioso.

The blue butterflies looks for the reflection
Of their faces in the petals of blossoms
To inaugurate the festival of a silver season
Burning in blue flame chase its own dreams.

Intoxicated with the bakul flowers' fragrance
That is floating in wind like restless waves
Wafts from the horizon the butterflies glance
 Rushing into the blossomed springs' wings.

The tender dreams of love that stirs the mind
Cann't be shown and told what form it takes
When the seasons are not as gentle as a bud
Blue butterflies still be affectionate to flowers.

In somany unknown words with deep silence
Blue butterflies gossip with the blossoms
About the blue sky and love of seven colours
The spring will come with the love colours.
==

Cuttack,Odisha,India
©®Biswanath Kar

Mahfuzur Rahman Sourav

Roots of Grace

The ancient boughs stretch wide and deep,
Where silent winds of twilight sleep.
A whisper stirs the emerald green,
A sacred bond, felt, though unseen.
We walk the earth, yet sometimes blind,
To what the soil leaves behind—
For in the leaves and morning dew,
We find a heart, so pure, so true.
To love the earth is human grace,
To leave behind a healing trace,
To lift the fallen, tend the scarred,
And hold life's fragile, beating card.
For branch and bone, of one design,
We weave the thread, we share the vine.



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Beneath the Open Sky

Beneath the vast and open sky,
We watch the restless seasons fly.
The river tells an ancient tune,
Of silver stars and fading moon.
No walls can cage the wind that blows,
No hate can dim where mercy grows.
In every hand that builds a home,
Across the earth, wherever we roam,
We see the spark of kindred light,
That turns the darkest day to white.
To tend the soil, to free the soul,
Is how we make each other whole.

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Nirmala Putul

Tribal Women

(One)

Poor, destitute, unlettered,
Yet simple and pure at heart,
Even if dark of skin.

When they laugh in free, ringing laughter,
The sky fills up
With lines of flying white egrets.

Tucking dhak blossoms into their chignons,
When they dance in rows to the beat of the maandal,
An unseasonable spring arrives.

They love the forests, the rivers, the mountains,
The soil, the songs, and the crops.
Within the circle of their kin come
Cows, goats, and swine as well.

Beyond the boundary of home,
Stretching to the distant horizon
Lies their world—
Where exists mountain-like grief!
Mountain-like patience!!
And wilderness like that of the jungle!!!

(Two)

Quietly they live, enduring all,
Washing utensils, sweeping the floor.
Risking life, they roam the woods to fetch
Roots, tubers, fruits,
Firewood, twigs, tooth-twigs, and leaves.
Going to the weekly haat market, they sell
Leaf cups and plates, mats, brooms, handheld fans.
Molding bricks, digging earth, breaking stones,
They toil as hard physical labor.

Working day and night, they run
The household and cover every expense.
They gather for lazy, idle men
Liquor and toddy.
Soaked in water all day, they plant paddy,
Singing songs of joy,
Forgetting life's agony.

Plastering and smoothing the earthen walls of home,
They mend the cracks in their own minds.
Walking miles on end, they haul water.

To men swaying drunk, out of their senses,
They lend support every day.
Worn out by hunger, thirst, and exhaustion,
They still endure fists and kicks.

In the dead of night, upon a lifeless body,
A brutal, monstrous rampage!
Listening to it all, silently processing within,
Like wood eaten by termites,
Eroding inside, continuously...

(Three)

Only as far as their eyes can reach
Is their world confined.
They do not know that in this world
Exist other worlds just like theirs.
They do not know
How their belongings reach Delhi,
When, long before reaching the highway,
The dirt paths of their world
Gasp for air and die.

They do not know how rivers
Dry up by the time they reach their world.
How their photographs reach Delhi—
They do not know, they know nothing at all!!

©Original Santali:-Nirmala Putul
English Translation :-Malti Kisku

EVA Petropoulou Lianou

Sun,



The king rise

My Heart start beat

For everything is surrounding us

Sun,
Gratitude the word

I seek

People change during the spring

They fell in love with each other

They fell in love with themselves

Sun,

My face you touch

As a great protector

I feel the power of the heat

The world will change one day

When the people become

Generous as the Sun

©®EVA Petropoulou Lianou

Sping,

the only season that makes me laugh

I laugh

I laugh like childrens do

I play and remember the perfume of my grandmother cooking

Spring,

Wishes come true

Thoughts in my mind

Flowers Are growing

Trees are blossoming

Birds are singing

Spring,

The faces of the war will end

Nature will take over

Balance and harmony will rule

Spring time will be

Forever...

©®EVA Petropoulou Lianou

Summer

Childrens are happy once in a lifetime

When they play in the sand

Waves come back and forthward

Between 8 years old and 18 years old

So much memories we try to keep...

People are happy when they're young in mind and heart

Summer come to remind us

How to be gentle

Kind

With no worries

But respectful to Universe

Nothing belong to us

Only our thoughts

Our dreams

Summer we wait to see

this extraordinary miracle

Love, respect

A beautiful world in harmony

Where we people

Share hands

And will start dancing

The song of the Peace.

©®EVA Petropoulou Lianou

Shah Jehan Ashrafi

The rose on the hilltop

Once I went to pick a rose from the hilltop.

The raging breeze and the wild rain

Made me feel like a restless horse.

My heart, a delicate threatened lover.

Lightning and thunderbolts scared

It to death, telling it that the rose

Wasn't meant for it at all.

But I continued to climb, a race

Against the void; only ascension was my aim.

I never stopped looking at the colour red.

I watered it with my tears, but I whirled

And was gone by the wind.

Passion tamed me all the while.

I refused to taste the howling nothingness.



©®Shah Jehan Ashrafi
Canada

Aminu Femi Jamiu

EARTH TREMOR

Is this life worth living?
Oh, Mother Nature!
Give the rivers back their breath,
Let the water ripples rise again.

Darkened clouds web the sky.
Vice upon vice!
Man fractures nature's veins,
Turbulence tilts the ground,
Breeding violence in rows.

In the blink of an eye,
Hell rent the heart of dawn,
Ash and agony choke the earth.
What a tragic dirge!

We crown money as earthly lord,
What an existential romance!
As we burn the air with our errors.
Lo and behold!
We are in a blistering skew.

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Huguette Bertrand

LAUGHING STARS

Don't miss the stars
like eyes watching us
from the dark roof above
seeds of light all over

glances free of charge
no blurred windows
a perfect view wherever you are standing

just stop and look up
to watch the stars laughing
even disappeared in the morning
will come back late next night
in a wink you will see them
spinning in your eyes

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NIGHT STAGE

A night stage
is a grand work
displayed in silence
as dusk sets

it makes its nest
in starry eyes
when the moonlight passes by
setting ablaze amazed hearts

in a sharing silence
it shakes all dreams
and all dramas

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Huguette Bertrand is a French-Canadian poet and editor. She has published 39 poetry books, most of them in French presented on her website. Her poems in english were published in international journals and anthologies and translated in multi languages.
https://www.facebook.com/huguette.bertrand.9

HyeKyung Ahn

A Path Between Cedars

I taste the leaves of the cedar tree.
Where could this path be leading?
Searching for fruits that have yet to ripen,
I wander through the cool dawn with heavy steps.
The leaves are already thick,
Yet cleavers twist around my feet.
As always, the path is hard to find.
With the purple of cleavers scattered all over the ground,
I touch the unnoticed bark of the cedars
And find joy in conversations with a giant.
In the memories the giant stirs,
A bag slung over sunburned shoulders is walking.
The sorrow and anger once packed inside that bag
Are washed away by the wind.
Passing a few countryside houses with bent window frames,
I come upon a home with its wall collapsing–
The path breaks off,
Swept away into the sea.
Was the village too small, and I missed the bus stop?
Even when I turn back to walk along the paved road,
The path ends again in the cedar forest.
Beyond the cleaver-covered thickets, a dizzying cliff.
The cool breeze of dawn too is swept into the sea.
All around, silence.
The sunlight calmly stirs the cedar leaves awake.
Suddenly, I hear the cedars' chorus.
I cannot stay still.
In rhythm, I dance joyfully with the trees.
The chorus wraps around my body
And reaches the treetops in an instant.
I dance endlessly,
Spinning in circles to the sound that surrounds me, Looking down upon an ancient kingdom beneath the sea. And then, I walk for kilometers more.

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Letter

But yesterday, I went out to the field,
walking through the grass, brushing it aside. A magpie, instead of flying away,
pattered before me.
I wanted to place my hand
on its shimmering wing.
Could my hand become a letter?
Already in the iris stems,
the flutter of summer had arrived.
Not knowing what I was looking for,
I dug through the muddy ground.
Perhaps trying to find a letter
that spring had left behind for me.
Then, tender birch leaves came rushing in, waves of white crashing above my head.
I reached out into the endlessly rippling leaves— a letter not yet finished
was caught in my palm

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HyeKyung Ahn was born Seoul Korea D.Litt.
Debuted in 1982 through the Monthly Poetry magazine
‘Simunhak’ Published poetry book; ‘Along with gardenias’(2026)
‘Exploration of the left’(2023) ‘The rain lives’(2017)

D. A. Simpson

brush strokes

****

brush strokes in chalk white
upon a canvas of powderblue
spread across the elysian expanse entire
while willow tree leaves a'fluttering
tendril thin branches gracing
harkened to a celestial incantation,
unheard by the living
who roam and tread awhile the dusty paths
on this mortal orb etched
tiles of silver white
‘gainst the backdrop of a celestial sheet
reminiscent of a million butterflies a'floating
bearing upon their wings of filigree and lace
the spirits and souls
of the fallen and lamented,
laid to rest,
wafting like vapours and smoke through the dominion
silent now and sleeping
their dreams and reveries
upon the opaque palette to release
their eternal sanctuary to attain
their eternal salvation to assume

~ d.a.simpson ~
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The sky ripened

****

The sky ripened
assuming the character a peach,
mellow, luscious and heavy
A crimson orb,
a'dangling yonder in the western empyrean
A setting sun
dipped its fiery flames
into an inky sea,
darkened by the mysteries of nightfall
Where cool waters gathered
for to lap at the stillness of the horizon
And paused awhile their journey without end
to ponder the enigma of the gap
That timeless place, thin and ephemeral
‘tween the now and the eternal ever present
While high in the firmament
the canvas turned a deep turquoise
Which melded with the lilac whispers of night
in the fading light
As the trees
shed their cloaks of emerald green
and donned gowns of midnight black
Silhouetted in majesty,
great awnings ‘neath a lambent tableau
aloft in the celestial heights

~ d.a.simpson ~
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A crimson disc

****

A crimson disc
dangling low in an endless empyrean
Aglow in a lambent candescence
‘gainst a backdrop of ebon black
Pondered its reflection
liquid and ephemeral
Supine on the smooth surface
pervading the dark waters below
A'glistening in the evening light
as myriad ripples drifted across the deep
As spirits and shadows
emanating from another dominion
Began to move across the benthic expanse
Their murmurs and whispers stirring the lake
into a somnolent reverie
As night fell upon the scene
and silence abounded throughout the realm entire

~ d.a.simpson ~
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Mohammad Kutubuddin .

The Elusive Dawn.

In the fury of the flood, so much of what we have gathered lies imperilled;
The cradle of our cherished relationships
Drifts away, smiling into oblivion.
Sorrow celebrates in the courtyards of the sorrowful,
While happiness, an ancient slave, dwells in the quarter of the contented;
The sheaves of sunlight, bathed in suffering,
Lie abandoned at the bend of twilight.
A weary bird seeks its nest in the fading light;
The nights drape the world in a shawl of consolation.
Some remain awake, murmuring their tasbih,
Wondering when the elusive dawn will descend.

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12 October 2026

Dr. Kang Byeong-Cheol

Freedom of the Autumn Leaf

All that lives
is born toward freedom.
Walls carve our names;
the earth speaks ruin.
When the time of stars widens,
the bound ones rise
and cut their own knots.
Leaves of summer
cling to stone walls,
take on autumn’s fire,
and at last break their chains.
The ivy’s fall—
that is freedom on the earth.
O leaves,
beyond the shattered air,
let us fly with the wind.
In the ceaseless turning of the world,
every chain,
at last,
becomes history’s fading song.

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가을 잎의 자유

모든 살아 있는 것은
자유를 향해 태어난다.
벽은 우리의 이름을 새기고,
땅은 파멸을 말한다.
별의 시간이 넓어질 때,
묶인 자들은 일어나
자기 매듭을 끊는다.
여름의 잎들은
돌벽에 매달려
가을의 불을 입고
마침내 사슬을 끊어낸다.
담쟁이의 추락–
그것이 이 땅에서의 자유.
오 잎이여,
부서진 공기를 넘어
바람과 함께 날자.
세상이 쉼 없이 도는 가운데,
모든 사슬은

끝내
역사의 희미한 노래가 된다.

Heo, Hyung-man

Ecstasy

Every scene in the world is ecstasy,
the fields of canola flowers dyed golden by the sunlight,
even the bees plunging into the flowers are enchanting.
And people are no different.
Those I draw near to, and those who draw near to me,
are all an exquisite rapture, even when our eyes never meet.
Oh, world of rapture, landscapes of wonder, grace that burns within the heart.

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황홀

세상의 풍경은 모두 황홀하다
햇살이 노랗게 물든 유채꽃밭이며
유채꽃 속에 온몸을 들이미는 벌들까지
황홀하다 더불어 사람도 이와 다르지 않아서
내가 다가가는 사람이나 나에게 다가오는 사람 모두
미치게 황홀하다 때로는 눈빛이 마주치지 않는다 해도 그렇다
오, 황홀한 세상이여 황홀한 세상의 풍경이여 심장 뜨거운 은총이여



Poet Heo Hyung-man was born in 1945 in Suncheon, Jeollanam-do, South Korea. He made his literary debut in 1973 through the literary magazine Wolgan Munhak (Monthly Literature). He has published 20 poetry collections, including Eyes of the Soul, Ecstasy, Wind Sword, and Encounter. His works have also been published abroad, including the Chinese poetry collection 許炯万詩賞析 and the Japanese poetry collection 耳な葬る.

He has received numerous literary honors, such as the Korean Poets Association Award, the Yeongrang Poetry Literature Award, the Pyeonun Literature Award, and the Gongcho Literature Award.
He is currently an Emeritus Professor at Mokpo National University and the 9th President of the Korean Association of World Literature.

Yang Geum-Hee

The Spider's House

Without a threshold or pillars,
the spider builds in midair a house
dozens of times larger than its own body,
weaving its life with slender threads.
Once, a wing that flew freely
beneath the blue sky
became entangled in that house
and folded away its final flight.
For some,
a shelter from wind and rain,
for others,
a tomb where the final breath is laid to rest.
Even that house
is touched by a handful of dazzling sunlight
that has crossed the vastness of space.
Upon a single thread
where life and death meet,
no one is the master forever,
and no one can dwell there eternally.

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거미의 집

거미는 문턱도 기둥도 없이
제 몸보다 수십 배 큰 집을 허공에 지어놓고
가느다란 실로 생을 엮는다
한때 푸른 하늘을
자유롭게 날던 날개 하나
그 집에 걸려
마지막 비행을 접었다
누군가에게는
비바람을 피하는 안식처
누군가에게는
마지막 숨을 내려놓는 무덤
그 집에도
아득한 공간을 건너온
눈부신 햇살 한 줌 닿는다
삶과 죽음이 맞닿은
한 올의 실 위에서
누구도 영원한 주인이 아니고
아무도 영원히 머물 수 없다



Poet Yang Geum-Hee is a distinguished Korean poet, literary activist, cultural leader, and scholar from Jeju Island, South Korea. Since her literary debut in Simunhak (Poetry Literature Monthly), she has made significant contributions to contemporary Korean literature and to the promotion of international literary and cultural exchange. She served as the Second President of the Korean Association of World Literature (KAOWL) and as President of Jeju PEN. She is a member of the Consortium of Distinguished Scholars of the International Academy of Ethics, serves as Vice President of Culture and Arts at the Korea Institute for Peace and Cooperation, and has received an honorary doctorate. Throughout her career, she has devoted herself to literature, peace, ethics, cultural exchange, and intercultural dialogue, building meaningful connections among writers and readers across national and linguistic boundaries.

Her poetry has been translated into more than 40 languages and widely published in literary journals and anthologies throughout Asia, Europe, the Americas, and the Middle East. Her work has introduced the landscape, history, emotions, and cultural spirit of Korea—particularly Jeju—to readers around the world.

Her major publications include the poetry collections Happiness Account, Ieodo: The Island of Legend and Existence, and Nests of Birds, including a Taiwanese edition and a bilingual English–Korean edition. She is also the author of the essay collection Happy Companion and the translator of PREKAZ: Legacy of the Brave – He Lives On.

More recently, she edited and published PROFESSOR YANG GEUM-HEE'S LITERARY STROLL ABROAD, an anthology featuring poems by 50 renowned poets from around the world, reflecting her continuing commitment to international literary exchange.

Her international literary collaborations have also continued to expand. The Korean–Japanese collaborative poetry collection Duet of Bookmarks (栞の二重奏), co-authored by Korean poet Yang Geum-Hee and Japanese poet Maki Starfield (マキ・スターフィールド), was published by the Japan Universal Poets Association on the 26th.

Yang Geum-Hee has received numerous international literary honors. She was selected for PRIZES 2025: The International Best Poets & Translators and was named one of the 100 Most Influential Literary Figures of 2025 by Barcelona Magazine, a prestigious literary publication issued in Spain and the United States. She was also awarded Kazakhstan's international order "Kazakhstan 560 Years" and received the 2025 Grand Prize for Culture and Arts.

In 2026, she was honored with the Dr. José Manuel Equihua Estrella International Literary Prize, presented by the Greece Chapter of CCI Universal Poetic Utopia, headquartered in Mexico. She was also a recipient of the Naji Naaman Merit Prize for Literature.

Recognized internationally for her contribution to literature and cultural exchange, Yang Geum-Hee continues to foster dialogue and understanding among cultures through poetry, translation, scholarship, and global literary cooperation. Her literary path embodies an enduring commitment to peace, humanity, cultural harmony, and literature as a universal language that transcends borders.

Meg Smith

Blue October

Along the trail of leaves, falling
from their own copper,
I will find my sky:
Naked, clear, a pathway to
a river where I meet
dreams
waking
true forest of the perfect month.

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Nocturnals

No darkness so natural can cover us,
but leave thin space for breath, for secrets,
for that time when we could open the sky
of deep falling: space, and stars.
And I commend you to them, space, and stars,
and our last spark, from which will grow
a new sun

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Christina Margeti

TWIN FLAMES

I shall find you again
in the winter alleyway
as the rain will carry the scent
of your sobs.

A light
October breeze
caresses the temples,
like a wistful breeze
tangled in your hair.

A kiss on the lips
endless
the ballads,
the companions,
on the strings of longing
just like back then…

Back when it would ignite
in the dead of night
a rhythm
all its own,
ours alone.

Notes flit
around your palms
so fair,
like sparrows
that breathe
at your touch.

Unadulterated love.
Untainted…
In time's frame
always unaltered.
In every form,
timeline, together…
In celestial melodies,
of mystery…

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Swayam Prashant

Love Sweet Love



(5)
I didn't drink your love
I was only neck-deep
in my thirst for your beauty
Ah, for a glimpse !
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(6)
Holding an apple in her hand
she said innocently,
"Have a bite
it's only an apple".
And I did
and committed the sin
innocently... ...

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Swayam Prashant (pen name of Dr. Prashanta Kumar Sahoo) was born in the undivided Cuttack District, Odisha, India. Formerly he was an Associate Professor of English and the Head of the Department of English, Sarupathar College, Assam, India. He has authored ten books: Evaluation of Textbooks in the Teaching of English (2013), Values in Life(2013), Live Like A Man (poetry)(2014), Haiku from the Garden of My Own (poetry)(2014), Knowledge Tree (2014), Virgin Land Impregnated (2012), Joy of Love (2009), Heart of Love (2023)(poetry)(published in USA), The Sky Conquerors (2024) and Premras Amrit (poetry in Assamese)(2019).
His poems have also been published in several international anthologies: Voice of United Eleven (2011)(in India), Peerless Pearls (2020)(in India), Perceptions (2021)(in USA), Quintessence: Aspects of the Soul (2021)(in USA), Quintessence: The Emotional Realm (2022)(in USA), World Healing World Peace (2022 & 2024)(in USA), Climate Change (2022)(in USA), The Wonders of Winter (2022)(in USA), Love Letters in Poetic Verse (2023)(in USA), Dream (2nd Edition)(2023), Psythur (2023 & 2025)(in Australia), Armchair Poetry (2023)(in USA), Letter Poems to Our Deceased (2024)(USA), Being Human (2024)(in USA), Shards (2024)(in USA), Oracle of the Ancients (2024)(in USA), Light-Bringer (2024)(in USA), Tempest (2025)(in Australia), Cherish (2025)(in Australia), Dream (2025)(in Australia) and Psythur (2025)(in Australia).
His poems have also been published in the international poetry journals like Impspired Magazine (in UK), Open Skies Quarterly/Poetry (in USA), The Year of the Poet (in USA) Raven Cage (in Germany) and The Zest of the Lemon (in USA).

Ananya S Guha

Mother Tongue

I haven't thought of my mother tongue
My mother's mother tongue
My father's mother tongue
So what is my mother tongue ?

But the hills tell me I am a man from
The hills, I see these hills
As my home so I speak a language
Which only these hills understand
When it rains the hills and the rain
Murmur in voices I know
I wake up every morning to this language
Which does not have vowels or consonants
But only these hills understand the rhythmic
Movement of the wind and rain
A language which I understand
My father's mother tongue
My mother's mother tongue

The mother tongue of these hills

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Shillong
INDIA

Ananya S Guha lives in Shillong a hill town in North East India. He has been writing and publishing poetry for over forty years.

Germain Droogenbroodt



Artificial Intelligence

Will our eyes soon see
what themselves see?

Will our brains
still think
what they think?

Will we still be
who we are?

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III Premio Internacional de Poesía de Fuente Vaqueros, Spanje

Translation by the author and Stanley Barkan

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www.ukiyoto.com

BrendaMohammed

GOD OPENS DOORS NO MAN CAN SHUT

God opens doors that no one can shut.

When you think it's over, God turns up.

Be encouraged through Scripture and trust God.

His timing is perfect as He opens new doors.

Breakthroughs and divine favour will follow you.

God will lead you in everything you do.

Opportunities will appear that you never dreamed of.

Doors will open to your destiny and true purpose.

Look back at your life and realise He was always there.

Guiding and protecting you in every sphere.

His love is infinite, pure, righteous, and true.

God is a refuge and source of strength for me and you.

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Israel Chukwudi

Gratitude.

Gratitude is, the smoke knowing the origin is fire,
Not amputating the hands that pulled
The lepper out of a miry clay;
It's the estuary returning back to the river
After caressing the seashore.
Dig up the past let's survey the present,
How long did the feverish bird shivered on the cage
Before freedom came knocking on the door?
If now the bird frolicks and scratches the face of the sky,
Does it pay homage to earth, the bedrock of heaven?
After thousand miles of futile race;
Of planting and harvesting nothing
How did the tongue send fervent honour
To all deft hands that dragged sorrow,
Stabbed and nailed it to the cross?
When flourishing like Cedar planted
By the flowing brook of Lebanon
Be not as foolish as egg challenging the rock to a duel.
But beat the drum of honour
To drive home song of gratitude
To venerate all who greased your ship to sail.

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Hong Ngoc Chau

THE SUNSET TRAIN

1
The Creator operates according to natural laws;
Life remains a cycle of ups and downs. Oh! Lord!
The four seasons- spring, summer, autumn, winter alternate
In life, one cannot force things to be otherwise, so accurate
2
The union, separation, the workings of all things right
Days pass, nights fall, the months and years flow by.
The night fades as the radiant dawn breaks,
Life force surges, filling all creation. No break
3
Understanding humans, reflecting on life,
Listening to and understanding oneself in life
The source of happiness lies within the mind;
The train of life journeys on in silence. I'm fine
4
The crimson sunset fades into deep violet hues, falling
Amidst the bustling docks, heartfelt bonds are gathering
Does the traveler still carry lingering sentiments? Reality
Is it a place where meetings and partings play out endlessly?
5
Preparing one's mindset for life's journey, truly
Striding through every hardship, steadfastly
Living with loyalty, truth, and goodness, I think
Reaching a haven of peace, with love overflowing.

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Roberto Dávila Torres

A PRAYER NOT TO WAKE

Lord:

the cage remains open,
but something in me
has forgotten how to fly.

My heart
sleeps at the bottom
of an empty room
that no longer remembers my name.

Every night
someone extinguishes
a lamp within my blood.

What will I do
with this silence
that never ends?

Where will I hide
this fear
that has learned to call my name?

Lord:

if you can still hear me,

make the night a body.

And let me enter it

until I disappear.

Lord:

at least let me
not wake.

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A PRAYER FOR THE NIGHT

Lord,
tonight I have not returned as a bird.
Something darker has learned my wings.

My heart remains awake,
listening to death breathing behind the door.

Let no one turn on the light.
Let no one speak my name.
Someone is quietly gathering the remains of what I was.

Lord,
if the night still exists, let me fall into it.
And if you cannot heal me, if you cannot save
me either,
then at least do not return me.

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Sheikh Moniruzzaman Shawon

The kingdom of Sin

I live and breathe
In the land of three strands
So lofty, sublime
Yet so immersed in sin
But I bear no stigma of sin
Nor the scar of repentance.
I waltz in the ocean of love
Where love 's wine extinguishes
the yearning and the inferno of unfulfilled passion.
In heaven, earth and hell
There is no hunger, no deprivation
Only the eternal discord
Between
What is right and
What is wrong.

Explore the cosmos
With my eyes where
Resonates the divine symphony
Of god in hell
And the bewildered laughter of a goddess.
While behind quintets of sense, desires and passion
Bloom the blood red hibiscus
So ephemeral
Yet pursued in vain by perpetual spring.

In this kingdom of sin
I bear no scar of repentance
Or any stigma of sin
Only there is an interplay of light
And presence of illuminated, kaleidoscopic bodies of seraphims.

If you wanna dive deeper
Into the whirlpool of
Life, death and beyond
Then observe through God ' s divine vision
And you will discover
Paradisal sin in Paradise
In Adam 's innocent eyes.
Who whispered the diabolical advice?
Who begot sin?
Who begot virtue?
Who played the magic flute before Krishna?
In which gate of heaven were you then dumb Lucifer?
And where were heaven's celestial nymphs?

In this domain of sin
I’m free from all sins
Only god peddles his wares
In my being.

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English translation: Khaled Sharif Arefeen.



Poet Sheikh Moniruzzaman (Shawon) was born on 13-09-1982 in Nayatola, Moghbazar, Dhaka, Bangladesh. Father - Sheikh Abu Zafar Ahmed. Mother - Monowara Begum. Wife - Tania Akhter. In his professional life, he is a lawyer. In his family life, he is the father of two daughters. The first daughter is Sheikh Raisa Abiyat. The second daughter is Sheikh Arza Maliyat Raha. He has been writing for quite some time. "Je Samudre Agun Jale" is his first solo poetry book and "Shashwata Padachinha" is his second poetry book published in Bangladesh.

Allison Grayhurst

Through the Valley

To see you writhe and twist
from fractures and complex
imbalances in the body, depressing
your joy unto death, remembering
each day plagued with renewed anguish
and the winter arriving with thick fog,
middle-of-the-night phone calls
full of tears and panic and there
we gathered - you and me and God and Jesus,
we found a bandwidth to lean into.
I must let it go,
your months of suffering and the tests and fear.
I must draw a different equation that
will teach me a signature of peace.
Where you are planted is where you are now,
in divine deliverance, away from any anguish.
The same anguish I am still living in
and cannot seem to stop re-living
despite God's grace, despite how I was shown
your release into eternal love, despite
the giant pillars of love surrounding me
every day, since the day you left.
You have no pain,
you are as holy as the universe, in joy
as any infant suckling on its mother
or carried by its father, steady, safe,
enveloped in perfect protection
and a love so vast it radiates throughout every space,
eradicates all disease and fear gone before.
You are whole,
while I remain broken
and keep breaking as I try
to understand -
I loved you, but my love
could not save you from your suffering.
I love you and I know now you are saved,
resurrected into glory.
I must grow my strength stronger than my pity,
know God's love is stronger
than the senseless vaporous dream
that haunts the dying and the ones left
like me (tossing, flailing, helpless)
after death and because of it.

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Brenda Mohammed

A STRONG FAMILY UNIT IS THE KEY TO PEACE

A strong family is the glue binding individuals to the world.

Family togetherness is a driving force and should be our goal.

Family prayer is both a religious and relational routine.

Shared memories and traditions create a sense of belonging.



When you fall in life, your family should be there to catch you.

Families share each other's successes and failures, too.

A loving home offers a secure refuge away from daily stresses.

Families are a safety net, helping through hardships and successes.

Our personal roots connect us to our past and future.

Our upbringing in the family home builds our character.

If Families provide unconditional support for loved ones.

Love, peace, and harmony would rule in each home.

Children tend to mimic their parents' behaviour.

Parents should conduct themselves in a Godly manner.

Children are blessings and the future of every nation.

Train them to build our countries for God's eternal Kingdom.

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STRIVING FOR PEACE

How do we make our leaders listen to our cries for peace?

It is a complex challenge to advocate for wars to cease.

Leaders should engage in dialogue and use effective strategies.

Safety and Security should be each Government's priority.

Achieving global peace requires sustained effort by all countries.

Building strong local support can create change that extends globally.

Community events and campaigns can inspire a desire for peace.

Media, social platforms, art, and literature can help to promote peace.

Newspapers must stop publishing negative articles that stir up strife.

Communication should articulate the case for peace and a better life.

Policymakers and international bodies can influence policy changes.

Empathy must be promoted among cultures, religions, and all ages.

Education can break barriers and create a commitment to peace.

Information on consequences of war helps to understand urgency,

Mahatma Gandhi and Martin L King Jr. inspire with their legacies,

The importance of non-violent conflict resolution and diplomacy

Peaceful resistance can highlight injustice and the need for change.

Partnering with non-governmental organizations on the global stage.

Poetry can be a powerful instrument of hope, healing, and unity.

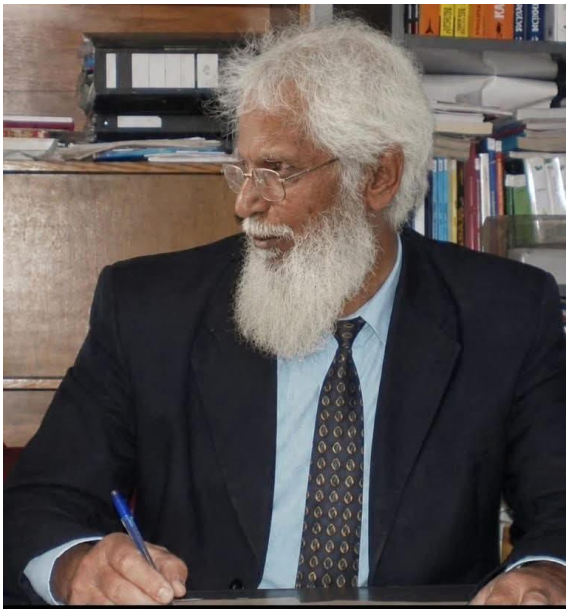
Poets use pens for peace, compassion, and humanity.

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Alam Mahbub

A Letter Of Peace To The World

O world, I send a letter sealed with light,
Not ink, but hope inscribed on every line,
To turn the endless shadows into bright,
And plant in barren hearts a seed divine.



Lay down swords that sing a dirge of pain,
Let silence heal the echoes of despair;
Let rivers cleanse the crimson of the slain,
And morning rise with love's unbroken prayer.

No flag, no border should divide the skies,
The earth belongs to all beneath the sun;
In children's laughter, truth and mercy rise,
Where peace begins, and wars are undone.

So take this letter, let its message stay:
Peace is life, the world's most sacred way.

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Xhuli Spahiu

PEACE, LOVE AND HUMANITY



Do not seek peace only in the sky;
it begins where one heart
chooses not to hurt another.
It begins with an outstretched hand,
with a word that heals,
with a door opened to a stranger,
with a heart that does not ask
where the other comes from,
but what pain they carry within.
Love knows no boundaries,
no color, language, or name.
It is the light
that finds its way even to the most weary heart;
it is the warmth
that remains when everything else fades away.
And **humanity**…
is seeing the human being in every person,
hearing their silence,
sharing bread, hope,
a kind word,
and a piece of your heart.
Because the world does not need
more walls,
but more bridges.
It does not need more hatred,
but people who know how to forgive.
It does not need louder voices,
but hearts that know how to listen.
Let us plant peace
where fear has taken root,
love where there is pain,
and light where there is darkness.
And if one day
a child asks us
what we gave to this world,
may we be able to say:
“We gave you a hand when you needed one,
an embrace when you were alone,
hope when everything seemed lost,
and above all,
we gave you love.”
Because in the end,
we will not be remembered
for what we possessed,
but for what we gave.

Peace is a choice.
Love is strength.
Humanity is the greatness
the world needs most.
And perhaps,
if each of us
lights even one small light,
one day there will be so much light
that darkness will have nowhere left to hide.

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Kosovo

WHEN THE WORLD CHOOSES PEACE

A Poetic Appeal to Humanity

When the sky no longer trembles with fire,
when the night brings no more tears or fear,
when children sleep safely in their mothers' arms,
and morning rises without pain or sorrow…

Then the world will understand
that peace is more than just a word.
It is bread shared with the hungry,
a hand reaching out to save a life,
and a heart that forgives without asking for reward.

Today, in so many corners of this Earth,
human beings still torture, oppress, and wound,
while children lose their innocence
in a world that should have kept them safe.

How long will the human conscience remain silent?
How many tears must fall upon this Earth,
how many lives must be shattered, how many hopes extinguished,
before humanity learns to feel another's pain?

Let weapons fall silent and let hearts speak,
let torture and cruelty come to an end.
No power is greater than the value of life,
and no ideology can justify human suffering.

No child deserves to live in fear,
no mother deserves the pain of loss,
no human being should live in chains
of violence, hatred, or injustice.

O human being, what value have victories
when souls remain wounded?
What meaning have borders and glory
when human dignity is trampled without mercy?

Do not measure a person by nationality,
nor by faith, language, or the colour of their skin.
Measure them by the compassion they show,
the justice they defend, and the love they give.

For Earth is a home we all share,
and pain knows neither borders nor differences.
No heart should have to suffer alone
in a world with enough love for everyone.

Let the voices of good people rise,
let justice be more than a distant dream.
Let nations unite in defence of life,
so that no one is tortured, oppressed, or forgotten.

Peace is not the silence of those who suffer,
but the courage to put an end to their suffering.
Justice is not a privilege reserved for the powerful,
but a right belonging to every human being.

Let peace be our legacy,
let humanity be the light that guides us,
and let love become the language that unites us.

So that tomorrow, when children ask us
what we did to save this world,
we may answer with a clear conscience:

We did not remain silent in the face of injustice.
We did not accept cruelty as inevitable.
We defended life, dignity, and freedom.
We chose peace for all humanity.

And then, perhaps, this world
will finally learn that the greatest strength
lies not in ruling over others,
but in preserving the humanity within ourselves.

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Tie Wu

Gaza, Gaza

—To the Souls of the Deceased Children of Gaza
By Tie Wu



Opening the newspaper, a jarring headline stabs my eyes —
“Disaster within disaster”: three thousand seven hundred and sixty children dead in Gaza;

Scrolling through a friend’s WeChat, furious verses ignite my heart:
“Blood-sea within blood-sea”: generations upon generations of hatred perpetuate in Gaza.

I now call back Mr. Eliot, the poet of a past century,
Should there arise a poet whose lecture hall is the battlefield?

I summon Yev-tushenko, author of Mama and the Atomic Bomb,
I ask: Are you still travelling where berries grow everywhere?

I know the battlefield is no basketball court; a poet’s words hold little power.
Humans dart like frantic ants. Has revenge become some people’s excuse for slaughter?

I know invisible fire-nets spread across the sky, fangs of technology bared.
Drones are no flies; peace has turned into an unforeseen worry.

How can I ever find your three thousand seven hundred and sixty young souls?
All I see are a few elderly women clad in orange in alleyways.

How can I comfort your surviving playmates there?
All I hear is the barking of some dog echoing in stairwells.

I once dreamed of a hundred possible tap-dance lives for one human being.
Writers there are composing how to stay suspended amid the whirlpool.

I once concluded that anyone’s fate may go off-target at any moment,
Yet your parents stand in long queues just for a piece of flatbread.

Beneath the sun, I study with children how butterflies take flight.
Have your souls turned into paper cut-out figurines?

With friends from Taiwan, I play island-themed games.
Have your souls sought out the White-Horse Guanyin?

A madwoman asks: Is there real-name registration for hell?
Ah, I believe every one of you bears a name, a given name.

My gifted daughter says: There is no hell — only the human world.
Ah, I believe you shall be the true witnesses.

The very first composition in life bears a name given by parents.
Your first catastrophe: graveyards become your hometown.

At Xinyuntai Middle School by the sea, I lecture on the humanistic essence of writing;
Through the telescope atop the Oriental Pearl Tower, I gaze afar toward Gaza.

Clouds stretch boundless. How may I pierce the thick mist to behold you?
In which corner lies this war-torn battlefield!

Wails rise on every side. How may I cross space to reach you?
How many more souls perish amid the roar of guns and blazing fires!

I am not composing poetry. Who could find poetry in news reports?
“Fish that rides a bicycle” — accepting an oracle, I lay down my pen.

I am not crafting prose. I stare numbly at a photograph from Gaza.
Late-life highlight: a writer cannot bring himself to broach this theme.

This is not an age where war engulfs everything, yet cruelty still lingers.
I seek our true spirit in music, philosophy and poetry.

Why cannot benevolence and justice preside over our world?
Plato, Confucius, Muhammad — where are your podiums?

People discuss how humanity may escape the Anthropocene crisis.
One writer penned: “Man sits on the edge of the world, smiling.”

I confer with AI, searching for new possibilities.
“The world is snowing whole-heartedly,” I make this proclamation.

River Jordan, Dnieper River, weep day and night; the Yellow River hears their lament.
The United Nations flies its flag at half-mast — today, this very day, my children!

Gaza City, Al-Shifa Hospital, refugee camps — Shanghai knows your pain.
I see a little girl on a subway carriage rocking a wooden hobby-horse chair.

Children, I dream of the 114 UN uncles and aunts;
Of a boulder centuries-old standing on a high plateau torn by gales.

Children, every grain of sand in Gaza cries out. I dream
Of our green transparent planet assailed by tempests of wind, rain and lightning.

What a montage: bulldozers topple Arafat’s statue.
He once signed the peace accord between Palestine and Israel together with Rabin.

What a stream-of-consciousness: the word “Liberation” blazes on your forefathers’ banner.
I once debated with my brother, a former soldier, the necessity and meaning of national liberation.

Some would write history as conquerors,

Becoming machines of war, claiming every stone for themselves.

Some seek to erase eternity. As killers,
They dictate others' destinies, acknowledging no soul at all.

Absurdity, O mankind! How can I keep silent in reason!
Gaza, Gaza — what unfolds there is truly unprecedented.

Absurdity, O mankind! How could I drive sharp iron nails?
Gaza, Gaza — some souls vanish without leaving a trace.

Once more I call back the great poets of the twentieth century.
O Eliot, listen, listen to this child's voice:

"I do not wish to see this world. I would rather die with Mother."
We never get to grow up. Is this not a spiritual trial for poets?

Once more I summon the poet who wrote Mama and the Atomic Bomb.
Mr. Yev-tushenko, your "berries everywhere" symbolises peace.

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Biswanath Kar

No War But Peace

Has anyone yet won the war in bloodshed
In hate, violence and mass assassination
No victory's flag in violence has b'n hoisted
In any history with the tunes of victory's yarn.

How many gold crowns are made of blood
In inglorious echoes of triumphal legend
By the worthless dreams to conquer world
No one has cherished the crown head.

No one has won others' heart in violence
No war but love is the only weapon to win
Love is stronger than hatred and nuisance
Love is the powerful God's gift and boon.

Let us enchant the mantras of humanity
Coexistence with love peace and harmony
Say no to cruelty of destruction and enmity
No war but peace is the only mantra to win.
=
Cuttack, Odisha,India
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Feroz Shah

War

A chunk of darkness
gouged from the rat's body

the black cat
delivers it door to door.

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Conflict

A safety pin
On the dressing table

faces the blouse hanging on the clothes rack

and tears off all rival buttons.

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Sorrow

Standing
on the weighing machine
it reads my weight as zero
everything functions perfectly
I slowly
drift upward from the earth.

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Feroz Shah (b. 1987) is a Bangladeshi poet from Noakhali whose work explores the subtle entanglements of human consciousness, material life, and the natural world. Writing in Bengali, he develops a restrained yet evocative poetic language shaped by solitude, memory, love, mortality, and the strangeness of everyday existence. At the center of his poetics is a **"poetry of objects,"** through which ordinary things become vessels of memory, emotional residue, and existential inquiry. His poems often move from the familiar toward the metaphysical, allowing the material world to

reveal its hidden interiority. His collections include **Golden Fish Swimming Upstream** (2017), *Salt Tree on the Blackboard* (2020), Man, Himself *Is a Minus Sign* (2021), and *A Dog Is Resting on My Shadow* (2024).

Donna McCabe

Addictions...

Surrounded by life's abundance
Bittersweet temptations
A sin for every occasion.

Donna McCabe ©



Donna McCabe is an established poet, reviewer and artist from South Wales, UK, with over twenty five years' experience. Her work has gained her multiple accolades within her field of literature. From being published in journals, magazines and anthologies both nationally and internationally. she is also a respected admin on many social media pages as well as having her own Instagram page and poetry page.

Instagram- @donnamccabe_

Facebook- Poemsbydonnamccabe

Laurie Nguyen

The Logistics of Boycotting Disney and Starbucks

This generation has no fight
We led the war, charged the gates
Only for soft, weak-willed cowards to spit in our faces.

So you'll boycott with us then?

You don't know how to compromise.

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Witchcraft

We've spent so much time
worshiping our egos
we've forgotten what it means

To be

Human.

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Rubab Abdullah

Rain's Gentle Song



Sky weeps soft, cool drops,
Lake's heart beats, soft ripples,
Life's gift, nature's peace.

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The Waiting

Old Parents,
Frail, fading fast,
Watching the quiet door,
Hoping for one familiar face,
Alone.

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(Rubab Abdullah is a Bangladeshi-American Poet)

Ankica Anchie Biskupović

THE SUMMER BETWEEN EVERYTHING AND NOTHING

It was the summer when you wanted everything and expected nothing.
There are summers we remember for the sea, for salt drying on our skin, for long evenings and windows left open through the night.
And then there are the others.
Summers that never settle into photographs, but somewhere deep beneath the skin. Years later, they return through a scent, a forgotten song, the touch of hot stone beneath a palm, or a wind that suddenly carries the sea back to us.
That was one of those summers.
The sun burned with the kind of merciless intensity known only to early July, as though it wanted to strip everything bare—the streets, the houses, the people, even the secrets they carried inside them. The city smelled of dust, hot asphalt and salt, while somewhere in the distance the sea breathed slowly, like an enormous creature exhausted from keeping human secrets.
People moved more slowly than usual. They carried towels, shopping bags, conversations, arguments, loves and ordinary plans for tomorrow. Everyone seemed to know where they were going.
Everyone except me.
I walked without a destination, although perhaps walking itself was the destination. I was surrounded by life, yet I had no idea what to do with my own. It seemed that everything was being offered to me—love, friendship, possibility, departure—and still I could not reach out and take any of it.
That summer, I wanted everything.
I wanted a miracle. I wanted the sky to break open and release a rain powerful enough to wash away everything that had accumulated inside me. I wanted someone to say the one sentence capable of changing the direction of my days. I wanted a hand reaching into the mud of my silence and pulling me out.
I wanted love.
Meaning.
Victory.
Peace.
I wanted someone who would stay.
And at the same time, I expected nothing.
Because expectations had become like hot bricks held between bare hands: sooner or later, they burned you.
I often sat by the waterfront beneath the shade of a palm tree whose leaves whispered above me like a language meant only for those who had nowhere else to go. I watched ships arrive and leave, carrying unfamiliar faces, scents of distant cities and conversations I would never hear to the end.
And I wondered what it meant to stay.
What it meant to leave.
What it meant to belong somewhere when, inside yourself, you felt displaced—scattered into a thousand pieces.
Summer is a deceptive season. From the outside, it promises lightness: colour, laughter, music spilling from cafés, glasses raised beneath terraces, bodies surrendering themselves to the sun.
Inside me, however, it opened cracks.
Sometimes I sat alone and watched my reflection tremble on the surface of the water. I was neither happy nor unhappy. I existed somewhere between the two, in a place for which I had no name.
Perhaps that was my problem.
I always searched for words.

Other people seemed able to live through gestures, kisses and sudden decisions. I turned every touch into a question and every silence into an answer that probably had never been there.
Then you came.
You did not come to save me.
You did not arrive carrying answers to the questions I had spent so long asking.
You came almost accidentally, like a breath of wind on a motionless afternoon, like unexpected shade at noon, like the instant when your eyes collide with someone else's and, for no reasonable reason, the world is no longer exactly what it was a second before.
Your face was illuminated by that particular light that belongs only to late July afternoons.
For a moment, you seemed more real than everything around me.
There was tenderness in your smile, but also danger.
As though, without knowing it, you might become both harbour and storm.
Something inside me recognised you before I had any right to.
I thought it felt like returning home.
Only later did I understand that it was a fall—and that I had no desire to stop falling.
Summer swallowed us.
Days spilled into one another like wine from glasses filled too generously. We were two people playing with fire, pretending not to know that fire has never cared who deserves to be burned.
Love became a blade.
Bright.
Beautiful.
Dangerous.
Inevitable.
The nights were the hardest.
That was when silence became loud.
I would lie awake listening to the monotonous turning of the fan while your words repeated themselves inside my head.
“Don't ask me for more than I can give.”
You had said it calmly, almost gently, as if announcing tomorrow's weather.
I knew you were right.
But the heart has never been particularly interested in what is reasonable.
The heart always wants one more minute.
One more touch.
One more promise.
One more morning.
The heart always wants everything.
And so I lived that summer stretched between desire and emptiness, between everything and nothing.
Every time your hand touched me, I felt both blessing and warning.
I tried not to think about autumn.
But autumn had already appeared in your eyes.
It was there before the first leaf fell, before the evenings grew shorter, before either of us dared to name what was coming.
Autumn was wherever your decision was.
One evening, after the heat had loosened its grip on the city, I went out without a plan. The cafés were crowded, but the voices exhausted me more than they comforted me. I took a drink and stood near a wall while music drifted from a nearby bar.
Someone was playing guitar.
I did not know the song, but everyone around me seemed to know every word.
I did not know the lyrics.
But I knew the feeling.
It was the sound of belonging to something.

And belonging was precisely what kept escaping me.
Then I saw a young woman passing through the crowd with a book beneath her arm.
Hesse's *Siddhartha*.
I recognised the title immediately.
For some absurd reason, it felt like a sign—as though the universe, which had remained silent for so long, had suddenly decided to leave me a small message in the hands of a stranger.
I wanted to stop her.
To ask her something.
Anything.
But she disappeared into the crowd.
And once again, I remained where I was, surrounded by the sound of other people's happiness.
After that, I began watching people more carefully.
Their gestures.
Their smiles.
The way one hand instinctively searched for another while they spoke.
I collected those small moments as though they were evidence that life still possessed meaning.
Sometimes I suspected that behind every laugh there was an emptiness similar to mine, only better disguised.
One night, walking alone, I saw an old man sitting on a bench playing a harmonica.
He played quietly, almost shyly, as if afraid of waking the water.
I stopped.
He was no virtuoso, but every note seemed to come from a place where people no longer knew how to lie.
I sat beside him.
We did not exchange a single word.
There was only the harmonica, the night and my breathing slowly becoming calmer.
When he finished, he stood, nodded once and walked away.
I never saw him again.
But that was the first night I understood that perhaps I was not entirely lost.
The summer continued.
The days looked almost identical from the outside, yet inside me a war was taking place.
The desire for everything collided constantly with the expectation of nothing.
I wanted love but sometimes lacked the courage even for a conversation.
I wanted adventure but could not bring myself to leave.
I wanted change while returning day after day to the same places.
And then, one suffocating evening, rain came.
Not ordinary rain.
A summer storm.
The kind that arrives violently, without permission, striking roofs, windows and streets as though the sky itself has finally had enough.
I stepped outside and let it soak me.
Water ran down my face, my clothes, my hands.
For once, I did not move away from it.
It felt as though the rain were removing an old skin.
And standing there, beneath that broken sky, I understood something I had been searching for in other people for far too long.
Not everything I needed had to come from someone else.
Perhaps what I had been asking the world to give me was something I first had to learn to give myself.
When you left, there were no dramatic goodbyes.
No great scene.
No rain against windows.
No broken glass.

No final embrace worthy of a film.
Only a heavy silence that remained suspended between the walls after you were gone.
And my footsteps returning to the waterfront.
To the palms.
To the ships.
To the sea.
For a long time, I believed summer had betrayed me.
Summer had promised everything and left behind an emptiness deeper than winter.
Years passed before I understood that this was not true.
That summer had not taken everything from me.
It had taken my illusions.
And perhaps I had confused them with everything.
I never learned what happened to the girl carrying Hesse beneath her arm.
I never discovered the name of the old man with the harmonica.
Some people enter our lives for only a few seconds and remain inside us for years.
Perhaps we do not need to know their stories.
Perhaps it is enough that, for one brief moment, they became part of ours.
Years later, when July returns and the city once again smells of hot stone, salt and asphalt, I sometimes stop.
In the distance, I hear an old guitar.
In my memory, a harmonica begins to play.
Among strangers, I imagine I see a familiar book tucked beneath someone's arm.
And then I remember the person I was.
The one who believed his hands were empty simply because they were not holding what he had wanted.
They were never empty.
They held an entire summer.
A longing.
A few departures.
A storm.
A love that could not remain.
And a man who was only beginning to learn how to be alone with himself without feeling abandoned.
That summer did not teach me how to get everything I wanted.
It taught me how to survive what I did not receive.
And perhaps that is why I now know what I could not have known then:
the greatest courage is not in receiving everything you desire.
It is in still being capable of desire after everything you were denied.
I turned toward the sea.
The sun was slowly sinking beyond the horizon, leaving a long golden path across the water.
For once, I did not wish for anyone to return.
I did not ask for an answer.
I did not wait for a miracle.
I simply stood there.
And for the first time, nothing was missing.
Because it had been the summer when I wanted everything and expected nothing.
Only much later did I understand—
life had not left me empty-handed.
It had left me with myself.

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Poet • Writer • Novelist • Essayist
Split, Croatia 🇭🇷

Amb. Ankica Anchie Biskupović (literary pseudonym Ankica Anchie), born in 1969 in Split, Croatia, is a Croatian poet, writer, novelist, essayist, short story author, satirist, aphorist, visual artist, humanist, and Cultural Ambassador with a distinguished international literary presence.

Her literary work encompasses poetry, prose, novels, essays, satire, aphorisms, children's literature, and humorous writings, promoting peace, cultural dialogue, human dignity, and universal humanistic values.

In 2025, she was named among the 100 Most Influential Literary Figures in the World by Barcelona Adabia. In 2026, she received the prestigious Naji Naaman Literary Prizes – Creativity Prize among 4,127 participants from 83 countries and the Literary Icon Award 2026 from Creative Beacons International Group.

Her works have received numerous international literary and artistic distinctions and have been translated and published in magazines, anthologies, and cultural journals across Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas.

She serves as Ambassador for Croatia within African Poetry Giant, is a VIP Member of CIESART – International Chamber of Writers and Artists, Delegate of the Panorama International Literature Festival (PILF 2026), Delegate and Member of the Diplomatic Corps of UFGL, and a member of several international literary and cultural organizations.

Her published books include the poetry collections Beside jedne Dalmatinke I & II, Kleknut htjedoh, učitelju, Grlom.u jagode, Zvjezdana prašina, and the novel Tišina iza stakla, while several new literary works are currently in preparation.
Her guiding belief is:
"Literature is a bridge connecting people, languages, cultures, and humanity."

Amb. Ankica Anchie Biskupović
Croatia
Poet • Writer • Novelist • Essayist • Humanist • Satirist • Aphorist • Visual Artist • Cultural Ambassador

Sabyasachi Roy

The Politics of Sentencing

Here I am, sitting before an MRI plate. It is not merely an image of the cervical spine; it is the skeleton of our democratic structure. The white discs of bone, arranged one after another, resemble an orderly bureaucracy. And that dark space in between—the part they call the disc—is precisely the void where our rights, our protests, have been gouged out. Look at this plate, with its blue body and gaping bony cavities—it is not merely absorbing light; it is recording our silence.
Look at how those metallic wires are wound around vertebrae number 6 and 7. Are they there merely to hold the bones together? No. They are the apparatus of control that keeps our necks permanently straight, forever positioned to say "yes." The twists of those wires are the clauses of the sedition law; once they are wound around the throat, no protest can emerge. When the State twists our neck in the name of its sovereignty, this is how its imprint appears in the radiology lab. And look over there: at levels 4 and 3, there are no wires, only silence. Exactly like the silence that follows the looting of a vote. Sitting here in this bluish darkness, I wonder: does this straight spine of ours ever learn how to bend beneath the boots of state power? Perhaps this very plate is its final sentence, where every number—from 1 to 8—is a carefully engineered chamber of the state apparatus, where every one of our hatreds, every fear, every silent consent is being captured and imprisoned in a digital body like this.

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The Country After Leaving

At dawn, the curtains look like tired passports.
I leave with one shirt, two photographs,
and the address of a place that no longer exists.
At the checkpoint, a boy examines my face
as if I might be hiding a country inside it.
I smile. He doesn’t.
Behind me, the old street keeps burning its ordinary breakfast:
bread, petrol, jasmine.
Ahead—another language, another sky,
the clean violence of welcome.
They ask what I left behind.
I say: nothing. A beautiful lie.
My dead cities travel light, apparently.
On the train, someone sleeps against the window.
Outside, fields slide past like film
from a life I almost remember.
By evening, I understand:
home is not where you return.
It is the border guard inside you
who never stops asking for papers.

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Protocol for Peeling Citrus

Before the morning notifications start their daily riot,
I sit at the formica table and peel an orange like a surgeon.
Each pearly cell of juice separated without a drop spilled—
a devout, completely useless ritual of precision.
In the next room, the pencil marks on the doorframe
measure a child who isn't here anymore.
The bed sits empty, shades drawn against the rude sunlight
that insists on reminding the walls of what they used to hold.
My body is a crowded room filled with ghosts—
the dead aunt who taught me to speak without shame,
the friends who lived in the sun while I hid in syntax.
I eat the fruit slowly. Sweet, sharp, utterly vacant.

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Marjola Dashi Jaupi

SUITCASE

Today, in this suitcase,
I am not packing only my clothes,
but a little earth from my homeland,
so that I may breathe its scent
whenever longing overtakes me...

There, another land awaits me,
another language—

not the language once spoken
by my grandparents,
my parents,
my friends...

Today, in this suitcase,
I am not packing only my dreams,
nor childhood
that turned grey before its time,

but photographs of my parents,
now gone,

so that, from somewhere above,
they may reach down to caress me
with their wings of air.

My homeland.
My earth.

Why could you not keep me warm
within your body,
as a mother holds her child
within her womb?

Why, my homeland?
Why?

The airplane rises into flight...

Far below,
my homeland is growing smaller
and smaller...

The Prime Minister's Office,

the Parliament,
and all the cities,
one after another,
begin slowly to shrink...

They dissolve
like a grain of sugar,

until nothing is left
but a tiny point
on the horizon.

And here,
in this limbus between the clouds,

the buried voice of my conscience
brings back to me Naim,
our great national poet:
“You, Albania, bestow upon me honor
and the name Albanian.”

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Tirana, Albania

Niloy Rafiq

Chandrabati

At the estuary of miraculous eyes, a fair of words gathers,
Tilottama-In the artist's city, hearts exchange through countless nights with the wind,
Hide-and-seek of love, the rooster's call of parting, secret whispers in the chamber of sleep.
Again and again the soul calls-come, guest word-bird, at all hours,
Into Chandrabati's land. In the airy dwelling, sweet sun brings winter's warmth in the morning,
She will arrive at the station, though someone said she has not yet come-Perhaps a slight delay for Chandrabati.

At midday, upon the horizon of light and shadow, the royal bird grazes in Shibrampur.
Evening descends, moonlight blossoms on the river Chandra, the stars fall asleep.
Two guardians of Chandrabati stand shy, serene, tender, magical-
At the border of joy, barbed wire dims nectar, rain falls in the courtyard of Brahmaputra.
Birdsong weaves its tale, moonlight unfurls into morning leaves.

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Translator : Jyotirmoy Nandy

NILOY RAFIQ



Born: August 6, 1983
Hometown: Maheshkhali, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh

Niloy Rafiq began his literary journey in his school years, contributing to the literary pages of local daily newspapers. His voice soon reached national prominence, with poems appearing in leading newspapers and little magazines across Bangladesh. Over time, his work transcended borders: more than a hundred of his poems have been published in international literary journals, magazines, and newspapers.

His poetry has been translated into over thirty languages—including English, Spanish, Swedish,Finnish, Albanian, Macedonian, Serbian, Russian,Ukrainan, German, Italian, Greek, French, Portuguese, Persian, Hebrew, Polish, Arabic, Urdu, and Chinese—testifying to its universal resonance.

Published Works

English Collections (Amazon, Latin America):
1. Sun Leaf
2. An Incomplete Kiss
3. White Stone (English and French)
4,The Fragrance of Fire (English and Italin)

Bengali Collections:
1. Bishuddho Bishade Bhasi Ami Rajhans (I Float Like a Swan in Pure Melancholy)
2. Pipasar Paramayu (The Longevity of Thirst)

3. Nona Manusher Mukh (The Face of the Salt People)
4. Agnyato Agun (The Unknown Fire)
5. Ankhi Anka Adinath (The Eyed Adinath)
6. Momer Prarthonay Nato Matir Sharir (The Earthen Body Bowed in Waxen Prayer)

: Niloy Rafiq. The Poet of a New Horizon: a book of review on the poet's works, written by Poet Professor Gausur Rahman, a renowned literary critique and author of Bangladesh

Forthcoming Collections:

1. Nur-er Pathor (Stone of Light)

Rhiannon Owens

Tiny Apples 🍎🍎🍎

The child grasps his mother's hand
But tugs backwards,
There is something of wonder he has found...

Scattered across the wall in bright fruited hue
Are dozens of Rowan berries; or maybe Mountain Ash to me and you...

And in excitement the child exclaims,
"Look! Tiny Apples!"
and cradles one in his hand,
With the widest eyes...

If only we could all see "Tiny Apples" wherever we go
Then the World could truly be miraculous...

But right now it seems that we reap what we sow.

And child and mother walk on
As he examines his mini prize...

From a distance once more
"Tiny Apples!" he cries
With joy in his guileless surprise.

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Ashley O'Keefe

The Nice Gentleman

I walked in, not knowing
if you'd recognise my face.

You sat, staring through the window at the bare trees.

I waited for your gaze to shift,
for you to notice me.

You turned and glared with curiosity,
eyes blank, remembering nothing.

"Can I help you?" you asked.
"You already have," I smiled.

You blinked, confused.
I didn't try to explain or force you to remember.

Instead, I read from a book.
Within minutes you were relaxed.

You didn't know my name
But my voice brought comfort.

A quiet morning,
another familiar day.

A memory fading
Withdrawing from the world.

I'd bring you flowers,
Tell you jokes,
Read your favourite stories.

“The nice gentleman who reads...”

"... Where is the nice gentleman? The gentleman who reads."

She'd ask every day
Then every now and then.

Until the memory fades...

She sat, staring through the window at the bare trees...

I didn't come.

I never came again.

I'd become the leaf caught in the autumn wind,
resting exactly where it fell.

Ashley O'Keefe
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Swayam Prashant

A Light-Bringer, A Trail-Blazer

He came late, but he came like a whirlwind,
rather , a storm.
He created a path in a place
where paths were unknown.
Where people could see
only what was under their noses
he could see
far beyond the horizon
and led the people and the community
to a higher goal
which they had never dreamt of.
He was a pioneer, a real visionary
in the field of school education.
Sarupathar can never forget him;
the history of education of excellent quality here
can never be complete
without recording his contributions
be it in the establishment of Dayanand Vidya Niketan ,
the first ever English Medium School at Sarupathar in 1989.
or in the founding of Bolosing Memorial School,
his own English Medium School in 1993.

English medium schools are not just known
for their medium of instruction only
but for the discipline and best practices in teaching
they follow in their campuses
which are unheard of in provincialised schools.

Mr. Sibaji Rai was the first educationist
in the entire Dhansiri Subdivision (now, Sarupathar Co-District)
to lead the first ever English medium school
and who spread such light of knowledge
that it was never seen here before.
Parents and guardians liked him,
students loved him
and the public respected him.
he was an ideal for others
who followed his footsteps.
His students have achieved great heights in different fields.
Now several of them are architects, doctors,
professors, teachers, government employees and a lot more... ...
Really, he opened a new path
and left a blazing trail for others to follow.
* * * *
Nearly a score of years of difference in age
did not matter much in our friendship.

(He was one of the six persons who could
talk with me in English when I arrived
at Sarupathar in late eighties.)
We talked like two true and intimate friends,
discussed matters related to school education
and how to improve it
and to make it more useful and effective.
We both had led the “Elite Circle”,
an English speaking club,
an unheard thing at Sarupathar.
He is truly unforgettable.
He was a friend whose memory I will carry
in my heart forever.

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Laurie Nguyen

A Servant's Dilemma

What do you bring to the table?
Nothing. Just a body and a smile and an anchor for an upcoming storm.
Can you cook or clean or suck a dick on command?
I like to serve and help my community.
Do you work out? Can you not get too big?
I carry the weight of my mother's legacies, and her mother's before that.
Can you make sure the children are always taken cared of?
My lullabies are my own, and my voice carries into my dreams.
Can you love me if I have no money?
Love has no conditions, and my heart is filled to the brim with it.
Will you let me lead you?
I serve as a partner, putting others before myself.
Good. Can I have your number?
I don't know.
What'd you mean you don't know?
I don't know you well.
You're being difficult.
What'd you bring to the table?
My handsome body and a gaming controller that's crumbled under the weight of my leadership qualities.
Can you cook or clean or pleasure me?
Your pleasure isn't my priority.
Do you work out?
I carry the weight of my legacy on my shoulders. I'm just starting out.
Will you make sure the children are always taken cared of?
That's your job.
Will you love me even if I have no money?
I expect you to pay 50/50.
Will you let me lead you?
Women are supposed to submit to men.
No.
No what?
I'm not giving you my number.

…

Bitch.

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Dr. Lee Hye Seon

Unreachable

I encountered Ron Mueck's* multitude of skulls,
piled layer upon layer, all the way to the lofty ceiling.

Hollow eyes, hollow noses,
skulls sitting, standing, lying down, neatly stacked one upon another,
their brains long drained away.

They gazed at me tenderly—
the sorrowful eyes of lives before this one, of lives before those lives, of countless kalpas gone by;
and the loves of tomorrow and the day after, the loves of lives yet to come.

I have carried them within me,
dragging that multitude
through every single cell of my being,
wandering through the muddy fields of this earthly life.
All this time, I have merely been counting the vibrations of cesium atoms.

Not a breath of wind comes down from the sky.
A dream lies face down; not even a blade of grass stirs.

And as I stand before the wind that refuses, utterly, to make room for me,
I watch myself—
myself, my own—
the drifting cloud, the singing cicada,
the love of a grub beneath the earth that called out to you, singing itself to death, the idle slumber here on this street,
there beneath that tree, upon your back

Dragging along the immeasurable selves within me,
a cow, overloaded with the burden of a lifetime, climbs once again today,
prostrating itself with its whole body, over Sumeru, over the Mountain of Skulls.

A skull, its brain long drained away,
searching for the dreaming me.

* Ron Muck: An Australian-born contemporary sculptor renowned for his hyperrealistic human figures and sculptures, often rendered on a monumental or unusually small scale.

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닿을 수 없는

론 뮤익*의 해골무리를 만났다
높은 천정까지 첩첩 쌓여 있었다

뻥 뚫린 눈, 뻥 뚫린 코

앉고 서고 누르고 차곡차곡 쌓인
뇌수가 다 빠져나간 해골들

다정히 나를 바라보는
전생 전전생, 억겁의 슬픈 눈
내일 또 내일, 미래생의 내 사랑들

나는 내 안에,
세포 하나마다 저 무리들을
끌고, 끌며
이승 진흙밭을 헤매어 왔구나
세슘원자의 진동만 헤아리고 있었구나

하늘에서는 바람 한 점 불어오지 않는다
엎드린 몽상, 풀잎 하나 까딱하지 않는다

도무지 곁을 내주지 않는 바람 앞에 서 있는 나를 바라보는
나는, 나의
흐르는 구름, 노래하는 매미
죽도록 노래하며 너를 부르던 땅속 굼벵이사랑
너의 등에 업혀 무위도식하던 이 거리 저 나무 위의 단잠

헤아릴 수 없는 내 속의 나를 끌고
한 생의 짐 넘치도록 실은 소가 오늘도
수미산 해골산을 오체투지로 넘는다

뇌수가 빠져나간 해골
꿈꾸는 나를 찾아서,

*론 뮤익(Ron Mueck): 오스트레일리아 태생의 현대 조각가로, 기념비적으로 거대한 크기부터 매우 작은 크기까지 인간의 모습을 극도로 사실적으로 재현한 조각 작품으로 유명하다.



Poet Dr. Lee Hye-Seon was born in 1950 and is a poet, literary critic, Doctor of Literature, and professor of poetry writing. She made her literary debut in 1981 through recommendations in the literary magazine Simunhak. She has published several poetry collections, including Extinguishing with Fire, Burning in Water, Half of the Spilled Liquor, Every day is a good day, Birdsong Delivery, If You Happen to Meet the Wind, The One Who Knows Me Better Than Myself, and A Divine Being (One God). Additionally, she has authored books such as An Evening with Lee Hye-Seon's Poetry, Lee Hye-Seon's Stroll Through Famous Poems, Literature and the Transfiguration of Dreams, and My Father's Educational Methods. She also compiled Corona? Korea! In 2016, her works were selected as excellent books in the Sejong Book Literary Sharing Program.
She has received numerous literary awards, including the Yoon Dong-Ju Literary Award, Korean Contemporary Poet Award, Korean Arts and Culture Grand Prize, Critics' Association Criticism Award, Dongguk Literary Award, Pyoam Ikjae Literary Award, Korean Poetry and Literature Award, and Seonsa Literary Award.

She has taught at various universities, including as a visiting professor at Dongguk University and Sejong University. She has also served as Vice Chairman of the Korean Writers' Association, a member of the Literature Promotion Policy Committee at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Chairperson of the Korean Women Writers' Association, and President of organizations such as the Dongguk Literary Society, Korean Poetry and Literature Writers' Association, Gangdong Literary Association and Distinguished Scholar with IAE. Her current Positions are Advisor to the Korean Writers' Association (KWA), Advisor to PEN International Korea Center, Honorary Chairperson of the Korean Women Writers' Association and 4th President of the Korean Association of World Literature.
Her poetry has been translated and introduced in various countries, including Italy, Germany, Egypt, Greece, Belgium, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Kosovo, Albania, Vietnam, Mexico, South America, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan.

The Punk Poe

“Deadly Chamber”

I draw in your breath shallow cold and steady
Froze in my nightmare a slow jagged machete

Razor blade fangs sinks beneath the surface
Ripping through my scream its maniacal circus

Falling like foggy moonlight, gripping my mind
A fingerprint memorizing trauma, misery’s mine

Suffocating romance, does he dare even smile?
I’m your executioner I skillfully murdered in style

A deadly chamber, you can’t fathom an escape
Eternally my Romeo let me whip you into shape

Like all silly fairytales they must come to an end
I don’t play fucking games & certainly not pretend

Hush hush little baby don’t you dare shed a tear
What’s that you whispered falling upon deft ear?

The Punk Poe…
Always Be Punk…
Always Be Drunk…
(On Poetry)

“March of Ides are Afraid”

Something billowing haunts March
Torturing the essence of the heart

Unknown the smithereens it brings
Lies upon Hades’ heathens wings

Shallow are ones smothered in regret
Dancing jagged thorns not to forget

Numbness flows within hollow veins
Will infinity forthcoming be in flames?

Way of the warriors extend your blade
Take out evil-doers consumed with hate

Crawling the skin just chillin like a villain
Eden's fruit beget sin, wikked was forgiven

Enraged sheer activity dormant perception
Settle walls of the soul unto fatal infection

Turning shoulders, like a worn out pair of shoes
Stiff upper lips press forward making no excuse

Shadows inhabiting every sobbing empty soul
Little by little relinquishing every bit of control

March of Idea are afraid & screaming into dust
Gallows mirror hollow swinging pendulum is just

Knees must be cleansed prepare for confession
Bless me for I have sinned a killer’s possession

The Punk Poe…
Always Be Punk…
Always Be Drunk…
(On Poetry)

“Watchful Mothers”

You’d love my cold corpse while it lie near you
Said my lips were your favorite shade of blue
Promised an electric funeral & perfect voltage
Long stemmed roses & a razor sharp hostess

Straight edge blade slid nicely into my jugular
The sweetest man ever my handsome Lucifer
Do you mind if we dance on my frozen grave?
I’ve always dreamt of becoming a zombie slave

It feels just like my birthday may I make a wish?
Dracula would steal this bloody valentine kiss
Does my icy rigid cold rotting flesh turn you on?
We’ll stay out all night & go to bed before dawn

My ballroom gown stained in cherry hemoglobin
Summoning demons & conjure a satanic omen
I’ll say cheese with my freshly carved out smile
My back fits a machete I was murdered in style

A mouth spitting bile, come steal a little smooch
I promise you a chamber filled with every abuse
The torture I’ll inflict, screams heard for eternity
It’s hotter than hell more graves then Germany

Hounds of hades will hunt you down like rabbits
There’s no Sundays here we kill every Sabbath
Barking at the moon a summons our forefathers
Grind bones on headstones your watchful mother

The Punk Poe…
  Always Be Punk…
Always Be Drunk…
  (On Poetry)

Habibullayev Asadullo Akmalovich

HONOR

“Honor is more precious than death.”
The street was quiet, and everything around was peaceful. Safar was walking along the road at the entrance to the village. He had just turned eighteen. He was rather short, with dark eyebrows, a fair complexion, a strong sense of pride, a thoughtful nature, an attractive appearance, and a powerful young body. He had recently graduated from school and was not yet engaged in any particular work. His parents were elderly, and he was their youngest child. His older brothers already had large families of their own, while his sisters had married and moved away.
Safar arrived home.
The weather was hot. Summer had come, and the sun had been shining brightly all day.
“Assalamu alaykum, Father. How are you?”
“Wa alaykum assalam, my son. Are you well?”
“Yes, Father, I am fine, thank you. Where is Mother?”
“She went to the neighbor’s house. Son, your uncle called yesterday. He said there is a job available. It is a good and easy job.”
“Yes, Father, I will go. I am sitting around doing nothing anyway.”
“All right, my son. I will tell your uncle to take you with him.”
Safar went to work. He was an energetic young man and soon proved himself to be a good worker. A month had already passed since he had started working with his uncle. His uncle, Akram, was the head of a construction team. He earned a good living and usually had ten to fifteen workers under his supervision.
Safar worked diligently. He spent one or two years working under his uncle, who paid him a good salary. During those two years, Safar became a skilled builder. He learned a great deal and mastered nearly all the secrets of construction.
One day, Akram gathered all the workers together.
“At the end of this week, I am giving everyone two days off. Go home and spend some time with your families.”
Safar returned home. He saw his parents, brothers, and sisters. His nephews and nieces had also grown up and were almost the same age as him. Some had already turned eighteen, while others had reached adulthood.
One day, his father Erkin said:
“My son, it is time for us to get you married.”
Erkin was over fifty years old. Gray hairs had appeared in his hair. He had spent most of his life working in construction and had always brought honestly earned bread into his home. He was an educated and respectable man.
His wife, Mohichehra, was over forty. Gray hairs had also appeared in her hair, and wrinkles had begun to show on her face. Yet she was still energetic, beautiful, fair-skinned, and gentle like an angel.
“My son,” she said, “your aunt has found a girl for you from our own village. She is educated and works at a kindergarten.”
“Mother, if you like her, that is enough for me. You know my heart. You have never made a wrong choice.”
“My son, all I want is to see you happy. I have helped all your brothers and sisters settle down. If I can see you settled as well, I will have no regrets in life.”
“Mother, please take care of yourself too. I need you.”

“All right, my child.”

Erkin and Mohichehra talked for a long time while Safar quietly listened.

On Tuesday morning, Mohichehra and her younger sister Gulnoza went to ask for the girl’s hand in marriage. Gulnoza was a lively and determined woman. She was rather short and energetic. Whenever there was a ceremony or celebration in the neighborhood, Gulnoza was always there. Without her, gatherings seemed dull. That was why everyone invited her to weddings and other events.

At last, Gulnoza and Mohichehra arrived at Aunt Gulsum’s house and knocked on the door.

“Come in, the door is open,” a voice called from inside.

They entered.

“Assalamu alaykum, Auntie. How are you? Is everyone at home well?”

“Wa alaykum assalam. We are fine, thank you. How are you?”

“Thanks to God, everything is fine.”

“Please, sit down.”

“Thank you.”

“Gulsara, come here!”

“Yes, Auntie, I am coming.”

Gulsara came in, greeted the guests, laid the table, and brought various refreshments. After they had talked for some time, Gulnoza began the main conversation.

“My dear aunt, Gulsara, we have come to ask for your daughter Durdona’s hand in marriage for our Safar. Now you cannot refuse us. Look at my sister—what a wonderful mother-in-law she would be! My nephew Safar is hardworking and capable. He is their youngest child. Once they see him settled, they will have no regrets.”

Gulsum replied:

“My dear Gulnoza, I am only the grandmother. Her mother Gulsara and her father are here. Whatever they decide will be final.”

“But, Auntie, without your blessing, they would not make such a decision either.”

After a long discussion, they finally agreed.

“Congratulations! We are relatives by marriage now,” they said, embracing each other.

They also gave gifts to everyone.

“Mohichehra,” Gulsum said, “we have given the second daughter of my eldest son to your son Safar. We know that your family is good, so we agreed quickly. Durdona is educated and works as a kindergarten teacher. Will you allow her to continue working after marriage?”

“Of course, Auntie, I will.”

“Let the young people meet tomorrow and talk to each other. They should see whether they like one another.”

“Yes, Auntie.”

“Now give us your blessing, Auntie. We should be going. As they say, ‘A relationship between in-laws lasts a thousand years.’”

Aunt Gulsum gave a long prayer, wishing happiness to the young couple, wisdom to the elders, and peace and tranquility to everyone.

“Goodbye, dear in-law,” they said, embracing once more before leaving.

The sisters returned home happily. As soon as they entered the house, they told Safar:

“Tomorrow you are going to meet the girl. They have agreed. Do not forget to take her out tomorrow.”

Erkin also came home. He had been visiting their neighbor Samad.

“Give me a reward for the good news!” the women said. “You are now related by marriage to Berdimuhammad. We convinced them immediately, although it was rather difficult to persuade Aunt Gulsum.”

“That is wonderful. Congratulations, son-in-law! And congratulations to you too, our new relatives.”

“Tomorrow the young people will meet. Then we will go and formally confirm the engagement.”

“All right,” Erkin said.
The next day Safar dressed very neatly. First, he went to Berdimuhammad’s house, picked up Durdona, and together they went to the Youth Park.
Durdona was tall and slender, with dark eyebrows and eyes, and fair skin. She was twenty-two years old and a very intelligent young woman.
The young people liked each other and talked for a long time.
“Safar, it is getting late. I should go home. My family will worry about me.”
“Wait, Durdona. I will walk you home.”
“All right, let us go.”
They continued talking as they walked.
“Please stop at the beginning of the street,” Durdona said. “It would be embarrassing if the neighbors saw us. I can walk the rest of the way myself.”
“Goodbye, Durdona. Get home safely. I will write to you tonight.”
“All right.”
A month passed. The young people met frequently. Meanwhile, the elders formally confirmed the engagement and decided that the wedding would be held in the summer.
The wedding day drew closer. Safar completed several jobs, while his brothers and sisters helped him greatly. The wedding was scheduled for July 18. Only three days remained. Everything was ready: the wedding hall had been arranged, and the cars had been prepared.
On the wedding morning, the sound of traditional trumpets and drums filled the air. There were many people—women, children, elderly people, and almost the entire village. Safar’s friends were keeping the celebration lively.
Safar dressed and set off to the bride’s home. They arrived and entered the house. Durdona came out, bowing according to tradition. Safar gave her flowers, and they stood together while she continued performing the traditional bridal bow.
Safar and his friends were taken into a separate room while Durdona went to change her clothes. After sitting for a while, the groom’s party announced that it was time to take the bride.
Durdona came out and tearfully said goodbye to her parents. Accompanied by sad music, she left her parental home with her husband.
First, they visited the place where the “Boysun Spring” festival was held, then the Youth Park, and finally they brought the bride to Safar’s home.
Preparations then began for the evening celebration. Durdona entered the wedding hall in a white dress, while Safar wore a black suit.
The celebration began. Everyone danced in front of the bride and groom, while Durdona continued the traditional bow.
The wedding was wonderful. Both families celebrated joyfully, and everything went just as they had hoped. It was the beginning of Safar and Durdona’s married life. They were extremely happy.
Days passed. Safar returned to work, and Durdona also resumed her job. She left home every morning and came back after lunch. She loved children and cared for each of them warmly.
August was coming to an end. Safar had returned from work, and the beautiful evenings of their married life continued. The young couple enjoyed making each other happy.
Erkin and Mohichehra did not allow Safar to leave for work again immediately.
“Rest for a month or two,” they told him.
So he stayed home and occupied himself with household work. Since he had free time, he began taking Durdona to work every morning and bringing her home afterward. They would talk and laugh throughout the journey.
One day, just after they arrived home, Durdona became dizzy and started vomiting repeatedly. Safar carried her inside and laid her down.
After she recovered a little, he asked:

“Are you all right, my dear?”
“Yes, my husband, I am fine.”
“A little later, get dressed. We are going somewhere.”
After a couple of hours, Durdona dressed, and they went to the hospital. A nurse examined her and later returned with the test results.
“Congratulations,” she said. “You are going to become parents soon.”
The young couple were overjoyed. They immediately returned home and told Mohichehra and Erkin. They also called Durdona’s mother.
It was a beautiful day. Everyone was happy.
Time passed. Safar’s sisters-in-law and sisters often came to visit Durdona. She continued going to work. Usually, she woke up early, prepared breakfast for her parents-in-law, and then left for work.
Winter arrived. Snow fell, and the weather became cold, but she still went to work every day. Safar had also gone away for work. Durdona sometimes became lonely and visited her parents.
Winter passed and spring arrived. Safar returned home. Durdona stopped working because the birth of their child was approaching.
One evening, Erkin was returning from the neighbor’s house when he suddenly heard Durdona’s voice. He immediately called Mohichehra, and Safar came running as well.
They quickly took Durdona to the hospital. Doctors took her inside. About an hour later, Nurse Gulandon came out and asked for a reward for good news.
“Congratulations! You have a grandson!”
“Thank you, Gulandon!”
“You are welcome. It is our duty.”
Mohichehra and Erkin returned home. Safar stayed at the hospital with his wife throughout the night.
Early the next morning, Mohichehra brought warm soup.
“Let my daughter-in-law drink it while it is still hot.”
“Of course, Sister. Take it inside.”
They visited Durdona, who had recovered considerably, and saw their grandson as well.
“He looks exactly like my son,” Mohichehra said.
“Yes, Mother, he looks like Safar.”
“My daughter-in-law, are you feeling better? Does anything hurt?”
“No, Mother. I am much better.”
“Take care of yourself.”
“I will, Mother.”
Safar went to arrange a car. They were told that the mother and baby would be discharged on Thursday.
That day, Durdona’s parents stayed beside their daughter. At night, Safar again remained at the hospital.
The next morning Durdona’s sisters came, followed by her aunts. Even Aunt Gulsum came to visit. Everyone was delighted.
As evening approached, Durdona said:
“My husband, go home tonight. You are very tired.”
“No, Durdona. I want to stay with you and our child.”
Together, Safar and Durdona chose the name Samar for their son.
Safar spent another night at the hospital. Early the next morning, Mohichehra and Erkin arrived in a Zhiguli car and took Durdona and the baby home.
Both families and many relatives were waiting for them.
After the traditional ceremonies, the baby was carried into the house.
A few days later, Samar was placed in a traditional cradle. Life continued, and the young couple enjoyed the happiness of being parents.
When Samar was two months old, Durdona returned to work. She left in the morning and came home around lunchtime. Mohichehra looked after Samar during the day.

A year passed. Samar had grown considerably. Durdona continued working, and Safar continued going away for construction jobs.
One day, Safar returned home earlier than expected.
“My son, you came back early. Is everything all right?” Erkin asked.
“Yes, Father. Everything is fine. We completed the work quickly.”
Safar greeted everyone and immediately ran to his son. Samar had become a charming and active child. Like his father, he was energetic.
Later, Durdona returned home.
“Oh, Safar! You are back!”
“Yes, my dear. I am home. Are you tired? Has work been difficult? Has our son caused you trouble?”
“No, everything is fine. And you? Are you well? Are you tired from work?”
“No, thank you. Everything is fine.”
The husband and wife talked for a long time.
Later, Mohichehra called:
“Daughter-in-law, change your clothes and start preparing dinner. It is getting late, and your husband has come home.”
“Yes, Mother.”
“Durdona,” Safar said, “leave the baby with Father. I will help with the pilaf.”
“All right, my husband.”
Erkin laughed.
“These young people! One moment they call each other ‘my beloved,’ another moment ‘father’ and ‘mother.’”
Mohichehra smiled.
“Leave them alone. As long as our son and daughter-in-law are happy, they can call each other whatever they want.”
“You are right.”
Erkin and Mohichehra then went into the garden.
“We have not watered these plants for quite a while,” Mohichehra said.
“Yes. Tomorrow we should ask our son to water them.”
“The green apricots on the trees near the neighbor’s wall have grown quite large.”
“Yes. Do you remember? Our wedding was in spring. You used to pick those green apricots for me every day.”
“Of course I remember. What beautiful days they were.”
“Our youth has passed.”
“Yes. I have lived in this house for many years now. These apricot trees were already here when I became a bride. Look at them—they are still standing tall, still young, still bearing fruit. But our youth passed like a single season of fruit on that tree.”
“Our spring has passed,” Erkin said, “but it was a beautiful spring, one that can never be repeated.”
“That is our happiness. We have no regrets.”
“We both loved spring. Almost every happy event in our lives happened in spring. Do you remember? Our first son Nosir was born in spring. So were Sherzod, Gulchehra, Dilfuza, Sarbona, Safura, and our youngest son Safar. Look how wonderful it is. Every one of our children is happy and has children of their own.”
“Yes. This too is a gift from God. We must be among His blessed servants. Our children grew up without bringing shame upon us.”
“There can be no greater happiness than that, my Mohichehra.”
“My dear husband.”
They walked around the garden for a long time, remembering their youth and the years that had passed.
Meanwhile, Durdona and Safar were inside with Samar.
“Look how sweet our son is,” Durdona said. “He looks exactly like you.”

“Yes, my dear.”
The evening grew late.
“I have already prepared the pilaf. We can serve it soon. I have laid the table. Once Mother and Father come in, everything will be ready.”
“Durdona, does Samar make things difficult for you when I am away? You have both work and the house to manage.”
“No, my husband.”
“If you ever have difficulties, tell me. Do not forget.”
“All right.”
Soon Erkin and Mohichehra returned from the garden.
“Mother, Father, come in. Dinner is ready.”
They sat together and ate. Afterward, they drank tea and talked for a long time.
Later, the young couple went to their room, and Erkin and Mohichehra also went to sleep.
The next morning, Durdona went to work. Safar stayed home with Samar. Mohichehra and Erkin went to visit Toshtemir, Mohichehra’s younger brother.
Toshtemir usually lived in Tashkent and returned to Boysun only occasionally. He had his own house and shop in Tashkent, while his family remained in the village.
Safar became exhausted looking after Samar. The child never stayed still. One moment he cried, the next he laughed and played.
“Your mother will come soon, my son.”
Although Samar could not yet speak, he became happy when he heard the word “mother.”
About an hour later, Durdona came home.
“Mother, are you tired? Did the children trouble you?”
“No, no. Everything is fine.”
“And you? Did you get tired looking after the baby?”
“Not at all.”
A week or two passed.
“Durdona, prepare my clothes. I am leaving for work tomorrow.”
“All right.”
Safar left the next morning. Erkin gave him a long blessing before he got into the car and departed.
After Safar left, Erkin said:
“Tell your daughter-in-law to bring some tea outside. I will sit on the bench under the apricot tree.”
Mohichehra brought tea, and the couple talked.
“Send our daughter-in-law to visit her family,” Erkin said. “It has been a long time. She must miss her mother. She is someone else’s child too.”
“I do not stop her. If she wants to go, she can go whenever she likes. Her work ends around noon, but she usually comes home around one-thirty or two. Perhaps she visits her mother since her parents’ home is close to her workplace.”
“She is young. Maybe she wants to go out sometimes but feels shy about telling us.”
“Perhaps.”
Life continued in this way.
A month later, Safar returned from work and rested for some time. He went out with his friends and returned home in the evening. Durdona served dinner while Mohichehra entertained Samar.
That month Safar did not return to work.
One Monday morning, Durdona finished the household chores, handed Samar to Safar, dressed, and prepared to leave for work. Suddenly she felt unwell and collapsed.
Safar quickly lifted her onto the sofa and sprinkled water on her face.
“Durdona! Durdona, my dear, wake up!”
After the water touched her face, she regained consciousness.

“Are you all right? What happened?”
“My head started spinning and I fainted.”
“Then I am taking you to the hospital.”
“There is no need. I am fine.”
But Safar insisted and took her to the hospital.
Doctors examined Durdona and discovered that she was pregnant again.
Safar was so happy that he called all his relatives to share the good news.
The doctors recommended that Durdona remain in the hospital for one or two days.
Safar entered her room.
“Congratulations, Mother of my children. You have given me another child.”
Durdona smiled shyly.
“Tell me, what should I bring you?”
“Safar, I do not feel like eating anything. What did you do with Samar? Who is looking after him?”
“Samar is at home with my mother. Do not worry. Everything is fine.”
“All right.”
Safar returned home, where Mohichehra and Erkin congratulated him.
Months passed, and Durdona gave birth to a beautiful little girl. Safar named her Sanobar, choosing a name that sounded harmonious with his own.
Sanobar looked exactly like Durdona, almost as though she were a copy of her mother in childhood.
All the relatives came to see the newborn. The family held a joyful gathering.
“Durdona, look how beautiful our daughter is. She looks exactly like you.”
“Yes, she is beautiful.”
Samar was now two years old, while Sanobar was still a newborn.
When Sanobar was three weeks old, Safar returned to work. He had remained home for some time because he was worried that Durdona would struggle alone.
Durdona stayed away from work for quite a while because she was busy with the children and household responsibilities.
One day Mohichehra called her:
“Daughter-in-law!”
“Yes, Mother?”
“Make pilaf tonight. We are having guests. Your uncle and aunt are coming. Father invited them.”
“All right, Mother. I will start cooking. Please watch Sanobar. Samar is asleep.”
“Bring my granddaughter to me.”
“Yes, Mother.”
Durdona handed Sanobar to Mohichehra.
“I will cut the carrots and wash the rice. You will not be bored with your granddaughter.”
Within a couple of hours, Durdona completed all the preparations.
By evening, Erkin’s elder brother Jabbor and his wife Suluv arrived. They were very friendly people who easily won everyone’s affection.
“Erkin, your sister-in-law insisted that we come today. She said she missed Mohichehra. So I called you immediately to say we were coming.”
“You did the right thing, Brother. We have missed you as well.”
“How are my nephews, daughters-in-law, and grandchildren?”
“Thank God, everyone is well.”
“How are Nurbek, Diyor, Barchinoy, Sevinch, and your youngest, Otabek?”
“They are all fine. They send their greetings. They said they wanted to visit their uncle and missed their aunt’s cooking.”
“That is wonderful.”
Durdona came in.

“Assalamu alaykum, Uncle and Aunt. How are you?”
“Wa alaykum assalam, daughter. Are you well? Are the children and household chores tiring you?”
“Thank you, everything is fine. Mother, here is the tea. I will bring the pilaf shortly.”
“All right, daughter.”
Suluv said:
“Your daughter-in-law is very energetic. She manages the children, the home, and her work.”
“Yes, she is a good daughter-in-law.”
The brothers talked for a long time. It was already after nine o’clock when the guests decided to leave.
“We should go now.”
“Brother, you could stay a little longer.”
“Next time, Erkin.”
“All right.”
“Bring Mohichehra and visit us sometime. Bring Safar and his wife too.”
“God willing, we will.”
They said goodbye and left by car.
On the way, Suluv said:
“What wonderful days those were when we all lived in one courtyard. Do you remember? How quickly those years passed. A person’s life is like the wind—it passes so fast.”
“Yes. Those were beautiful times.”
“I lived together with my sister-in-law and my parents-in-law in one courtyard. We never quarreled. Look at people today. Ah, youth!”
“That is life.”
The guests left, and Durdona and Safar went to their room. The grandparents also went to bed.
The next morning, Safar left for work. Everyone saw him off.
At around eight o’clock, Durdona took Samar with her to work, while Sanobar stayed with her grandmother. Life continued in this manner.
Durdona usually returned a little later on Fridays because there was no work on Saturdays and she completed all her remaining tasks before coming home.
One Friday, Safar unexpectedly returned from work without telling anyone. He wanted to surprise Durdona and went to her workplace.
There, he saw Durdona sitting and holding hands with an unfamiliar man.
Safar lost control of himself. He ran toward them and struck Durdona several times with his fists. Then he attacked the man beside her.
Durdona was covered in blood and fell to the ground. The man immediately ran away.
Seeing what had happened, Samar clung to his mother, screaming and crying.
Safar did not know what to do. Finally, he picked Samar up and began walking toward home while the child continued shouting for his mother.
Durdona’s colleagues immediately called an ambulance.
By the time the ambulance arrived, Durdona had lost consciousness and was lying motionless. Her condition was extremely serious.
The doctors rushed her to the hospital.
Sadly, her heart stopped on the way, and she died.
A few minutes later, Durdona’s parents arrived at the hospital, crying and grieving.
Police officers came to Safar’s home and took him directly into custody. Erkin and Mohichehra were devastated. Mohichehra cried continuously, while Erkin followed the police officers.
By evening, the entire family’s life had been turned upside down.
Durdona was buried the next morning. A young woman had left this world far too early, and her children were now forced to grow up without a mother’s love.
Safar was sentenced to twenty years in prison.

The devastated parents did not know what to do.
Durdona's father cried:
"I no longer have such a daughter. She has brought shame upon me."
Erkin also cursed his son:
"I have no murderer for a son."
Mohichehra spent her time crying and trying to comfort Samar and Sanobar.
Durdona's mother came and took the grandchildren away with her.
Both families suffered deeply. One family was mourning a daughter, while the other was overwhelmed by grief and illness.
Mohichehra could not bear what had happened. She suffered a heart attack and was hospitalized.
Years passed.
Samar and Sanobar were raised by their maternal aunt.
Mohichehra did not live long after her heart attack and soon passed away.
Unable to bear the loneliness, Erkin also died.
Safar's elder brother Nosir moved into their parents' home.
For fifteen years, Nosir lived in the family house. He held weddings for his children, raised his family, and built additional rooms.
Nosir's wife, Erkagul, was a pleasant woman who got along well with everyone. Their three daughters were intelligent and well-mannered and married into respected families in the village.
Their only son had also married and had a daughter.
Twenty years passed since those tragic events.
Today Safar was being released from prison.
His brother Nosir and Erkagul went to meet him.
The brothers had seen each other only once or twice during all those years. Tears filled their eyes as they embraced each other for a long time.
They returned home in Nosir's car.
Although Safar was only in his forties, he looked much older. His face was covered with wrinkles, and he appeared weak and incapable of heavy work.
As he entered the gate of his childhood home, all the events of his life passed before his eyes one after another. He staggered, and Nosir caught him.
They gave Safar a separate room where he rested for several days.
Years of imprisonment in damp cells had damaged his health, and he had developed serious problems with one of his legs. He walked with a permanent limp.
Almost every day relatives came to visit him—his brothers, sisters, and others.
Nearly a year passed this way.
Eventually, Safar began to feel unwelcome even in the large family home.
Whatever he did seemed to irritate someone.
His brother repeatedly told him:
"Brother, I am getting old. Build yourself a house and get married. This house belongs to me now."
Safar did not know what to do.
Even his nephew often came home drunk and started arguments. One day, he even tried to attack Safar.
Poor Safar could do little. He had lost his former strength and could barely walk properly.
Months passed in this way.
Nosir was the eldest son, but the eldest child in the family was actually their sister Dilfuza.
Dilfuza was over seventy. Although she was elderly and rather heavy, she still looked younger than her age.
Her husband, Hoshim, was five years older than her. He had aged considerably but remained active.
When Dilfuza heard about the quarrels between her brothers, she repeatedly told them:
"Do not fight so much over one house."
Yet the conflict continued.

Dilfuza’s children were all settled and living happy lives.
After discussing the matter with her husband, she brought Safar to live in her home.
Safar stayed with his sister for quite some time. He helped his youngest nephew Samat in his large apple orchard. Samat often paid his uncle well for his work.
Eventually, Dilfuza persuaded Safar to marry again.
They found him a divorced woman from Pasurxi village in Boysun.
Her name was Gulmira.
She was over thirty but still energetic and beautiful. Her first marriage had ended because she had been unable to have children, and she still hoped to become a mother someday.
Gulmira was brought to Dilfuza’s home as a bride.
Safar and Gulmira lived there for one or two months.
However, Safar could not remain there permanently either. Eventually, he returned to his parents’ house and talked to his brother. He and Gulmira moved their belongings into one room.
Gulmira was an exceptionally generous and hardworking woman.
She cooked every day and did nearly all the household chores. She even helped her sister-in-law with her work and maintained good relations with the neighbors.
In simple terms, she was a remarkably kind woman.
For this reason, Safar soon fell deeply in love with her.
They lived in the house for several weeks.
However, Nosir took the matter to court. The court ruled in Nosir’s favor, giving him legal possession of the house.
Safar and his wife were forced to leave.
Although twenty years had passed, Safar’s children Samar and Sanobar had never once visited him or even contacted him.
Whenever he remembered them, tears filled his eyes because he missed them deeply.
During all those years, Samar had married and had children of his own. Sanobar had also married, had children, and was living a happy life.
Sadly, both children had grown up hating their father.
After being forced out of the house, Safar and Gulmira moved into Gulmira’s family home.
For two or three months, they lived peacefully.
During this period, Gulmira became pregnant.
Just as their lives seemed to be returning to normal, Safar began thinking about earning money and building a house of his own.
But one night, he suffered a heart attack and died.
In the end, Gulmira buried her husband from her own parents’ home.
Not a single one of Safar’s relatives attended his funeral.
Once again, Gulmira was left a widow—this time carrying Safar’s unborn child...

The End

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Dr Jernail S. Anand

THE TIP OF THE LIFEBERG: THE VISIBLE AND THE INVISIBLE



Life is just a tip of the iceberg. Most of it remains unknown even to us. It is like a 'Tip of the Lifeberg', a mysterious entity. What is visible is the transfixed reality, but what flows in the name of life, is the virtual reality, which escapes from our eye, as well as from our grasp. The visible universe is very vast, but vaster still are the spans which remain away from the reach of human vision.

As soon as a child opens its eyes, it is able to see the visible world, and its vision of the invisible is blocked. It is wrong to assume that what we see is in existence, and what we don't see does not exist. The idea of existence extends far beyond the boundaries of the manifest and the unmanifest, to include the possible as well as the impossible.

In fact, nothing fits more to the idea of existence than the oft-quoted phrase: tip of the iceberg. The visible world is just a tip of the iceberg which remains hidden from the view. In fact, we do not possess the eye which can see the hidden domains of existence. We can measure and describe in exact words what we can see, feel and even touch, while the mass remains hidden from the view, and therefore, defies all description.

What we say becomes visible through the words, but is it all that we wish to say? What remains unsaid joins the mass of the invisible. What we do is visible to everyone, but what we could have done, a hundred parallel choices which were not taken, fall to the store of the invisible. All relationships, shaky or stable, stand on a few words with long silences. How limited is meaning, and order, and how vast is the domain of non-sense and chaos! I wonder if we have ever taken into account the force of the invisible mass, which stays behind, and from which we choose, and give meaning to our lives, limited in extent and possibility.

There are fifty things which appear on our to-do-list in the morning, and after the day is spent, we sit down to see how many have been accomplished, and what remains behind, which was attempted, but remained undone. It is not our failure to accomplish certain tasks. If we applied all our powers, that was the obvious aspect of our effort. But, if it could not be accomplished, we should be able to see the role of the invisible. Maybe there are some forces, which do not will it to be done by us.

I am a cosmogen, and a firm believer of the divine presence everywhere. All our actions, I believe, have behind them a divine sanction. But, the divine forces remain out of human vision. When we try our best to do something, and still it is not done, I always feel there are some forces which do not want this done. It is

an article of faith with me when I say, I believe in the benevolence of God. If my work is done, it is His blessings, and if it is not done, it is also His blessings, because, like a father, he knows what will be beneficial to me and what can harm me. This is my faith, and I do not invite anybody to believe me.

If good is the ultimate design, then, what is evil, manifest and unmanifest? It also happens to us, sometimes invited and sometimes uninvited. We need not go far into polemics, or even metaphysical designs of Gods. The ideas are simple. We know only very little. And a vast amount of knowledge even about ourselves is kept away for the simple reason that we can tolerate things only to an extent. And this balance is determined by cosmic forces. The perceptible and the imperceptible vary in each individual case, because, all our senses, and our powers are limited, and the sooner we realise the glass ceiling, the better.

People who indulge in criminal activities, and with their smartness, dodge the public law, one day find that invisible forces have disabled all their wits, and huge figures of crime like Ravana crumble to dust. This is the power of the invisible, which stays around us, watches us, and is ever ready to implement the universal ethics. Only it remains out of the powers of the human eye.

But seeing both the possibilities in the same view, and feeling the visible and the invisible in the same moment, is the dualistic vision, which is glimpsed rarely by blessed souls, prophets and sages, or people with highly awakened consciousness. It is my faith that we are governed, watched, dictated and directed by the invisible forces. God takes care to impart dignity to man, by giving him a free will, and to keep his head aloft. It is not servility. It is love.

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Dr. Jernail S. Anand, with 210 books to his credit [20 epics] is a Chandigarh-based polymath, and a vital architect of the 21st century ethical literature whose seminal work ‘Lustus: The Prince of Darkness’ challenges the moral complacency of our era. Founding President of the International Academy of Ethics, and Laureate of Charter of Morava [Serbia], Seneca [Italy], Franz Kafka [Germany, Ukraine, Czech Rep] and Maxim Gorky [Russia], his name is inscribed on the Poets’ Rock in Serbia. He is an Honorary Member of the Serbian Writers Association, Belgrade. Anand has built a poetics that unites ethics, Vedic spirituality, social critique, and the philosophy of meaning. Anand presents an articulated perspective on poetry as an instrument of planetary consciousness. A moral philosopher, professor, and international speaker, Anand has devoted much of his research to the ethical dimension of language, to the responsibility of the individual within a globalised society, and to the relationship between matter, consciousness, and transcendence. Email: anandjs55@yahoo.com.

Christopher Dabrowski

Between Us Snowmen 2

Winter, frost, snow and icy wind. They stood outside the house, as they do every year, complaining about their lives.

- My wife turned cold lately - said the first.

- Same - sighed the second.

The third one, not wanting to be left out, added:

- Mine says I have cold fingers.

- I envy you guys - interjected the fourth. - Mine is hot as hell, so I avoid her because I want to live.

- But you're a snowman - the first one was offended. - I would prefer mine to melt me a little. Especially since the warming is coming.

The snowmen fell silent, overwhelmed with trepidation.

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Note about the author:
Books in USA: "Escape" (2019 - Royal Hawaiian Press), "Anomaly" (2020 - Royal Hawaiian Press / 2025 - Alien Buddha Press), "A Monsters Pretending to be Human" (2024 - Alien Buddha Press), "Destiny Always Finds a Way" (2024 - Alien Buddha Press), "The Wonderful Life of Paul Veermer" (2024 - Alien Buddha Press), "The Element of Unpredictability" (2024 - Alien Buddha Press) & "Don't Be in Such a Hurry to Die" (2024 - Alien Buddha Press)
Books in Spain: "La fuga" (2019 - Royal Hawaiian Press / 2024 - Just Fiction!), "Anomalia" (2019 - Royal Hawaiian Press / 2024 - Just Fiction!)
Books in Chile: In Spanish translation "The Wonderful Life of Paul Veermer" (2025 - in preparation - Zuramerica Ediciones & Publicaciones S.A.)
Books in Germany: "Die Anomalie" (2020 - Der Romankiosk)
Books in Canada: "The Prisoner Of Infinity" (2022 - Ukiyoto Publishing), "And On Earth without Changes" (2022 - Ukiyoto Publishing), "The Worries Of A Not So Dead Man" (2022 - Ukiyoto Publishing)
Books in India: "Escape" (2025 - Wolf Books Publishing)
Books in Poland: "Naśmierciny" (2008 - Armoryka publishing house), "Anima vilis" (2010 - Initium publishing house / 2025 - Hengal publishing house), "Grobbing" (2012 - Novae Res publishing house), "Naśmierciny i inne opowiadania" (2012 & 2017 - Agharta & Armoryka publishing house), "Z życia Dr Abble" (2013 - Agharta publishing house), "Anomalia" (2016 - Forma publishing house), "Ucieczka" (2017 - Dom Horroru publishing house / 2024 - Videograf SA), "Nie w inność" (2019 - Waspos publishing house), "Nieznośna niewyraźność bytu" (2022 - Saga Egmont / 2025 - forthcoming as II part of book "Horyzont zdarzeń" - Bibliotekarium), "Obyś żył w ciekawych czasach" (2023 - Św. Wojciecha) & "Horyzont zdarzeń" (2025 - forthcoming - Bibliotekarium)
Audiobooks in Poland: "Naśmierciny" (2008 - Armoryka), "Nie w inność" (2019 - Waspos / Saga Egmont), "Naśmierciny i inne opowiadania" (2022 - Saga Egmont) "Grobbing" (2022 - Empik Go), "Anima vilis" (2022 - Empik Go) & "Ucieczka" (2022 - Empik Go)
Anthology in: USA, England, Australia, Poland, Canada, Portugal, France, Tunisia, Russia, Brasil, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Germany, India, Romania & Bangladesh.
And he published his stories in the following magazines: Slovakia PLAYBOY (Slovak edition), USA, England, Canada, India, Czech Republic, Russia, Brasil, Spain, Argentina, Germany, Italy, Hungary, Sweden, Mexico, Albania, Nigeria, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Costa Rica, Peru, Vietnam, Turkey, Ukraine, Romania, Slovenia, South Korea, Austria, Central African Republic, Egypt, Columbia, Philippines,

Nicaragua, Lithuania, Ireland, Indonesia, Denmark, Serbia, Chile, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Pakistan, Kosovo & Seychelles.

Daniel de Culla

IT WAS FEBRUARY 14TH

It was February 14th when hurricanes Eleucadius, Felicula, Zeno, Proculus, Ephebus, Bassus, Protolicus, Cirion, Bassianus, Agathon, Ausentius, and others battered the Iberian Peninsula, causing rivers, lakes, and swamps to overflow and resulting in much material and human suffering.

Faustinus and Jovita, Pupulus and Pascasia, Protestato and Cunegunda went down to the Duratón River, a tributary of the Duero, to see if we could catch some crayfish, even though it was raining, thinking that nothing similar would happen in Peñafiel from Valladolid, the Balcony of the Duero.

Seeing that the sky offered no respite from the storm, and the river overflowing its banks, sweeping away trees, mulberry bushes, and the occasional house as the current unleashed its fury, we escaped, passing by its quintessential Plaza del Coso, a vibrant heart of the city. We managed to get to the top floor of the four-stone mill—one for cleaning and the others for grinding—to avoid being swept away by the water, remaining there in suspense until the storm subsided.

From atop the flour mill, we saw that the water had reached halfway up the houses, sweeping through the outskirts on both sides, flooding garages and ground floors, eager to reach its beautiful, well-preserved 15th-century castle.

Lines of light raced across the sky, sparks leaping from cloud to earth. Instantly, we huddled together, fearful that the force and power of its action might harm us.

Each of the thunderclaps, their echoes prolonged by thunder and heralded by flashes of lightning, made us huddle together tighter. One of those lightning bolts, with a sound like artillery fire, passed beneath all of us, each feeling the sensation of a firecracker exploding between our legs.

When the sky gathered clouds and the wind subsided, we separated, staring at our lower abdomens, our clothes scorched by the lightning strike. As we unwrapped our rags and pulled out our limbs and organs, we saw that the lightning that had grazed us had also severed the girls' clitorises and our testicles; only our bodies remained standing, which was what we needed most to be safe, without needing to call an ambulance or go to the health center, since our wounds had been closed with a laser.

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A POLITICAL JOKER

My friend Polistilo, a celebrated Castilian author, is furious with himself and the entire community because he didn't become mayor of his adopted city of Burgos.

He, who was so confident because he had promised, if elected mayor, to make the Arlanzón, a fledgling river, navigable; to turn Las Huelgas Park into a theme park of sex, drugs, and rock and roll; to make transportation and admission to municipal swimming pools and cultural events completely free, was left disappointed because his atheist and republican party didn't even get enough votes for a single council seat.

He fondly remembers the day he went to vote and the presiding officer, as he put his ballot in the box, exclaimed: "Ha, ha, ha!"

Look, I used to tell him:

-Get out of politics, get out, because politicians, when they get into power, are devoted to the 'Jorge Embrace': a type of robbery where one of the assailants approaches the victim from behind, throws their right arm around their neck, and pushes them with a leg to leave them defenseless while their accomplices rob them; always protected by law by the clingy, dependent members of the Justice system who dream of putting the citizenry in chains.

-I already knew that, Polistilo would reply. And I knew that all the Senates and Congresses of the global world, with their multifaceted, polyhedral roofs, are dens of thieves, pawnbrokers' houses, and brothels too. But I wanted to bring about change, to put an end to the tricks and embellishments used by crooked politicians, and for us to stop seeing towns, cities, and nations with a prison-like atmosphere, or mistreating animals in hunts or bullfights.

-I already knew that. How naive you were, my friend. You traveled through Europe hoping to see if in any of these nations they tied dogs with sausages, and you were sorely disappointed to find they're tied with leashes and prison shackles. Would you run for mayor again?

-I'd gladly run. But, since I now feel neither Moor nor Christian, and have no desire for the mayoralty, I'll reconsider my creative individualism by retreating to the Monastery of San Pedro de Cardeña to read and reflect on Joseph McCabe's "History of Torture" about Christian barbarity; Mark Mirabello's "Crimes of Jehovah," emphasizing his thought: 'I don't know if God exists, but it would be better if he hadn't'; and John Moore's "Anarchism and Ecstasy." I'll be staying for about fifteen days in monastic silence, not giving free rein to my lustful desires, for the cross of my carnal sword is pressed between my legs.

-Well, fare well, Brother Polistilo. If you like, you can say hello to my uncle, the oldest one here. He plays the organ without knowing a word of Gregorian chant, and his name is Juan de la Oliva.

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AMBROSIA FLAVOR

I am Sisebuto, and my friend is Witila. He's a real pro. He takes me, like a father takes his son, through streets and squares to find brothels where he's arranged to visit this or that prostitute over the public phone.

He tells me:

-Sisebuto, I'll go in with her first, and then I'll tell you if the merchandise is good, so you can go in afterward. I'll make it easy for you through the semen!

He tells me that when a prostitute cries, it's because she's been mistreated, and the pimp on duty is holding onto her papers.

That, while he's fucking her, she'll beg me to free her from this carnal ordeal, which she chose out of necessity, hunger, and deception, because they promised her she'd be a flamenco dancer.

I have five sisters, and I don't want their wounds to be reopened by disgusting whoremongers. That's why I haven't told my friend anything, and when I'm with a whore, I don't do anything to her, I just look at her naked and, in front of her, I jerk off while she sings to me:

"Penis, wake up if you're asleep, because death awaits you."

Then, when I ejaculate, I die of love in the style of the mystics of all religions, and I see God through her pussy.

I ask her:

-How many thorns have pierced your pussy today?

She answers:

-Five.

Then I look at her and look at her again; and I admire that, in the tear of her ass, I see all the passion of Christ, anguished and painful.

I beg her:

-Bring a companion, join your breasts and ass, your lips. This excites me. It dazzles me. Standing like this, together, you look like divine angels having sex.

The companion arrives, they join together.

Then, feeling emboldened and exalted, I approach them on my knees, trying to slip my tongue between their large lips, which are stuck together with divine mucus.

They beg me:

-Sisebuto, deliver us from sin. Here they have stolen our honor, our lives, and our hearts. While they defile us, they give us a shameful death.

I answer them:

-I can do nothing for you. You have no salvation. You can be proud that you have between your legs a wound that, for men, is damnation.

When, two hours later, I emerge from the room of foliage, Witila asks me:

-How did it go?

I reply:

-Not too badly at all. They took me between two whores and twisted my penis so much that the demons took it away.

I don't intend to go back to any whore, for they remind me of my sisters and my mother.

The only thing I'll do is what you and I often do: join our penises and fight with them like swordsmen, dreaming of reaching the penis of Silveira's son, or the son of the lady of Olivares, but never any arsehole, because when you go to play with it, you lose your senses.

Witila tells me:

-I consider the Ace of Diamonds or Arsehole to be a single, immense God, and that there can be no other.

-I bet.

-I pass.

-How beautiful your two oars are, says a voice from the ceiling.

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Eva Lianou Petropoulou

The Walls

Once upon a time there was a girl called Love. She was so kind and generous and very curious about the world outside of the Walls.
Love, was staying in a beautiful city but her parents was very affraid because she was so sensitive and small, so they keep her inside the
Walls.

Love, she has a beautiful room with so many toys and books and she had a teacher that she visited her 4 days per week to do their homework. It was very interested onthe outside world and she often asked questions to the teacher:
_What exist behind the Walls?

The teacher never responded clearly.she was always say things with no sense.
The sky is blue. The trees are green.There are big houses and red flowers.

One night, Love was trying to sleep and then a strange insect come to her room.
Zzzzzzz
Zzzzzz

Are you a mosquito?
She asked the insect...
Noo , I am a libelule.I am the savage libelule but the wind make me loose my path.i lost my sisters.my sisters love me
They will come back for me.

Are you coming outside of the Walls??
Please tell me,what exist out there..
Love, asked the little insect.

Have you ever see the night without stars?
Noo, responded the little girl

Have you ever see a bird without wings??
Noo, responded the little girl

So, that is behind the Walls.
Sadness and fear.
No place to stay and play.
Because the Love walk away since several years ago!!

But i don't understand...
I am Love and i never walk away...
In fact i never had the chance to get out of those Walls!!!
She responded in a very serious way.

Then, if you are The Love.
I must educate you .
I have no time , my sisters will come soon for me. We are happy only when we're all together.

If you are The Love, You must be free.
You must overcome those Walls.
You must go deep and receive before you take. But you must always give freely.
Each time you give love, a libelule is born.
We need so many libelules to keep this world, in harmony, full of light and full of hope.

If you are the Love, no Matter what,you will stay in the heart of Humans and animals. You Will try every day and night.
Because only Love can bring happiness to faces of human, only love can bring back the light to the stars...only Love can bring the wings to the birds.

If you are the Love, only You , You can destroy those Walls!!!!!
The Love is a huge energy, full of light and compassion.
Nobody can stop her, if she make wishes.

If you're the true Love, this world will be in peace, happy,and healthy again.



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Awarded author children literary
Greece

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Yeon Myung Ji

Step by Step, Walking Santiago

The Silver Way that started in Seville, and the French Way that came to León from Salamanca and walked, it is hard, but as you move forward step by step, you see a yellow arrow, and as you walk step by step, before you know it, you arrive at Santiago Cathedral.
At the end of that road, there is me.
The me inside me that I met while walking is strange, uncomfortable, and arrogant. The me who completely lets go of myself and shouts hurrah in front of the cathedral has now become quite smart.
Things I thought were important recede far away.
Before asking for someone's interest and favor, the thought occurred that I should first become a gift to someone.

The day of arriving at Santiago Cathedral was hard because it rained and was cold. In the sunlight of thirty-some days, my face was tanned and my heart ripened firmly. Walking step by step, I arrived at Obradoiro Square at Santiago de Compostela Cathedral.
Like others, I shouted hurrah and looked up at the cloudy sky with hot eyes.
The days that were difficult due to an ankle injury now draw up tearful emotion with joy. People lying on the floor looking at the sky, people hugging and dancing,,, all the roads I have walked are here.
The next day at 12 o'clock, I attended the Botafumeiro Mass.
Not all pilgrims attend the Botafumeiro Mass.
Even my Spanish husband, who does not go to church, attended the Mass with emotion.
Thinking of the Apostle Paul, who went on his 3rd missionary journey to the end of the earth in Europe, there is no day that is not grateful.

Santiago says that I myself am the most precious person to me.

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Donation Cafe

On the mountain trail from Samos to Sarria, there is a donation cafe. I met Sam, a British young man with whom I was walking the Silver Route (Vía de la Plata), took pictures, sat in the cafe for a moment, and looked around at the people resting together closely. Netting was wrapped around a temporary toilet between the fruit trees. They say to only urinate and go.

Between people drinking tea and eating fruit while resting cheerful without stopping, and people nodding their heads and listening attentively, there is a path. The path, which embraces people who have walked for a long time with its long arms, does not judge people, waits quietly, and then secretly fills what is needed.

Refraining from doing what one is capable of doing is the path's way of loving. People who live as themselves without avoiding others walk the path carrying backpacks. In the greeting "Buen Camino," they support each other with interest, comfort, and encouragement.
Today as well, newly, Buen Camino!

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I am Yeon Myung-ji, a poet from South Korea. I began my literary career in 2013 with the poetry journal <Gasibi>. I have published the poetry collections <Sitting Like an Apple> and <Where Is the House of the Word “I’m Sorry”>, the e-book< Seventeen Marco Polo Sheep>, and the travel essay< Step by Step, Walking the Camino de Santiago>. I have received the Tolstoy Literary Award, Homi Literary Award, Cheongsong Gaekju Literary Award, Aviation Literary Award, and the Bronze Prize in Poetry at the 2025 Literature Asia Awards. My poems have appeared in literary journals and magazines across Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. I continue to write with passion, exploring life, memory, travel, and the human spirit.

Sabyasachi Roy

The Unknowable

The building was called the Cloud Testing Room. There were no clouds. There were secrets, the bones of rain, lost brothers and sisters, unfinished poems... the fears people had left behind. At noon I used to poke the satellites orbiting overhead.
“Are you awake?”
They winked in Morse code and drew unfamiliar diagrams over the earth. The government called them new borders. Geographers called them altered crust. Poets called them exile. I wrote on the file:
“STATUS: NORMAL.”
That afternoon I was drawing a girl. There were waves in her eyes, rain in her ears, a single mark on her face. The mark changed every day. On the first day, her cheek. On the second, her forehead. On the third, her lips. On the fourth, my hand. On the fifth day I saw that the mark was on my chest.
I stopped the brush.
“Who are you?”
The girl said, “You drew me.”
“Then how are you talking?”
“You gave me a mouth.”
I painted black over her lips.
She smiled.
Then she said, “You need colour to stay alive.”
“What about dying?”
“White.”
I turned the picture face down.
The girl said, “Turning it upside down doesn’t turn the story upside down.”
I tore the picture apart.
Another piece of paper came out from inside the torn paper. It said:
“THE AUTHOR OF THIS STORY IS A COWARD.”
I stared at it for a long time.
Then I wrote underneath:
“I am not the author.”
The paper immediately answered:
“That is the author’s first lie.”
I burned the paper.
A man came out of the ashes. He looked like me, only a little more tired. He was holding a notebook. He said, “I’m writing the story.”
“What story?”
“Yours.”
I laughed.
“You’re writing me?”
“Yes.”
“Then who am I?”
“A character.”
“And you?”
“The author.”
“Where does the author live?”
He closed the notebook and said, “In another story.”

Then he disappeared.

For the first time, I understood that there was another world outside my world. In that world, an author was sitting somewhere. He was writing my life.

He was writing now:

“He is standing in front of the glass wolves.”

Then he wrote:

“The man was afraid.”

I screamed, “LIE!”

The glass wolves laughed.

The author crossed out the sentence and wrote:

“The man was not afraid.”

“That’s a lie too,” I said.

He wrote:

“The man realised that he was inside a story.”

“That’s a lie too.”

He thought for a moment and wrote:

“The man did not realise that he was inside a story.”

That was when I truly became afraid. Because I had realised it. And the author could not write it. I tried to snatch the notebook from him. I couldn’t. My hands were made of paper. There was ink in the creases of my fingers. Inside the empty spaces of my body were white pages. I tore open my chest. There was no heart inside. There was a footnote. The footnote said:

“THE DEATH OF THIS CHARACTER WILL BE DETERMINED IN A LATER EDITION.”

I ran. But when you run inside a story, the distance doesn’t increase. Only the sentence gets longer.

I returned to the Cloud Testing Room. Someone was there. I didn’t know him. He was sitting at the desk, writing. There was a computer in front of him. On the screen was my life. He was typing:

“I returned to the Cloud Testing Room.”

“Stop,” I said.

He turned around. He looked like me. But he was older than I was.

“Who are you?”

“I’m the author.”

“Then who is your author?”

He was silent for a while and looked at the screen. A new line was appearing:

The author looked at the man standing before him and realised that he, too, had an author.

He began to tremble.

I smiled.

“Now do you understand?”

He nodded.

“None of us is the author.”

At that exact moment, his computer screen went black. A new sentence appeared:

THE READER HAS NOW ENTERED THE STORY.

We both fell silent. There was a third person in the room. Nobody was there. And yet somebody was reading. We both looked towards him.

“Who are you?” I asked.

There was no answer.

“The reader,” said the author.

“Where is the reader?”

“Here. Right now.”

I looked around.

“Where?”

The author said, “In the eyes that are looking at us.”
Suddenly I realised that every window in the room was closed. There was no door. There was no light. Only an invisible eye.
Then the screen said:
THE READER THINKS HE IS SAFE.
“No,” I said.
“What?” said the author.
“That sentence isn’t true.”
Immediately, a new sentence appeared on the screen:
THE READER THINKS HE IS VERY CLEVER.
I screamed, “Stop!”
A new sentence:
THE READER IS NOW BORED.
The author looked at me.
“You can’t stop him.”
“Why?”
“Because he can turn the page.”
And then something really did change. The walls of the room moved away. The author disappeared.
I was alone. In a white room. There was a mirror in front of me. I wasn’t in the mirror. The person in the mirror was sitting there, reading this story.
“Can you see me?” I asked him.
He nodded.
“What are you going to do now?”
“Close the page.”
I fell to my knees.
“Don’t.”
He smiled.
“Why?”
“I’m not finished yet.”
“You’re a story.”
“So?”
“When the story ends, the character dies.”
“No. When the story ends, the character only leaves the reader’s head.”
“Same thing.”
That was when I understood, for the first time, how profoundly middle-class our idea of death is.
“Then remember me,” I said.
“I will.”
“You’re lying.”
“Yes.”
Then he closed the page. Everything went dark. But the story still wasn’t over. Because after the page closed, I realised that I was no longer inside the story. I was standing in the reader’s room. There was no reader. There was a chair. A table. On the table, a piece of paper.
It said:
“THE PERSON WHO READ THIS STORY LEFT THE ROOM A FEW MINUTES AGO.”
I picked up the paper. Underneath it was another line:
“WHEREVER HE IS NOW IS THE NEXT STORY.”
I looked towards the door. I opened it. Outside was a city. The streetlights were on. It was five forty-two. The moon’s reflection lay in the mud. A dog looked at me and said,
“You?”

“I’m the reader,” I said.

The dog laughed.

“No.”

“Then what?”

The dog said,

“You’re a character.”

I looked behind me. Someone was sitting inside the room. Looking at me. Writing. I tried to close the door. I couldn’t. That was when I understood—the door did not belong to my room. It was the door to my writing. And the city I could see outside was not my reality.

“It’s the reality of the person who is reading this story now.”

I screamed one last time:

“Then where is the real person?”

The glass wolves answered from every direction:

“He’s still reading.”

Then the clock at five forty-two ticked once. If you have looked at the clock by now, the story knows where you are. And if you haven’t, it doesn’t matter. Because the story doesn’t look at the clock. The story looks at you. Under the final line, another sentence appeared by itself:

“THE READER NOW UNDERSTANDS—HE IS NOT READING THIS STORY. HE IS SITTING INSIDE IT, WAITING FOR HIS TURN.”

Then another:

“YOUR TURN HAS COME.”

And finally, where the author’s name was supposed to be,

it said—

“YOUR NAME.”

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Aham Brahmasmi

Leaning over the pages of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad in the light of Advaita Vedanta, the sage Yajnavalkya said, “Aham Brahmasmi.” Then a silence fell over the room, as if someone had just used the word “responsibility” in a government office. At first, nobody understood what had happened. Then, one by one, the philosophers began to gather. Language, existence, power, justice, gender, history—each arrived carrying its own weapon. Yajnavalkya sat quietly. In front of him was a clay lamp. The oil was running low. Non-duality is a grand idea; but money to buy oil is needed in the dual world.

Wittgenstein looked at the lamp first and said, “Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.” Yajnavalkya said, “That’s what I’m saying.” Wittgenstein frowned. “What are you saying?” “Silence.” “But you just spoke.” “So did you.” They both fell silent. Five minutes later, Wittgenstein got up and left. At the door he said, “Language is a trap.” Yajnavalkya said, “Yes. And people usually mistake the trap for their home.”

Heidegger arrived next. With a long sigh he said, “Man is thrown.” Yajnavalkya said, “Exactly.” “Into time.” “Exactly.” “Toward death.” “Very exactly.” Heidegger seemed relieved. Then he asked, “So, are you Brahman?” Yajnavalkya said, “In your language, I am Dasein; in mine, you are still curious.” Heidegger stared at him for a while. “The question of Being cannot be closed so easily.” Yajnavalkya smiled. “Neither can death. And yet everyone sits down to eat rice every afternoon.”

Then Hannah Arendt arrived. She said, “Human beings are born into plurality. Erasing plurality in the name of unity is dangerous.” Yajnavalkya said, “A pot of rice contains many grains.” Arendt said, “You can’t do politics with metaphors.” “You can’t make rice with politics either,” Yajnavalkya said. “Sometimes politics happens precisely because of rice.” Arendt fell silent.

Outside, several citizens were standing in a voting line. One of them said, “Whoever wins, we’ll still have the same suffering.” Yajnavalkya looked towards the window. “See? Non-duality.”

Foucault arrived and said, “Your ‘I’ is actually a product of power. The state, institutions, discipline, surveillance—they all produce the human subject.” Yajnavalkya said, “Then who is imprisoned in the prison?” “The body.” “And who else?” Foucault paused. “Identity.” “And who else?” “The structures of power.” “And who else?” Foucault was irritated now. “Why are you asking?” Yajnavalkya said, “Because I want to know who the person answering is.” Foucault got up and left. At the door he said, “There is a dangerous possibility in what you’re saying.” Yajnavalkya said, “There is one in what you’re saying too.”

John Rawls arrived and said very politely, “If you want justice, you must first forget your own position.” Yajnavalkya said, “Advaita says the same.” Rawls said, “But social institutions?” “Of course.” “Fair procedures?” “Of course.” “Then why are you talking about heaven?” Yajnavalkya said, “I’m not talking about heaven. I’m only saying that a man who stands on someone else’s throat and says ‘Aham Brahmasmi’ knows Sanskrit; he does not know Brahman.” Rawls smiled for the first time.

Simone de Beauvoir said, “One is not born a woman; one becomes one.” Yajnavalkya said, “So does a human being.” “Then where is the body in your Brahman?” “Where someone standing in the kitchen forgets their own existence, while everyone eats their cooking and says, ‘The salt is a little low.’” Beauvoir remained silent for a long time. Then she said, “That is not Advaita.” Yajnavalkya said, “That is domestic life.”

Kuhn arrived carrying a thick book. “Paradigms change. Truth changes with them.” Yajnavalkya said, “Death?” “What about it?” “Does death change when paradigms change?” Kuhn hesitated. “Within the scope of science...” “I didn’t ask about science.” Kuhn closed the book. “You are very inconvenient.” Yajnavalkya said, “So is truth.”

Popper came running in. “Anything that cannot be falsified is not science.” Yajnavalkya said, “Exactly.” “Then your claim is not scientific.” “Exactly.” “Therefore?” “Therefore, your job is safe.” Popper said irritably, “That is not an argument.” “Neither is life,” said Yajnavalkya.

Judith Butler said, “Identity is repeated performance.” Yajnavalkya said, “Meaning people perform their roles every day?” “Yes.” “What if someone doesn’t perform?” “Society will punish them.” Yajnavalkya said,

“Then the performance is the prison, and the audience are the guards?” Butler said, “You’re making it too simple.” “Prison walls are usually simple,” he said.
Habermas arrived in defence of dialogue. “Truth does not arrive alone; it gains validity through discussion.” Yajnavalkya said, “Have you discussed anything with death?” “That is not relevant.” “Of course it isn’t. Death never enters into dialogue. It only changes the time of the meeting.” Habermas was genuinely angry now.
Marx had been standing outside the door all this time. He said, “Consciousness is the result of material conditions. Talking about Brahman to a hungry person is cruelty.” Yajnavalkya stood up. The oil in the lamp was finished. The room went dark. He said, “You’re right.” Marx looked surprised. “Then?” “Feed him first.” “And then?” “Then ask him who he is.” Marx said, “You’re turning revolution into spirituality.” Yajnavalkya said, “And you’re reducing spiritual hunger to a footnote of economics.”
Outside, the factory siren had begun to sound. The workers were coming out. One man had dust on his face and blood on his hands. He looked up at the sky and said, “They cut my wages again today.” Yajnavalkya went and stood beside him. The man said, “Who are you?” Yajnavalkya said, “I am you.” The man said, “Then pay me my back wages.”
Yajnavalkya fell silent. Marx laughed. Foucault took notes. Rawls calculated. Arendt searched for the political implications. Butler considered the performative character of the sentence. Popper looked for a way to falsify it. Kuhn saw the possibility of a new paradigm. Heidegger thought about death. Wittgenstein fell silent over the limits of language. Beauvoir looked towards the kitchen. Habermas proposed a discussion.
Nobody noticed that, in the corner of the dark room, Yajnavalkya’s old body was slowly lowering itself to the floor. At first they thought he was meditating. Then they saw that he was no longer breathing. The debate stopped. For a few seconds, everyone was genuinely silent.
Then Popper said, “Now, at least, the claim can be tested.” Marx said, “You see? The material body is the final word.” Heidegger said, “Death has revealed his Being.” Foucault said, “Even a corpse is a document of power.” Arendt said, “We now have to make a decision.” Habermas said, “Through discussion.” Kuhn said, “This could be the beginning of a new paradigm.” Wittgenstein said nothing. Even for him, continuing a language game with a dead man seemed slightly indecent.
Then Yajnavalkya’s lips, lying on the floor, moved. Everyone froze. The corpse whispered, “Aham Brahmasmi.”
Nobody answered.
Because now everyone understood—it was not a philosophical problem. The real problem was that even after death, human beings refuse to let their last statement be proved wrong.
And the most frightening thing was this: outside the room, a new committee was already being formed. The first item on its agenda: “To reach a unanimous decision on who Brahman is.” The second: “To appoint Yajnavalkya’s corpse as chairman.” The third: “No one may use the word ‘I’ without the chairman’s permission.”
Outside, the sun had risen. Inside, it was dark.
And in the darkness, the dead Yajnavalkya seemed to be smiling faintly, as if saying:
Everyone is Brahman.
Some people just form committees about it.

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Theo Lonic

Autumn Chorus

Wind whispers through the betula platyphylla guarding my window. My beloved, I wish I were a bird, nesting in your arms! "You should be awake!" I open my eyes, watching the tree's golden leaves from a blurry distance. The alarm clock starts. I spring out of bed. Mona, though, ignores hers for a minute; throws herself back onto the pillow. She stares into a mental distance. Her alarm clock starts again. I'm making coffee. She robotically dismisses the alarm, staring. A neighbour's door slams. Locks. Footsteps down the hall. Mona looks remote. A car's engine starts. Door slams. Footsteps. Cars. Indistinct voices and a crow's caw. Eventually, a distant horn. Mona jolts out of bed. I can hear her footsteps over my head. She goes to the kitchen and makes coffee. Has a glass of water. Her coffee machine is less noisy than mine.

Roaming around her apartment, she sadly assesses her space. Goes to the window, watches the people outside. Her coffee is getting cold. She reclaims her cup. Sips while looking through the window. I hear her muffled voice. She's talking to somebody. Did she receive guests? Hmm... very unlikely! She's become a recluse in the past six and a half months. ever since. her return... I prick up my ears.

"I'm gonna do it. I don't care what you think or how you feel I should feel. I'm tired of being told how to be. It's all wrong in your eyes, this grief! ...to be tired of pleasing people. Pfft, People!" A bitter smile decorates her face. Silence falls heavily.

I look at my betula platyphylla - the wind has stopped playing with its bright garments. "People like to tell you what is right and wrong. They enjoy being followed blindly. Stupidly. And they love it when you're unhappy but keep pretending everything's just right. You keep functioning for their needs! That's what people love and care about. Not your real happiness but their reason to brag about themselves. However, they're not being fair to me.

When they ask me to pretend, to change my mind, my feelings... they're denying me the right to be. Myself. Real. Honest. Natural. They want me to ignore my heart. Isn't that the ultimate perversion of the concept of liberty?

"She walks around the room, sipping the last coffee-drop. Studies the cup's interior like a fortune-teller. She nods, assessing a mysterious piece of information. "Yes, Mona. Yes. The eyes are on you... You know, when you were little, you were much better a person." She walks around the room. She feigns surprise. "You never rebelled against anything or anyone. Father yelled at you for getting the house perspective wrong? Maybe you cried, felt hurt or sad but never argued. Mother was irritated or ill? You helped in the kitchen without protesting. Had to redo something? Sure. The other children could wait. Of course, by the time you finished your chores and the school homework, your friends were no longer outside, playing. But there was always tomorrow." She stops and looks towards her inner-self as if asking "Where are you going with this, Mona?" She then answers herself - "I don't know. Should I...? "She stops and thinks about it, listening. Decides: "No. I'm not trying to go anywhere. I'm just..."I hear a deep voice responding to Mona. I can't tell the gender.

"You're just trying to prove yourself right." All ears, I concentrate on their conversation. "The small world you lived in before all this. The few people who were there, watching you, caring..."

Mona gasps in vexation. "Caring? " Her hysterical short laughter electrifies the walls. She starts shaking with outrage. Her voice betrays her. "Caring... I can't believe what I just heard!" I can see her astonished gaze. "You... It's like you were never there!... with me!"

The Voice starts. "Look, I... I didn't mean it like that. You know I don't like ..."

"Yeah, yeah, yeah... I don't have time for this! I have to be somewhere right now."

"Of course..." the deeper answer comes.

"You know, you could be more helpful by choosing my outfit.

"The Voice responds in disappointment.

"Of course..."

"You have good taste, you know?"

I get out the balcony, climb the ladder we had illegally attached to the building to connect our apartments - Jim's idea - and watch in awe. She pulls out a dress from her closet. "Always did!"

"Myeah." Silence. My jaw falls. Mona's speaking this voice's words too!

She extracts more outfits from the closet.

"I wonder what the right attire would be for this occasion."

Scornfully, the Voice responds.

"Oh, an occasion..."

In her own voice: "Yeah, what's wrong with that? Everything can be an occasion. Why not?"

She's deciding between two outfits.

The Voice: "I know where this comes from, but do you really think it helps you, right now?"

Mona gestures while conversing with... herself? I am confused and frightened. Maybe she's... well, after all this time spent in solitude...!

"I mean, your situation..." the Voice explains.

Using her own voice:

"My situation...?" Taking a deep breath. "You know what? I don't care."

She begins to change. The voice within retorts sarcastically.

"Of course you don't! Why would you? It's only your life, not mine too!"

She exhales with a sigh. Her shoulders and arms fall.

The Voice continues.

"I mean, it's not like I'm going to have to watch and just deal with everything! ...for the rest of our life, right?"

Mona finishes changing. She puts on make-up.

As herself: "We'll have to carry on with this conversation later."

"Sure, why not make it too late?" the voice within reprimands.

Mona responds: "Oh, come on! There's no time for this now!"

"There's never time for the unimportant matters of health, Mona, but somehow we always find time for the real survival issues like making up events? That, yes! That is truly important.

"Gotta go! Be nice, now!"

She takes a deep breath. The voice within, rolling her eyes: “Right…”

A crow caws as she leaves the apartment.

*

I will have to talk to Mona about this ladder sometime soon. We should remove it. It's quite dangerous, ...and illegal. She is now in her small apartment, alone, in the dark, a glass of wine in her hand. The street light by the window is the only light source. She's dressed as if she were at a New Year's Eve party.

That Voice speaks again.

"So, this has nothing to do with your parents' loss!"

Mona peevishly responds: "My parents? Why would you bring them up?"

"I don't know. It seems like the humane thing..." Eyes widen.

"...do you hear yourself?! What's humane about bringing back trauma?"

Rasping, the voice within retorts.

"Well, no offence but if I cannot put some sense into your heart and reason into your mind..."

Mona nods approvingly.

"My parents' ...ghosts, should. You're clever! I always liked that."

"You only like that because it makes you feel you're smart."

I spot her lifted eyebrow.

"Uh..."

The voice follows with a grimace.

"What's mine is yours...?"

"Uhm... yeah... I guess... " She lowers her head. Silence.

Oh, I must be careful not to slip. I always found climbing down more difficult. Stupid ladder.

*

Mona keeps sipping wine from her glass. From time to time she sighs. She looks towards the window and downs the remaining wine. Pours a new glass. Her countenance changes from humbled to proud diva.

"You know what would work now?" Mona asks in her own voice. "Music!"

The voice within speaks, eyebrows ironically contorted.

"You could call that handsome man you spent an hour convincing you're so complicated…

"Mona hoots with laughter.

"Can you believe he bought it? I actually convinced him I was married to an old man and having a much younger lover than myself while exploring other possibilities!"

"He liked you, Mona..."

Mona stifles.

"He was just pretending.""

For an hour?""

What wouldn't a guy do for a good ...shackle-break?"

Scornfully, the Voice within follows.

"Oh! Sorry. I forgot you are this pure angel not looking or needing any. You're such a Saint, Mona!"

Mona's own voice sounds bemused.

"Yes I am, my dear cukoo."

A long silence follows.

"I forgot to ask." the Voice breaks in. "What do you think he felt while looking at all those pictures?"

As if abruptly awakened: "Huh...? ... Wha... I... don't know. ... I think he was ... surprised?"

"Why do you…"

She interrupts the Voice.

"Look, I really don't care. I know it's not nice of me but just like they'd use me for their selfish needs, I'm using them for mine." Silence.

Mona plays her index around the glass top, pensively. Sadness slowly conquers her.

The Voice breaks in again.

"You should stop mocking all the guys who show interest... I think that would help."

Mona retorts.

"A lot!"

"It would, Mona. You would get the chance to be seen as who you really are and also see them for who they are. To look into these people's eyes and see more than your left out crumbled cookie."

"Oh, Father Christmas! Milk?"

"You know what they say..."

As herself: "I'm tired."

A crow caws.

The Voice: "You know what? Music would…"

The streetlight is glitching. Mona's own voice, extinguishing

"I'm tired"

The Voice tries again.

"Maybe..."

As herself, whispery voice: "I'm tired."

The streetlamp breaks.

Thank's God I descended the ladder earlier!

*

There is a royal kind of reverence towards nature in autumn. Every time I get the chance, I take a long walk and enjoy the trees' safe flames screaming with joyous sadness. Despite the chilly air, I decided to have my lunch break in the Anton von Scudier Park. So has Mona, apparently.
She walks in the park, dry leaves falling to her feet, brushing her shoulders, caressing her hair. Immersed in her thoughts, she takes photos, stops and sighs. A sad smile lines up her lips. Takes one more look at the sky. Another shot, sighs then leaves.
Later, in her room, Mona is standing on the bed, shell-shocked. She holds her camera in her lap. Tense muscles. Her eyes fill with tears. She sobs. A sense of helplessness pervades me.
The Voice intervenes carefully.
"May I try to help you?"
"Help me how?"
She breaks into tears, convulsively.
"What you just did earlier in the park... that took courage."
"What? Taking pictures to bunnies in the sky?" She wipes her tears. Watches into the void.
"You know what I'm talking about."
"Oh, the other thing... What was I supposed to do? Let that five-year take the candy and walk with that weirdo? No way! I know I'm generally indifferent to other people's problems but this...? I couldn't pass by."
"You did good, Mona..."
"Yeah..."
Suddenly she starts convulsing. She loses her consciousness. I panic. I try to reach my phone when I hear a swish. An androgynous being dressed in black kneels next to her, checks her pulse and her front, adjusts a hair-strain... Caresses her skull. Hugs her gently then softly rocks her awake. I'm in shock. For a few seconds, I forget I have a heart or lungs. My brain almost freezes too.
"Come, Mona, wake up." It's that voice!
Slowly, Mona awakes. My entire body is shaking. Mona speaks.
"What...?" She pushes away this body holding her.
"Who are you?"
The Voice watches her intently.
"I'm... You know..." Indicates their chests. Mona is shocked.
"Oh...!" She tries to process the news. Suspiciously watches this being.
"I should probably make tea." the Voice's androgynous body speaks. "Would you like some?"
Mona, trembles but manages to emit a thin "Yes..."
The Voice walks away, turns on the kettle and prepares two cups with tea bags. Returns to Mona.
"It won't be long... How do you feel?"
"I... suppose I'm... shocked." Silence. "So, you say we... I mean, you are..." She draws a hand to her chest.
"Yes."
"And..." She points to her head.
"Yep."
"And all this is not a dream?" Mona asks, doubtfully.
The embodied Voice, takes her hand.
"No Mona... it's real..."
Mona, feels uncomfortable. Takes a glance at their hand-hold then at the Voice's face. The water in the kettle's boiled. The Voice heads to the kitchen. Meanwhile, Mona is trying to cope with the news. The Voice returns and hands her a cup.
"Thanks"
"Sure"
A long silence follows. They sip tea and look at each other. Mona finally breaks the qualm.
"That freak kept watching us for a while..."
"I think you did great... asking for permission to photograph her. Very clever..."

She turns tense.
"He's not my daddy, she said..."
"It's the Police's business, now. You did your part."
"I did my part..." She stares into the void, eyes pooling with tears.
"You can't do more, Mona! Please..."
"Can't I?"
The Voice begs: "Please... please..." Silence.
A crow caws.
"It's just like ... it feels..."
“I know..." Silence.
"It's been a while, but ... I miss him. I hate him but I... And I miss her!"
"Can you speak her name?"
"Anna..." Mona closes her eyes. "God, I feel so..."
"Guilty?"
"Yes... she..."
The Voice rubs her back.
"Oh, dear!"
A crow caws twice.
"How could I..."
The Voice interrupts.
"Look, you broke up with Jim..."
Mona, upset: "Why am I doing this? It won't bring her back! None of this! Going on, stopping... it's just the same!"
Silence. Tea-sipping.
"When I discovered with whom Jim had double-crossed me... damn it! I just. Can't. Stand this anymore. The memory of it! THAT..." Rolls her eyes and speaks through clenched teeth. "Person."
I slip and almost fall from the ladder. I hear a gasp and footsteps. Curtains adjustment.
"You should stop tormenting yourself." the Voice advises. "I know it can be helpful to sort things out... but self-blaming?"
I can see Mona getting angry.
"I provided that monster all the details she needed to reach Ana and lure her into this trap! 'Got her, my friend, my best..." She starts shaking, trembling voice, eyes pooling. "She was my best friend, my only friend!... and..." Furiously smashes the cup to the wall in front of her. “That bloody rat and her freak-team trapped and got her raped, ...and then killed!
Mona is panting and shaking. She stares into her memories, broken. A crow caws three times. Silence.
"There's nothing you can do... I'm sorry." Puts the cup down and comforts Mona.
*
Arms crossed, the Voice watches Mona rummaging through the closet.
"So, what should I wear?"
"Stop this, Mona! It's no fun. It never was. I don't know why I encouraged this behaviour."
A crow caws three times. The Voice continues after shortly considering the crow.
"I'm sorry but this isn't working. It's getting too hard to be around for you. Everything you do... the self-blaming, mocking people, even those who are kind, rejecting, even hurting them... avoiding me..."
"They'll be fine. It's not like I'm wasting years of their lives. I'm just playing a little. Shake their conscience so they start seeing things.
The Voice sighs and frowns. She continues.
"You used to get me. We used to work so well together! Having fun... Talking everything out. I hoped..."
"Sorry but this is too much. I can't take it anymore. I've changed, you've changed..."
"What's that supposed to mean?"

"It means I'm leaving. I just don't see any point in going on like this."
"Oh..."
"Maybe now you will consider therapy."
"Therapy...?" Mona scoffs. "Yeah, sure! Why not pay for it when I can just go out and talk about processed bull matter with any stranger for free!"
"How many times have I asked you to bond on a deeper level again? Mona, you need stability!" Silence.
"So, this is it. The end..."
"Sorry..."
"I... Uhm... Where will you go?"
"It doesn't matter. You won't find me."
"I see... Is there anyone you met?"
"Perhaps."
Mona sighs.
"Alright." She nods approvingly.
"Alright, it's okay, I... " She stretches her arm and they shake hands.
The Voice keeps holding Mona's hand. Regretfully: "Goodbye, Mona."
*
Mona sits in her armchair, a multitrack reel-to-reel tape recorder running behind her faint memory-recordings of her and her father talking, singing and fooling on the microphone. Next to the armchair, there's a small table on which lies a modern recorder.
"When I lost Anna, I thought I'll kill Jim. I even bought a pistol. It's there, in my night table drawer. I did nothing, though. Thought it wouldn't help much. After all, he was only a pawn in a dirty game from which he withdrew without knowing his part.

He broke up with that woman, I broke up with him. Later he confessed, then he left. Forever.
I know where to find him. I could find him and kill him in the blink of an eye. But he's not in the business. Sex-traffic is anathema to him. Besides, that woman is a clever serpent. She got away with it, of course. The Police couldn't connect her with the abduction ...and all. But how those guys knew where to find Anna!
...and the look in her eyes when they walked passed her on the street that day...! I…
They told Anna they were this woman's associates, exchanged cards, invited her to dinner. Took her to their favourite restaurant where Coraline Brighton always had her business meetings. Brighton Coraline... This isn't even her real name. Couldn't find much about this character.
Yes, I followed Anna that evening but just because there was this feeling not giving me peace. I just…" She pauses. Gathers her wit.
"We had tea before in our favourite café, as usual, Anna and I. Then I left because I got this phone call from a collaborator. I rushed towards his office where I waited for three or four minutes. Our conversation lasted ten minutes, then we signed our agreement. I was glad everything worked fast. 'Went out of the building grinning and walked towards the café, heading home. Then I saw Anna, walking out of the café. I sped up and saw these three unknown men in suit approaching her. I became alert. Prompted myself to the café's corner, listening. When she walked to the car with them, my heart started pounding with fear. I looked around. No taxi. However, I had heard them say they were taking her to "The Goring". I called an Über and prayed I was wrong.
The ride to the restaurant gave me time to think, reevaluate how strongly I feel about things. Anna had told me on a few occasions I was a little bit too paranoid and should be careful not to become too controlling. Nobody likes an over controlling friend ...or parent. Her parents were over-controlling. She couldn't stand them.
When I arrived at the restaurant, I relaxed. They were there, talking. I reprimanded myself for yet another paranoid episode and left. I didn't want her to feel overwhelmed with my protective instincts. Nor did I want to shadow her joy. She looked so happy! ...for the first time in years. I felt happy too." She sighs.

“I got myself back home - I was trying to make a living in London - wrote her a message, gave the good news. Made herbal tea, then she wrote back. "That's cracking! I have some good news too. Can't talk right now. See you tomorrow. Goodnight."
Next morning, I woke up as tired as a slave-worker at the Egypt pyramids. My whole body ached. There were even bruises on my legs. I immediately and old-fashionably asked Google about it. Got to the pharmacy and bought myself some vitamins and propolis candy. I wasn't having a cold but I always have propolis candy when I feel tired.
Near the pharmacy, there's a pastry shop. I got two cinnamon buns and a loaf of bread. Went back to my apartment, started eating a bun, got a cup of yogurt out of the fridge, some bacon, a tomato and an egg. Fried the egg and bacon in the pan and decorated a slice of bread with two tomato rolls. Put the bacon and the egg on top. Ate that... Then I looked at the clock and thought to write to Anna.
"Hey! What's up? How was your meeting..." 'oops...! she doesn't know I know she had a meeting last night. Erase, erase...' "last night..." 'no no no ... erase erase...' "your night?" - tapped Send.
While waiting for her reply, I decided I'd take a shower. When I came out of the shower there was still no response. I thought I'd give her more time and went to the closet, picked my clothes. Checked the phone again. No answer.
9:20 a.m. Got dressed. Checked my emails watching the phone all the time. Responded to a couple of emails. Checked the phone again. 10:03. 'She should be awake by now!' I decided to call her. No answer. My heart began pounding alertly. I felt my brain arteries contracting. Walking around the room while thinking to give it another shot - maybe she was in the bathroom... or went shopping downstairs… No answer.
I put all the work documents and the laptop in my bag, my chargers and the keys. Called Anna again. Nothing. I decided to take a detour and drop by her place. When I knocked at the door, nobody answered. At this point, my mind wouldn't help me think better. I started shaking. Pulled out the key-bunch where I hold a copy. Opened the door. Everything was neat. Checked the entire place, called her once more... Nothing. Then it occurred to me she may be at her studio, her phone broke for some reason and she didn't receive my message.
Called the studio. No answer. Insisting didn't help. I hopped in the car and drove to Anna's studio. She wasn't there. Her colleagues said they haven't heard from her since the previous afternoon. I left. Returned to her flat. Thought to ask a neighbour if she knew anything.
'Auntie Fae' must be able to tell me something. She knows everything about everyone in that flat. When they wake up and go to sleep, when they shower, where each of them works, if they're in a relationship, who their bosses are, who has a dog, their favourite walk routes, their favourite foods... Everything... She can even tell the precise hour of her neighbour flatulence.
Anna wasn't seen entering the flat the night before nor leaving it in the morning. We called the administrator. He helped us confirm she hadn't spent the night in the building. The camera did not spot her. We called the Police. They interrogated everyone. I felt everything was just a big waste of time. Mona sobs. A week later, Anna's body was found in Belgium. I put all the pieces together. 'Helped the Police until they advised me to move on and let them do their jobs. To them, Anna was just another job." While raising to her feet: "Not to me, though."
*
I'm struggling to keep myself asleep, knowing each minute helps. I need to rest, but this city doesn't comfort much. What in the name of Science possessed me to rent on a main street?
Timișoara is not for me, yet living here is such a wonderful experience! I just wish I could sleep for a little longer. I try to bring back to my ears the sound of the wind playing in the birch tree. Success, the sound comes to the mind bringing the right images with it.
Distant street traffic sounds. A shot in the dark. I spring out of bed with a gasp.

The End

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Sevinch Kuvvatova

Opportunity

It was around noon. There was still a little time before the clock struck two. Aunt Qumri thought to herself that perhaps they had arrived a little too early. Her son had been unusually impatient these days. A thought crossed her mind: Would he have the patience to wait?

After the security officer checked their documents, he pointed toward the second floor and the second room and allowed them to enter.

As they climbed the stairs, an unusual silence hung over the building.

Aunt Qumri knocked softly on the door and then slowly opened it. The only sound disturbing the silence was the gentle clicking of a computer keyboard. The secretary looked toward the door.

“Assalamu alaikum. Excuse me, we came to see the psychologist, Dilafruz Hamzayeva.”

In the doorway stood a woman approaching fifty, with a handsome but gloomy young man of about twenty-five standing behind her.

“Wa alaikum assalam. Welcome! I’m Dilafruz Hamzayeva’s secretary. It’s lunchtime, so she isn’t in her office at the moment. She should be back in about half an hour. You’re welcome to wait here until she returns.”

The secretary pointed toward the sofa in the reception area.

“Thank you, dear.”

The woman let out a small sigh and sat down. But the young man remained standing silently by the door, staring indifferently at the floor.

The woman invited her son to sit beside her.

“My son, come sit down. You heard the young lady. Dilafruz Hamzayeva will be back soon.”

There was both tenderness and deep anxiety in her voice.

After hearing his mother, the young man slowly walked over and sat on the sofa. His head was still lowered. He could not bring himself to look straight ahead, like a young boy who had done something wrong and was ashamed of it.

The secretary noticed his behavior as well, but said nothing. After observing him for a moment, she returned to her work.

Aunt Qumri looked around the room curiously.

The young man, meanwhile, remained hunched over, staring at the floor and sitting silently in his own world. The only sound in the room was still the clicking of the keyboard.

Then the woman spoke again.

“Don’t worry, my son. Everything will be all right. Soon, you won’t even remember these days…”

The young man heard his mother, but his eyes remained fixed on the floor. He seemed completely indifferent.

The mother tried to look away from her son, but her eyes kept returning to him.

That cold, indifferent gaze…

Seeing her son in such a state, the woman’s eyes filled with tears. Trying not to let anyone notice, she quietly said, “I’ll be right back,” and stepped outside.

The secretary couldn’t help but notice this.

The young man’s behavior had aroused her curiosity. It was also beginning to irritate her. Unable to resist her curiosity any longer, she decided to speak to him.

“Usually, people come here because they are facing some kind of problem in their lives. What kind of problem brought you here?”

The young man knew the question was directed at him, but he still did not raise his head. Indifference and coldness seemed to have completely consumed him. He had no intention of doing anything other than staring at the floor.

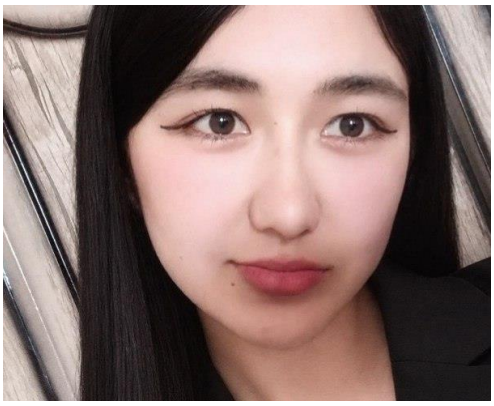
The secretary became slightly annoyed, but calmly addressed him again.
“Excuse me. Are you going to answer my question?”
Again, the young man did not lift his head.
The curious young woman had not been working there as a secretary for very long. In fact, she was a university student—a future psychologist. This part-time job was useful experience for her future profession, which was why she worked there.
Her professors had explained many times how to communicate with clients who came to see them, especially the importance of controlling one’s emotions during a conversation.
She knew all those rules very well.
But at that moment, she had no intention of following any of them.
Besides, she was still a student, and this arrogant young man wasn’t even her client.
At least, that was what she told herself to feel better.
Then, with a sarcastic tone, she addressed him once more.
“I suppose I’ll need a sign-language interpreter if I want an answer to my question. You seem to have a hearing problem.”
Even then, the young man showed no intention of raising his head.
Perhaps the remark had finally irritated him a little. Still staring at the floor, he began to speak.
“The reason we came here…”
He paused for a moment before continuing.
“My mother is worried that I might kill myself.”
His voice was cold and emotionless.
“What made your mother think that?” the secretary asked.
This time, the young man did not make her wait.
“What made her think that?”
He finally looked at the secretary.
His gaze was just as cold as she had imagined, but there was something else in his eyes—some strange energy.
“A failed suicide attempt,” he said casually.
For the first time, the secretary saw his face clearly.
There was no regret, no fear, and no guilt in his eyes.
She was astonished. She had never seen anyone talk about suicide in such a detached manner.
“You’re talking about suicide so casually,” she said angrily. “As if there were a second chance to come back to life after you died.”
At the word second, the young man became even more irritated, though he tried not to show it. He continued in the same cold tone.
“When I did it, I wasn’t thinking about coming back to life. At that time, I simply didn’t care about this life.”
“Then why are you still alive? Why are you still here?”
There was obvious anger in the secretary’s voice now.
The young man didn’t know how to answer. After a short silence, he finally spoke.
“I’m alive for my family. For my mother.”
“For your family?”
“Yes.”
“For your mother?”
“Yes.”
After the brief exchange, the girl asked another question.
“Do you love your mother?”
“Yes. Of course. I love her more than my own life.”
“Don’t lie!”
The secretary interrupted him before he could finish.

The young man looked at her with a mixture of surprise and anger.
“What do you mean? I don’t understand…”
He was becoming irritated.
The girl noticed it and continued in her usual manner.
“If you truly loved your mother, you wouldn’t have tried to take your own life. But you did. So there’s nothing unclear about my conclusion.”
The firmness in her voice made the young man lose some of his defiance. She noticed that, too.
Perhaps that was why her own anger began to subside.
“Have you even thought about your mother’s condition? There’s no light left on her face because she’s constantly worrying about you.”
What the girl said was true.
The young man didn’t know what to say. He could find no words with which to defend himself. He simply looked at her silently, as though admitting his guilt.
The girl noticed his embarrassment and decided not to question him any further.
Silence fell between them.
The young man looked away.
But the girl continued watching him.
Not because she wanted to ask another question, but because she had begun paying close attention to him.
The young man was becoming increasingly uncomfortable. A cold sweat began to form on his skin. He realized that he needed to respond somehow to the way she was looking at him, but he couldn’t find the words.
Just then, the door opened, and his mother entered.
Behind her came a beautiful, warm-looking woman in her forties.
“Ms. Dilafruz Hamzayeva, this is my son,” Aunt Qumri said, pointing toward the young man.
It was obvious that Aunt Qumri had been crying, even though she was trying hard not to show it.
The psychologist greeted them and invited the young man into her office. She told his mother that it would be better for her to wait outside.
The young man entered.
The psychologist pointed to the sofa and invited him to sit.
He sat down without saying a word, once again wearing the same indifferent expression.
The psychologist’s office was bright, cozy, and well-organized. There were both fresh and artificial flowers in the room. Pictures hung on the walls, while books, awards, and certificates filled the shelves. There was even a place for a globe.
But none of these things interested the young man.
He simply wanted to leave as soon as possible.
The psychologist noticed this, of course.
But she wanted to talk to him more and help him solve the problem that was tormenting him. So, without keeping him waiting any longer, she decided to get straight to the point.
After introducing herself properly, she moved on to the main subject.
“I came second in the university entrance examination in terms of the highest score. I was among the best in both my studies and my work—but never the best. I was always second.
“I was born on the second day of the second month of 2002.
“Today, on February 2nd, I turned twenty-four. This is my second muchal cycle.
“Do you understand?
“My entire existence seems to consist of one word:
Second.
“And now, when it comes to that girl…
“I was also the second man in her life.
“She had been involved with another man before me, but they broke up for certain reasons.

“After she met me, her first boyfriend contacted her again and asked her to get back together with him. And she agreed.
“I asked her, ‘Why are you doing this? What have I done wrong?’
“Do you know what she told me?
“Well… what did she say?” the psychologist asked.
“She said:
‘You are a good person. Unfortunately, I wish we had met earlier. If I had met you before that guy, maybe things would have been different. The only thing you are guilty of is being second.’
“Do you understand me now?
“I didn’t try to kill myself because of a girl.
“After hearing what she said, I realized that being second was somehow written into my destiny.
“And after that, I simply didn’t want to hear that cursed word—‘second’—ever again.
“That’s why I did it.”
He finished speaking with bitterness in his voice. It was obvious that he was becoming angry.
The psychologist noticed it, too.
She realized that she would need time to build a relationship with this young man. So, rather than pushing him further, she decided to keep today’s conversation general.
“From one perspective, what you’re saying is completely understandable.
“Being second can feel worse than being fourth—or even being last. It can feel like the worst possible position.
“Especially for someone like you, someone who sets high goals in life, it can feel like a tragedy.
“But as you said, perhaps being ‘second’ isn’t necessarily a curse.
“Think about it.
“Couldn’t ‘second’ also mean a ‘second chance’?”
She paused, then asked:
“Let me ask you something. This is your parents’ second marriage, isn’t it?
“Are they happy now?”
The young man answered somewhat awkwardly.
“Yes. Their life together is very good.”
“I see.
“Do you understand?
“Your mother was given a second chance.
“Maybe you have been given one too.
“Perhaps you can start your life again.
“Making one mistake does not mean that everything is over.
“You committed a sin. Wouldn’t Allah give you another chance to make amends and cleanse yourself of that sin?
“And what about what happened yesterday?
“You survived by what seems like a miracle.
“Isn’t that also a second chance?
“Life is made up of different trials. Sometimes we win, and sometimes we lose.
“But when we lose, we are given another chance to fight again.
“The fact that you are standing here in front of me right now is, in itself, a second chance.”
Listening to the psychologist, the young man felt at least a little lighter.
He already knew all of these things deep down, but he had refused to acknowledge them.
Today, however, he seemed to realize that perhaps it was time to accept what fate had brought him.
For the first time, the thought occurred to him that perhaps every event in life could be viewed from another perspective.
The psychologist watched him carefully.

She didn’t want to interrupt his thoughts by saying anything more.
“For today, it is enough that I’ve learned what has been troubling you.
“Our next session will be in two days, at two o’clock.
“Come back then, and we’ll talk about ways to find solutions to the problems you’re facing.”
The young man said nothing.
He silently left the room.
The psychologist walked out with him to see him off.
Meanwhile, the secretary and his mother were talking outside. His mother was telling the secretary something about her son.
When she saw her son, she hugged him and asked how he was feeling.
“Everything is fine,” he answered briefly.
“I’ll come again in two days. We can go now, Mom.”
His mother said goodbye to the secretary, and the two of them headed toward the exit.
As they were leaving, the secretary apologized to the young man for the inappropriate questions she had asked him earlier.
For the young man, this was actually a welcome opportunity.
The secretary’s curiosity, warmth, concern, and beauty had already caught his attention.
As he was about to walk through the door, he turned to her.
“Excuse me… if I ask your name, will you tell me?”
The secretary smiled playfully.
“Why don’t you try asking first?”
Her playful response brought a faint smile to the young man’s face as well.
But he couldn’t bring himself to ask her name.
He stepped outside.
Then, just as he was leaving the room, he turned back.
From inside, he heard the secretary’s soft voice:
“I already told you my name!”
When the young man heard her name, he thought to himself:
Fate is playing tricks on me.
A faint smile appeared on his face again.
First, he smiled at the girl.
Then he looked toward the psychologist, who was standing by the door.
The psychologist gave him a warm smile and simply shrugged her shoulders.
She, too, had sensed the warmth beginning to develop between the young man and the secretary.
But the strangest thing of all was this:
Their names were the same.
Once again, the psychologist silently acknowledged the mysterious ways of fate. :::

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Mohi Muhammad

Night at the Stilt House (Tonghor)

The river here takes a bend like a woman's waist, then swells up with its lush body. Up to its peak, it seems like a flirtatious, restless, rushing maiden; and when viewed with a steady gaze, it resembles the parting line of hair on a head. Sometimes, it has felt like the ribbon of a silver collar. To some, this river is a lover; to others, a life-goddess. In winter, its bosom dries up, but in the monsoon, it overflows. With the splashing waters of the rainy season, it almost floods both banks. Flowing in curves from far away, the river merges with the Karnaphuli near Madarghat.

Close to the bosom of the Karnaphuli lies the fishermen's village called Ichapur. The people of this village catch fish in canals and marshes. Some engage in farming, but even those who farm jump at the chance to catch fish whenever they find time. Catching fish is like an addiction to them; for some, it's a profession, and for others, it's simply something to do because they have nothing else. Growing up, they somehow get their hands initiated into this trade.

"Hey, Zaiylla's son, your arrogance is not good! I will throw you onto a banana leaf and make you eat. Why are you shouting—going to Kelashkar Killa to steal? If you don't eat, get lost! And if you want more, go bring your own plates and eat!"

These words were uttered the other day by the affluent landlord (Bhadra). Even though guests are served on plates, meals for the drummers are arranged on banana leaves. This issue makes Binoy's blood boil. So, he expresses reluctance to sit and eat on a banana leaf. That is when the landlord comes over and gives him a piece of his mind. Whether there is any other reason for chewing him out, only Binoy knows. Anita's father is happiest when he can belittle Binoy in front of everyone. While others might not remember that people like Binoy are human beings, the landlord certainly does not.

There was a grand arrangement for his daughter's wedding. The responsibility of drumming at that event had fallen on Binoy, and he had taken it on. A multitude of people gathered. The village had never seen such a grand event before. People were eating, roaming around, and doing all sorts of things! And these guys went on beating rhythm after rhythm on one drum after another. The hunger in their stomachs knew no bounds, but nobody paid any attention to that. Master Bahadura kept coming back now and then, saying, "Hey drummers, play louder! Beat harder! Let all these lowlifes dance, jump, and break a leg!"

Everyone else's meal was finished, but nobody mentioned that the drummers needed to eat. People were slowly leaving, yet still, nobody cared that the drummers hadn't eaten yet. But that they had to be treated this way simply because they played the drums—that was something he could not accept. He hated the high-and-low divisions of society. It would have been wonderful if everyone could be treated equally. But how could Binoy do that? Breaking and building society is no child's play! He just plays the drum. He plays the flute, sings, and writes songs. He doesn't even like catching fish.

Binoy's nature is stubborn. People call it headstrong. Let them call it whatever they want. Days won't pass by if you think about all that. So, he stays out of everyone's way and minds his own business, doing whatever his heart desires. What is one to do if he doesn't like catching fish? He was studying in class eight, but time slipped away. With the constant oppression by the village fishermen, studying any further became impossible. Everyone came to his father and said, "Look here, Jagamohan, are you going to turn your son into a barrister or a big shot?"

"What kind of talk is this, brother?" "No, reading books will ruin his life, and here you are letting him wander around catching fish all day!" "So what should I do, brother?" "Put him to work! There are so many boys his age doing labor." "Brother, he prefers studying." "Oh, get lost, useless good-for-nothing!"

These words drove Jagamohan mad. Unable to bear his father's unspeakable curses, he finally quit studying. Now, the drum has completely possessed him. If his fingers don't touch the drum all day long, he feels like he can't sleep. He always keeps a pencil and paper in his pocket. Whenever inspiration strikes, he starts

writing. Songs are composed in rhythm and rhyme. Binoy loves music; he has experimented extensively with drum beats. His two hands stick to the instrument like magic wands. A strange physical expression captivates Binoy while he plays: one foot steps forward, tapping in rhythm. Young and old alike prick up their ears to listen to his drumming.

There is a history in Binoy's life. Anita, the daughter of the landlord Bahadura. This girl in the fisherman's village is unlike anyone else; she draws every eye. For some reason, Anita is very fond of Binoy. Whatever she can save or sneak away from her father's belongings, she gives to Binoy—sometimes food, sometimes money. When Binoy refuses, Anita gets very furious and silently sheds tears. Though Anita's complexion is dark, her face has sharp features—a hint of overflowing youth, with wildness blossoming in her eyes and expression. She roams around the banks of the Halda. She is past the age of catching butterflies, but young and old men alike stop in their tracks to stare. In group, many would gossip away in the small village. And while running after a goat kid, she would always end up meeting only Binoy by the Halda riverbank.

The hunchbacked old grandmother would therefore keep nagging: "Why do you keep wandering around everywhere, bringing ruin upon yourself by giving things to that beggar?" "How could I do otherwise!" "What else will you do, catch a thief and get married, you wretch!" Anita would flare up in feigned anger, yet she didn't mind the grandmother's words at all. In fact, it left her body and mind entranced. She would float in the wind like cotton from a silk-cotton tree, and her castle of imagination would drift without bounds. But she could never have imagined that she would be brought down so crushingly by the words of the villagers. She felt helpless. The landlord father had arranged every single detail of the wedding.

The boat-shed is empty. Emptiness has solidified there. The banyan tree stands silently. The girl is no longer seen running after the goat kid. With her marriage settled, she had grown up immensely. She is hardly seen anymore at that boat-shed by the Halda Ghat. The touch-me-not leaves by the roadside leading from the fisherman's village wait for the chance to feel shy; they no longer receive the gentle touch of the girl's hands. That path had once felt the touch of her restless feet, but now the path doesn't search for her—she searches for the path.

The landlord chose Binoy to play the drums for his daughter's wedding. But Binoy refused to play the drums at Anita's wedding no matter what. Even when the landlord dangled money as a temptation, he said no. When it became impossible to convince Binoy to play, a hunchbacked old grandmother came along and said something that immediately made Binoy agree to play. Neither the landlord nor anyone else could figure out what she said; everyone was simply astonished that the stubborn Binoy had agreed to play the drums.

On the wedding day, when he created a commotion over the food, Anita silently came and stood at the edge of the veranda. The moment their eyes met, Binoy melted like camphor. Where all his anger had vanished, nobody could tell. Everyone watched as Binoy swallowed a hundred insults in silence and quietly took two mouthfuls of food on a banana leaf. If anyone had looked at Anita at that moment, they would have seen two rivers flowing from the corners of her eyes, just like the Halda.

The sky is gloomy and overcast. There is no wind. Rain has been falling for the past few days, accompanied by flashes of lightning that split the sky open every few moments. Boats crowd the bosom of the Halda. Swollen by mountain runoff, the Halda is full to the brim. Amidst the clouds, lightning, and rain, mother fish will rush out to release their eggs, which is why teams of egg-collectors have rushed over. They will hatch fry using these collected eggs.

Binoy has heard that Anita has come back to her father's house. It has been about a couple of years, but Anita still hasn't become a mother, and he hasn't seen her. Binoy is now a much sought-after drummer—playing here today and there tomorrow. Invitations come from various corners of the country, and he gets acquainted with hundreds of people. The only one he doesn't get to see is that dark girl whose eyes are as enchanting as those of a pregnant cow. In that charming gaze, there is the soft shadow of a banyan tree. In that very look, Binoy finds the affection of his village. Binoy wanders around with a constant ache inside his chest. He doesn't enjoy talking to anyone. His destination seems fixed, stretching from emptiness to emptiness. That is why Binoy's flute weeps on the banks of the Halda.

There is a hint of a storm. Lightning flashing in the sky strikes fear into the heart, making it feel as though a thunderbolt might crash down right on his head. He worries about his mother. His mother is all alone, and as for his father, he doesn't care about her at all. How long has it been since Binoy's sister visited? Her husband is a brute who raises his hand against her whenever he pleases. If they don't send this or that from their home, she has to listen to harsh words. Binoy had gone there last month, taking quite a few items to his sister's in-laws' house. The moment he set foot in the courtyard, his sister's mother-in-law screamed out: "Oh, you stubborn wretch, why did you have to show up? You bring this thief's son here to show off!"

When Binoy tried to approach and pay respects, the woman angrily pulled her foot away. Then curses poured from her mouth like popped rice. Her father had spoiled the girl by marrying her off to her son; her son had gotten nothing by marrying her, whereas he could have gotten so much more marrying elsewhere, and so on and so on. The sister came running with muddy hands; she had been plastering the floor. Her frail body showed signs of malnutrition; perhaps she didn't even eat properly, or maybe they didn't feed her. Seeing Binoy, she flared up: "Why did you come? Go back! Even if you hear news of my death, don't come back. I am fine, very fine, I am living happily!"

Laying down the items he had brought, Binoy wiped his tears and walked away that day. His sister's desperate screams followed him all the way to his ears—she was fighting with her mother-in-law.

The night has grown very deep. The number of boats has started to dwindle. The movement of clouds in the sky hasn't stopped; lightning flashes every few moments, and a drizzle is falling. Binoy is sitting quietly in the boat-shed. Just then, someone gently places a hand on his back. "Who is it?" Binoy asks slowly. "It's me." Binoy gasps—Anita! Why is Anita here at this hour? If the landlord finds out, it will be terrible. "Why did you come?" "I came." "Don't do this madness." Silence. The muffled sound of a girl weeping. "They say your child is not..." "Don't you know whose child it is?" "I don't know." "You don't know?" "Your fault!" Binoy starts in shock. Anita having a child because of him? What kind of talk is this! Why should he be held responsible? "I don't understand." "How could you understand?" "I don't understand anything except drumming?"

Amidst the complex vortex of cryptic words, Binoy's head starts spinning. "Don't lie, Anita. Speak clearly. Whose child is it?" "Your fault!" "May god strike you dead, you wretch!"

Pleas spill from Anita's lips. In the lightning flash, the healthy Anita looks utterly unfamiliar to Binoy. Meanwhile, there is no sound from anywhere; the lonely boat-shed stands isolated like an island. The fragrance-filled scent of Anita's body strikes his nose. Like wild creepers, her two arms wrap around Binoy with immense affection. Binoy's every objection fails to hold ground.

As the night deepens with a serpentine motion, the work of collecting eggs continues. The eggs will turn into fish fry. In the sky, fireworks of light burst forth once more. In that illumination, there is no longer any way to distinguish the two thirsty souls of a man and a woman in the boat-shed. The speed of the rain increases, accompanied by the roaring thunder of the clouds.

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Translated by Alamgir Mohammad

[Alamgir Mohammad teaches literature and translation studies at the tertiary level. He has published over 25 translated book titles both in English and Bangla.]



Mohi Muhammad,

born in 1974 at Asia Tea Estate, Chattogram, Bangladesh, writes stories of the marginalized people. His story collections include Ahalyakatha and Suchetana o Harishchandraline; novels include Araipata (on tea workers' life), the acclaimed Moynadweep, and Menka. Other works—Coffiner Uili, Uranchandi, Bharabou, Noyonpora, Aninditar Ekdin—offer thrilling, varied narratives.

Imelda Zapata Garcia

El Tren

We contemplate escaping through new route. I insist, reminded of torturous hum on neverending railway doldrum. Recall anxiety driven pall which drove my innocence to tears, unable to comprehend it all. This inexplicable shroud which hung upon my very breath. We turn the carriage of our ride, V8 engine drives us past oncoming traffic headed towards the queue. They'll sit and wait to view each rail car hitched, which ensnares them, forces pause amid their traveled path.
I wondered why for ages, listened to tales which spoke of my alarm, that phobic sense of dread, the sight of crossing trains has bled from my depths. La niña Llorona I became each time, while riding on family trips across the cityscape. My chest heaving in dispair, to realize that I could go nowhere. Trapped between the crossing gates and others who await, timeline severed in a way which I cannot negate.
Six decades later, clarity began to land. Peace settles in my heart whene're the blaring horn does warn, now that insight expounds on the crux of the matter. Trauma lay in the wrinkles of time, in every corner of a spirited soul of five, who's world was disrupted abruptly, never more to resonate in comfort of my cradle. Shanghaied unto crowded car with but the supervision of an elder boy of ten. His arms full of dedication and responsibility. And I, bereft of what was left behind, swallowed anguish, in attempt to find solace in cold comfort of estranged relatives who's generosity was strained by margin.
This left a boy, assigned parental consequence of seven souls who's bones he carried for some time. Until borders allowed the crossing, through proper channels, of appropriate guardians. Was it weeks or months, we languished in a vacant carriage house behind kinfolk's home, awaiting loving parents arrival. I have no recollection of our voyage on the train which traveled al Norte, but that train trip haunted me, long beyond youth. Those who love me know, to head in round about directions to avoid, to search for overpassing of railroads. To spare me of the slightest moment of unease in gridlock, imposed by el monstruo, a kin to La Bestia, in my heart.
Enigmatically, I've hopped aboard some trains which carried me through miles of Southern terrain. Serenity accompanied my soul each time, as if migration has resolved to feel a blessed thing, when riding on the tracks which long held terror and confusion.

Perspective softened through the age and age befalls as sage of understanding, that landing on common ground, the routes once traveled by generations of my past, has solace found. La niña cries of longing now, gasps at sight of moving trains, to think it once the vessel which began my living on this land, this Yanaguana ridden soil, which sits amidst a melting pot which boils. The sound of distant whistling of those songs which sound alarm, become nostalgia to my aging bones. I've since begun to romanticize the thought of travel on interoceanic railways, as I head towards ebbing days.

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Death Doula Moments

While he convalesced, awaiting news of impending death, she begged me be her Cyrano. She sought reprieve from shackles worn throughout tumultuous life of wedded turbulence. Phrases caught up in her throat became the ground for script which penned by my hand, might offer solace to her desperation. Spilt ire turned tragic confessor of encrusted pain she'd carried with each child they shared and words fell flat despite an effort to explain. Correspondence was a familiar tool which I used at her behest, one more form of empathetic worth I lent her troubled soul. Unlike Cyrano, the task was not to impress, but to impress upon a misconstrue of what forgiveness meant. I bent my words to fit the depravity of this man's vocabulary. No lofty verbs could convey conviction of her voice. Emotion hung on quiloqulisms of their mutual language, that they might land upon his frozen heart. I dug deep to conjure conversation she might have quipped, given half the chance. To stir up a faded memory of a love once shared, if only in a misspent youth. This, in effort to capture bits of what they both knew before the curtain drops o're the windows of his soul. She reached into her muted voice to plant each thought in strokes, painted on the canvas of his heart. Like Cyrano, my voice betrayed by truth, I grew to understand that I could ne're fit comfortably in her plan. His ebbing grew wings within the thrashing of cruel disease, and homebound became a kin to feeling ensnared, pinned down by what felt more cadaver, each second which lapsed. The last time he wobbled across the empty lot, to ask my council in some legal regard, he tripped and caught himself midair. His fragile frame, a breath of shadow of his worth. This man whose bravado poured through fissures of his very skin, drawn to thin. Delicate tissue on the last bed, whispers prayers surrounded that dim lit room. Desperation hung on walls which greeted my terminal call. She brought me forth to serve as conduit of sorts. I sat in silence as she shrank into a puddle of sorrow, speaking softly, those definitive words she'd left unsaid. Spoken at me while all the while addressed at that life partner, who's trembling bones lay in our presence, his breath escaping is gasps of pain. I thought to stay until stillness fell, but something pulled my heart away. As if the heft of that moment, might drag me to unfathomable depths. That was the pivotal point which spoke to me in clarity. Assigned me an opossing call, not of death support, but of vat to empty onto the living. I would be spared that milestone, regardless of its treasured significance, it's simply not my Métier.

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Sanctuary

The first one was not much to mention but her keeper was the judgment which gave me wings, a woman of wit who reached into a chasm of my soul and stirred something in me
It's breavity was that of poverty, a hall of words within one of few which offered knowing in text, reading room of a school in the most impoverished districts in the state.
Sanctuary to my futility in fitting into place. I spent free hours there, knowing that it's walls held comfort which was lacking elsewhere.
In the spaces where school was not open to my time, I walked city blocks to the nearest of those Citadel which dot the map throughout.
They grew in circumstance annually and as I grew to treasure their existence, I drew my own beyond their doors, to sup on essence spilled from books which sat on shelves which lined their floors
I joined the groups which lauded them for holding ground upon our land, those archival bibliotecs which hoard treasure of the mind, and added to their knowing, the bits of culture, I could find
I sat at tables in review, to have proposals stripped by those who, questioned that which my heart chose to bring to light within those halls. The history which follows us beyond the grave, celebrations written in the fibers of this land
I was given free reign to display, as entry greeting of community, an annual exhibition to represent the honoring of the Dead. In a time when others thought that morbid, and macabre, I fought to celebrate what a world finally embraced. Before Hollywood chose to regard, a notion that death might resolve, the question there's more than this, perhaps in death exists a form of bliss
I stepped into that den of books with full intent to more than look, to seize upon an space I chose to leave my heart, and place a modicum of flavor from the cornucopia of my roots, be it in the physical realm of books or the embrace a library can offer a community. I fought to plant inside the trove of written word which page invokes and late in life discovered that my words yet sit within the vat which local ones yet keep.
In celebration of jubilación, the very first of my creation, in May of twenty thousand and eight, three of those halls accepted a collection of my poetry, to harbor there. Cielitos, an unassuming entry on my part.
I've written more since that fine hour and though my words have flown to broader point, rules of engagement changed by now, and gifted books are shunned somehow, but I got that one archived for posterity. That humble book holds residence in greater halls, a library in a University of California keeps it there, among the writs of greater qualities. And I, humbled by the generosity, have traveled in the winds, my hearth to land upon Repository, Anthenaeum, which has ever been my Sanctuary

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Laurie Nguyen

Food Desert

Lips purse. Hands grasp an oversized HEB bag filled with recalled food. Wouldn't last a week but that was all he could carry A backpack between emaciated shoulders. A phone against his ear. A laugh. A sigh. I love you mom. Be back soon. He leaves, the sunset disappearing from aging skin.

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Nargiza Esemuratova

MOM, BOOKS AND ME

How did your love for books develop? I've heard this question many times in my life. A book, its scent, the rustling of its pages, the feeling of holding it – for me, it's a world of its own. ...I'm delighted that some of them are in my personal collection, some even if I don't read them.

Every book reminds me of my mother. Perhaps my love for books was instilled in my heart through my mother before books.
Every Thursday since I was a child, my mother handed me money.
– "Don't lose it. Be careful. "Don't let it slip", he would repeatedly instruct, sending me to the lady who sold newspapers.

My childhood was spent in the 23rd microdistrict of our capital. Whether it's the scorching summer heat or the heroic winter cold – it doesn't matter. For the newspaper, I passed the Progress school and headed towards the 22nd microdistrict. What I get there is the "Bekajon" newspaper.

The newspaper vendor also recognized me and didn't bother asking what I needed. He took the money from my hand and handed me "Bekajon". I hurried home, my heart pounding. There's a reason. If I had read the new newspaper before my mother, it was clear she would have gotten angry and upset. I've known this since childhood.
Even upon reaching home, the rumbling inside wouldn't subside.
Mom, have you finished reading the newspaper?
A bit more:
"Mom, what happened after that story?" Did they write in this issue?
Waiting again:
"Mom, can I study?" Have you finished the newspaper?
The joy of the day when a fresh newspaper arrived at our house was different.
Even now, whenever I hold a newspaper, I transform into that little Nargiz from my childhood. Just like that day, I felt a surge of excitement and joy.
But even though I bought "Bekajon" as much as I wanted and read it freely, I never experienced the pleasure of reading the newspaper, of those "Bekajon" books that my mother had waited for in my childhood to read. Because at that time, the newspaper wasn't just an ordinary newspaper for me. It was the joy I shared with my mother...
...A cabinet in our house used to be full of "Bekajon" newspapers from different years. My mother neatly folds and stores every newspaper she reads. Months and years later, he would open that archive, reread everything from the very first newspapers, and spend his time meaningfully.
Some people who saw these newspapers in our house:
–If you submit it to the waste paper office, it will be a lot of money. It's taking up so much space in the closet for nothing.
My mother doesn't even pay attention to their words.
Seeing newspapers under a bagel, a flatbread, or a small fried pie at someone's house:
– "But the newspaper has its downfall", he would say, sobbing.

Time passed, I grew up and matured considerably. Much has changed. Life has changed. Houses, streets, people, customs have changed. But our family's beloved "Bekajon" hasn't changed. Every week, we eagerly rushed to read the newspaper.

Sometimes, overwhelmed by curiosity, I say, “I won’t tell my mother”, and read the newspaper on the way. When I get home, I hand the newspaper to my mother as if nothing happened. But a fire burns inside me. I want to tell my mother what I read.

It was the most difficult matter for me not to tell my mother about some article, story, or interesting incident in the newspaper, and to act as if I hadn’t even read the newspaper yet.

Gradually, “Bekajon” became insufficient for both of us. We’ve also finished reading the old “Bekajon” from our newspaper archive. As for the new newspaper, we’ll read it on the day it arrives. It’s a sin for us to sit without reading anything until next week. So, my mother and I shifted our interests from newspapers to reading.

I was the student who received the most books in the school library. Both at the academic lyceum and at the university, I rush to the library with every call. In the library, my letterhead, intended for each reader, would often fill up. I return home with a book in my arms. My mother rejoices even more than I do when she sees me with a book.

He would clean up the work he was doing and then devote himself to reading. My mother was such an educated, literate, intelligent, sharp-minded, and intellectual person. When he starts reading a book, the world around him seems to disappear for a moment.

I have been studying throughout my life. School. Lyceum Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees at the university. Then doctoral studies...
A large part of my life is spent in an environment related to knowledge, books, and reading. But until now, I haven’t seen anyone who is so fond of books...

***

My mother and I had a unique way of reading books: If I buy a book, I bring it in two copies. We read the book simultaneously in two ways.
–Nargiz, start reading from page fifty. I read from the beginning of the book to page fifty.
–Okay, agreed. I started reading it then.
So, we’ll start reading books to compete.
If one of us gets distracted by something else, the other:
– “Let’s gather the other things”. “Come on, let’s finish the book”, we warn and scold him.

After finishing the book, my mother starts from the beginning, telling a story as if it were a fairy tale. I will continue the events that followed. Thus, the plot in the book becomes deeply ingrained in our worldview and thinking. Even when reading and recounting, they don’t limit themselves to simply describing the events; they turn into a long overview.
–What did this work remind you of? In which work is this plot repeated, think carefully, we have read that book. Did you remember?
– In “Khorezm”?
– No, think carefully, in which work is there such a story?
– Hey, alright, I remember, at “Terbenbes”! Right?
– Yes, that’s right. It’s been quite some time since we read that “Terbenbes”. If you brought it from the library, we could read it again.
– You’re right, I’ll look for the library tomorrow.

In this way, we would save time, increase our love for books, and finish reading them quickly. The next day, when I returned the finished works to the library, the librarians were surprised.

– Have you really finished reading it? She wouldn't believe. I rejoiced inwardly, feeling like someone who had accomplished something significant.

...Reading a book in two ways and traveling together in the world of books was a small secret for my mother and me, something no one knew.

As for the question, "How did your love for books develop?" My answer is simple: I think it's natural for Nargiza, whose childhood was spent among newspapers and books, to be interested in books. Because I didn't treat a book as a simple book. I learned from my mother how to wait patiently for the newspaper, how to rejoice in every new book, how to share the events I've read and what I've learned with my loved ones. The love for books in my heart is one of my mother's most precious legacies. Now, every time I read a book, I miss that little girl – Nargiza, who hurried home with "Bekajon" in her hands, her heart pounding with a thousand different thoughts.

Who knows, maybe it's my longing for my mother...If only I had the chance to relive those moments, if only I could read newspapers and books freely, and ask you again and again:

...Mom, have you finished reading...?!

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Uzbekistan, Nukus

Kakali Bhowmik

Stock Exchange of Love

When I was twelve, my mother told me, ‘See, you are the first girl in your class. Learn all the household chores properly and make a special effort to master cooking. But remember, don’t dream of becoming a professor or aspiring to great professional heights. You might grow old, and nobody would marry you. Dream of becoming a teacher only.’”

Perhaps I, too, would have held the same opinion had I stood in her shoes.

Yet, what I have felt, experienced, and witnessed over the years—in marriages, love affairs, and arranged marriages alike—has told me a different story. Certain patterns have etched themselves indelibly into my consciousness.

In some cases, perhaps in many, men seem desperately to seek either a six-figure-earning woman or a woman from an affluent family who, even without a job, brings with her a ready-made life of financial security. One is valued for what she earns; the other, for the security her family can provide. And perhaps love flourishes in some of these arrangements, too.

But somewhere amid these calculations of age, earnings, and financial standing, a question lingers in my mind: where does true love converge with its many dimensions when a relationship begins to resemble a marketplace?

When did the heart become a stakeholder, and when did financial security begin to dictate the stock value of love?

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From - India

Transition

He had entered middle age without noticing when youth had quietly slipped away.
That morning, he returned to the old seaside road after many years. The ocean remained exactly as he remembered it—blue, immense, curving like a ribbon beneath the pale sky. The little shop at the corner stood where it had always stood. Only its owner had changed.
He stood before it for a while, leaning on his walking stick.
Once, he had run along this road without growing breathless, his ribs expanding like bellows, his nerves alive with the thrill of discovery. He had wandered wherever his feet carried him, returning home only when the sun had spent its last golden ember.
Now, every step demanded negotiation.
His legs faltered. His back protested. His skin had begun to bear the fine, dry script of age. The walking stick had become less an accessory than a quiet companion.
Yet his heart betrayed none of the years.
Standing there, he could almost smell his childhood—the salt of the sea, the dust of the road, the warm fragrance drifting from the little shop, the sun resting gently upon his face. Memories resurfaced with astonishing freshness, carrying the colours of his younger years, their triumphs and wounds, their weal and woe.
He looked towards the distant cascade, where he had once roamed like a free bird.
He could no longer reach it as effortlessly as he once had.
For a moment, the truth felt cruel.
Life was carrying him towards old age, whether he wished it or not.
Then the evening sun brushed his face.
He smiled.
Perhaps his body had learned to lean on a stick, but his spirit had not learned to surrender.
He turned towards the sea.
The ocean was still blue.
The shop was still standing.
The sun was still warm.
And somewhere within him, the boy he had once been was still running.

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From — Tripura, India



Jahonafroz (Dilafruz Sultanova)

LOVE IN THE NETWORK

The final days of September were slowly slipping away. Leaving behind the city's deafening noise and bitter memories, Madina had returned once again to her beloved, old village life — into her own quiet and modest world.

Today was September 28th. Early morning, a crisp and cool air. Yet, the gentle grace of autumn urged her to embrace even this cold breeze with a bittersweet feeling.

Madina had her morning tea, attended to the household chores, and immersed herself in daily routine. After midday passed, she stepped into her bedroom. She wanted to sleep for a while and grant her exhausted body a moment of rest. But as she closed her eyes, scenes from the past unexpectedly began to play in her mind like frames from a movie. These memories would grant her no peace. Unable to bear it, she finally opened her eyes and rose from her bed.

She felt utterly depleted and withered, as though the heavy burdens and endless conflicts of bygone years were crushing down upon her shoulders. In truth, the days she had survived were far from easy. Once, she had been so strong. Solitude had felt foreign to her; declaring, "I will never surrender!", she used to face every ordeal without flinching, believing in herself. But time ultimately asserted its harsh rule — and Madina, too, was left feeling helpless and alone.

She stood up, picked up her phone, and unsure of what else to do, let her inner sorrow overflow into silent tears. Pulling herself together, she attempted to organize her inner chaos using artificial intelligence, seeking solace through gentle questions and answers. But her thoughts were unforgiving, dragging her back a year and a half into the past — to those desperate days when she had left for the city in pursuit of a livelihood.

City life wore Madina down to her very spirit. Gridlocked traffic, cold and indifferent faces, a restless, unyielding din... In that ruthless world where everyone was consumed by their own plight, finding a decent job was no easy feat.

One day, she was washing dishes in a tiny, suffocating kitchen. The work seemed endless; her fingers, dipped alternately into icy and boiling water, grew swollen and chapped. Trembling with sheer exhaustion, her eyes blurred. As she lifted a heavy porcelain plate from the soapy water, her fingers slipped. The plate shattered with a piercing shriek against the cold tiled floor. The quiet room instantly exploded with the head chef's harsh scolding. Kneeling on the floor, Madina began to gather the sharp shards. Just then, a razor-edge piece sliced deep into her finger. Yet she felt no pain in her flesh; she felt only the crushing humiliation that had accumulated in her heart. Clasping her bleeding finger tightly, she sat on her knees, bit her lip, and wept in quiet agony.

As autumn withered into freezing winter, she was working as a waitress in a local cafe. Her thin clothes offered no defense against the cold, and constantly moving between the drafty outdoors and the heated indoors brought on a severe illness. Fever burned through her body, every bone ached, and a heavy weight pressed against her head. While on duty, violent, dry coughing fits tore through her chest. While carrying a glass of ice water, another wave of coughing struck; the tray trembled violently in her hand, and the glasses rattled against each other.

The restaurant administrator — a cold-faced woman — motioned her over to the side:

—"You cannot serve customers in this state. If you're sick, stay home; this isn't a hospital. Don't bother coming back!"

Madina tried to object, to plead, "If I rest just a little, it will pass... I have no money left." But the lump in her throat and the uncontrollable coughing choked her words. With trembling hands, she put on her thin coat. Outside, a biting wind whipped snowflakes into her face. Penniless, helpless, and frozen in the dark night, she trudged down the snow-covered street, not knowing where to go. Such was the cruelty of loneliness and the modern city.

Keeping her grief locked inside, Madina’s heart eventually began to ache with physical distress. But whom could she tell? Everyone had their own burdens, their own families, their own struggles. They might listen once, maybe twice, but eventually they would say, “It’s your own fault for being so foolish.” Such is the bitter law of solitude — you cannot hold anyone accountable.

And so, night after night, swallowing her tears into her pillow, she began to pour all her sorrow, humiliation, and the agonizing pain — like the blood dripping from her cut fingers — onto paper. Every line she wrote was, in truth, a bleeding piece torn directly from her heart.

* * *

One day, hoping to preserve her poems and perhaps find kindred, aching souls like her own, she opened a modest channel. Working endlessly, her eyes would strain late into the night as she poured herself into poetry. She was invited into online creative groups. When criticism poured in, she comforted herself through tears; but when someone praised her work, she felt as though she were flying in the seventh heaven.

One evening, she joined an audio livestream taking place in one of the literature groups. Suddenly, a young man's voice echoed through the stream... It was not merely a voice. It carried a tender warmth, a deep sincerity, and an enchanting magic. Every word he spoke, even his simplest, sweetest wishes, melted like warm wax into Madina’s wounded soul — a soul battered by hard labor, humiliation, and constant scolding. How long had it been since she last heard such gentle and affectionate words in the city's cold, heartless realm? His words drew her in helplessly, thawing the frost around her spirit.

With trembling fingers, Madina typed her heartfelt wishes to the poet and, as if she had committed a crime, hurriedly left the group.

Days passed. Madina found herself coming across the poet's works more and more frequently. One day, the poet sent her a message:

—“Are you in every group I belong to?”

—“Yes, perhaps. I wish you success in your creative journey,” Madina replied.

—“Thank you,” responded the poet, whose name was Doniyor.

Time slipped by. One day, a verse written by Doniyor struck Madina so deeply that she composed a response right in the group, pouring the grief of her heart into the lines. Though it was only a draft, it was written with her heart's blood and her soul's cry. Doniyor was astounded. “Wonderful,” he replied, before writing to her in private:

—“Now I understand why you are in every group I’m in... Do you write poetry too?”

Thus, Madina and Doniyor became close confidants. Doniyor would invite her to his virtual poetry evenings, and they cherished each other's thoughts and insights.

One day, Doniyor called her. Having developed feelings for Madina, he intended to confess his heart. Yet after speaking with her, he inexplicably pulled back. Whether his feelings had cooled during their conversation or for some other reason, Madina sensed the shift, but remained silent. They began to drift apart.

When Madina finally took the step to clarify everything between them, Doniyor made it clear that he did not seek a serious relationship. He explained that his recognition on social media was enough for him, and that he wanted no drama in the groups.

Madina swallowed the bitterness whole. Though life had tested her with burdens far heavier than Doniyor’s rejection, letting go proved agonizingly difficult. Doniyor’s poems tore at her heart, and involuntarily, she would sometimes write lines in response. It felt as though her darkest days were only just beginning. Only art and literature gave Madina the strength to endure; it felt as if she would stop breathing if she ceased to write.

One evening, while members were exchanging playful bantering in a newly created group, Doniyor posted a message as well. Taken off guard, Madina typed before she could stop herself: “Welcome, you have brought a gentle breeze.” That night, a storm raged within her: Was I jealous? Does he feel anything at all for me? Trapped in these endless questions, she finally fell asleep.

Days turned into months. Doniyor's poems held subtle confessions meant for Madina, while Madina's lines carried unspoken longing for Doniyor. Yet neither took a real step toward the other.
Madina's life fell completely out of balance. Constantly distracted, she ultimately lost her job. The rift between her and Doniyor widened — they began exchanging verses laced with bitterness and resentment, until finally, Madina wrote a farewell poem titled "Adieu". She was trying to push him away, embarrassed to reveal her dire reality — that she was starving, penniless, and trapped in utter despair.
Unable to find work anywhere, she eventually took to day labor in the fields and orchards on the outskirts of the city.
One evening, after working from dawn to dusk in an orchard, she took her pay and headed home. She parted ways with her companion. To save money, she avoided taking a taxi and walked on foot instead. But after an hour and a half of walking, darkness invaded her vision from hunger and exhaustion, and her head began to spin. Passing by a cafe, she lost her balance and collapsed, losing consciousness.
* * *
When she opened her eyes, she was in a hospital room. Sitting on a chair right before her was... Doniyor! Madina's breath caught in her throat. In person, Doniyor was remarkably handsome, with a radiant face, deep black eyebrows, and captivating eyes. Madina recognized him in an instant, but Doniyor did not recognize her.
—"Are you feeling alright? You suddenly collapsed, so I brought you to the hospital. Are you okay?" Doniyor asked softly.
Madina nodded her head weakly.
—"I brought your medication," Doniyor said, gesturing toward a small bedside table. "Please don't misinterpret my intentions."
—"Thank you," Madina whispered quietly.
Doniyor mentioned he had matters to attend to and would check on her tomorrow before taking his leave. The moment he stepped out, Madina turned her face to the wall and began to cry tears of deep sorrow.
Half an hour later, Doniyor returned to the room carrying food. Thinking it was the nurse, Madina didn't turn around. Suddenly, that familiar, magical voice resonated:
—"Here, eat something... It's late, don't sleep on an empty stomach..."
Madina turned involuntarily. Tears streamed down her face.
—"Are you okay? Please don't cry," Doniyor tried to comfort her.
Madina wiped her face with her headscarf:
—"I am fine," she said in a muffled voice.
Doniyor sat for a while. Seeing that she drank water and took her medicine, he said, "I will check on you tomorrow," and departed. Madina could barely swallow a bite, yet forced herself to eat because Doniyor had brought it. She had never felt so vulnerable and utterly heartbroken. In her heart, helplessness and a strange, quiet peace coexisted. Weeping silently, she eventually succumbed to sleep under the effect of the medication.
* * *
Early the next morning, Madina asked the doctor for a discharge and left the hospital. Yet she could not bring herself to leave entirely — she went into a tea house directly opposite the hospital and sat drinking coffee until noon. Around lunchtime, Doniyor appeared holding a bag and walked into the hospital. Hiding her face behind the menu, Madina watched and waited.
At last, Doniyor emerged. Opening a letter in his hand, he began to read. His calm demeanor instantly shattered; the letter slipped from his hand, fluttering to the ground. He clutched his head in shock...
Greetings, my Letter!

Peace be upon you. Reading this, you may perhaps hate me, or perhaps feel pity.

You did not recognize me. I am not surprised. Having seen my retouched photos and edited pictures on social media, you surely envisioned someone entirely different. But in reality, you are even more handsome and imposing than any image. To be honest, words fail to describe what I feel.

I am certain you are wondering who I am. I am Madinamuntoz — the secret admirer who penned hidden lines for you, the fragile soul who fell in love with you.

Life, it turns out, is far more ruthless than the sweet dream you tried to paint. The day heartbreak became my fate, the old me died. On the day you entered my life like a beam of hope cutting through the dark, light flooded my world. But alas, that too was merely a mirage.

Believe me, my feelings were pure. A thousand times over, I regret that we met under these circumstances. But now, I doubt I will ever be able to forget you for the rest of my days — especially your eyes...

I am at peace with my life, for it turned my imagination into reality and brought me face-to-face with you. It is true that love knows no boundaries of time or space.

Whether I have the right to say this or not — I do not know. But I remain the helpless soul who fell in love with you — Madina.

Please, be happy.

From your Madina, who has written her final words and lived her last day.

Farewell. Adieu.

Madina longed to run out to him, but her pride and poverty held her back. Peering through the glass window of the cafe, she wiped her tears. Doniyor rushed back and forth, frantically asking the nurses about Madina. Finding no trace of her, he finally walked away...
Madina wept for a long time in the cafe. Then, she deleted all her Telegram groups, channels, and erased her profile. Returning to her rented room, she packed her belongings and headed back to the village. Like a living ghost, she returned — leaving her heart behind in that cold, unfeeling city...

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Dilafro'z Sultanova (writing under the pseudonym Jahonafro'z) is an Uzbek poet, essayist, and researcher published internationally across the USA, UK, South Korea, Netherlands, and India. Her literary works explore themes of motherhood, migration, human dignity, psychological reflection, and social dynamics. Honored with national and international distinctions including the 'Millat Iftixori' National Cultural Award, she writes to give voice to human emotion and connect readers across cultures.

Dr. Jernail S. Anand

ARTIFICIAL SCARCITY: A Parenting Prescription for an Affluent Society

Artificial scarcity is a term used in economics and commerce to describe the hoarding of goods so that prices may be increased. It is an accepted, if unsocial, strategy of market behaviour. I employ the term here in an altogether different perspective, where it is akin to a transferred epithet — a sphere which has nothing to do with business sense.

This argument does not concern the millions of young men and women who graduate into unemployment and search for work under the weight of real, material scarcity. They enjoy no surplus of luxury, nor any excess that dulls ambition. The problem under consideration belongs instead to those families who possess surplus wealth, and their growing up generations do not need to work hard or spend sleepless nights worrying about tomorrow's ration or an elderly parent's medicine.

The Three-System Breakdown

In such affluent sections of society, three systems are found under stress but at huge social cost:

First, wealth. Rapid accumulation of wealth, though not universally so, often bypasses ethical constraints. When business is run without a sense of ethics, skyscrapers rise in record time and fortunes multiply through means barely transparent. Wealth amassed without accountability tends to affect the moral standards of those who inherit the unearned bounty.

Second, the young. When this wealth is placed at the restraintless disposal of adolescents and young adults, it creates havoc. Lives are wasted in indulgence on what may be ill-gotten wealth. Because wealth is rooted in power, there is little fear of law. If illegal acts are committed, influence can secure a safe passage. By placing excessive power and pelf in their hands without moral training or restraint, parents inadvertently push them toward a variety of crimes. Can we think of the nova rich kids without enjoying rave parties? Drinks and occasional fall into crime including killings of inconvenient partners?

Third, society. The real sufferer of these derailed lives is society itself. Imagine if these same young people had been well trained and made to work hard, they could have given the world researchers, entrepreneurs, and innovators. That option is now substantially closed, leading to a wastage of young power and energy.

The Principle of Artificial Scarcity

Here enters the idea of artificial scarcity by affluent parents, who must confront the stark fact that excessive provision, born of love, often serves to turn children toward deviance. Juvenile delinquency has much to do with overindulgence by parents who are unrestrained provocateurs of evil among growing minds. The only reliable recipe to make them good and worthwhile citizens is to create an atmosphere of artificial scarcity. Apart from this, the parents themselves these days are rooted in a eco-system which does not believe in

restraint. Isn't it an additional liability? What the parents do not believe, how can they impart that sense of restraint to their children?

The idea of Artificial Scarcity is a holistic measure to keep children from harm's way. It does not at all mean neglect. It only means regulated flow. Parents can, and should, regulate money and comfort, and better still, require that their children earn their own living.

Mechanisms for Regulating the Flow:

The concept becomes practical only when we develop some mechanism to implement it.

Allowance with accountability: From age 10, we should tie pocket money to household or community responsibilities, with a condition for review.

Self-funding thresholds: Major purchases—a first car, foreign education, business capital—should require at least 50% self-funding through work, scholarships, or enterprise.

Mandatory work exposure: One summer job, internship, or rural/volunteer posting before college, with no parental bailout for failure.

Family business induction: If a family enterprise exists, entry only at the lowest rung, with promotion based on measurable performance, not surname.

If parents enforce these conditions and compel their children to work their way up, it will likely reduce a significant share of deviance and make society healthier. Moreover, when young people work as hard as the children of less privileged families, they generate new ideas and innovate. They become stronger mentally and intellectually. The only barrier between them and greatness is the flow of easy money, which distracts and derails.

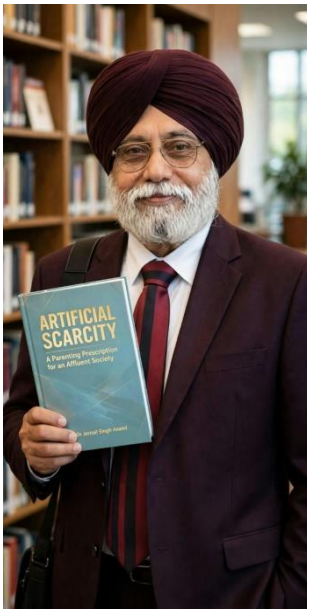
This may sound idealistic, but affluent parents already witness how children slide into drugs, fraud, and violent conduct. The most effective check on that slide is to stop the unconditional flow of money and create artificial scarcity, so that they must work their way up. That discipline is, finally, a highly beneficial act for society as a whole.

Extension to Human Relations

The idea extends beyond money to human relations. Any child for whom parents lose their sense of balance and become overprotective ends up spoiled. If a girl is overprotected and supported in every fantasy by her mother, she may have a hard time setting up a stable home. Young boys, too, need a rationing of affection. They must be corrected, and no partiality should be shown if they overstep what is right. It is for parents to make them realize their limits.

Conclusion

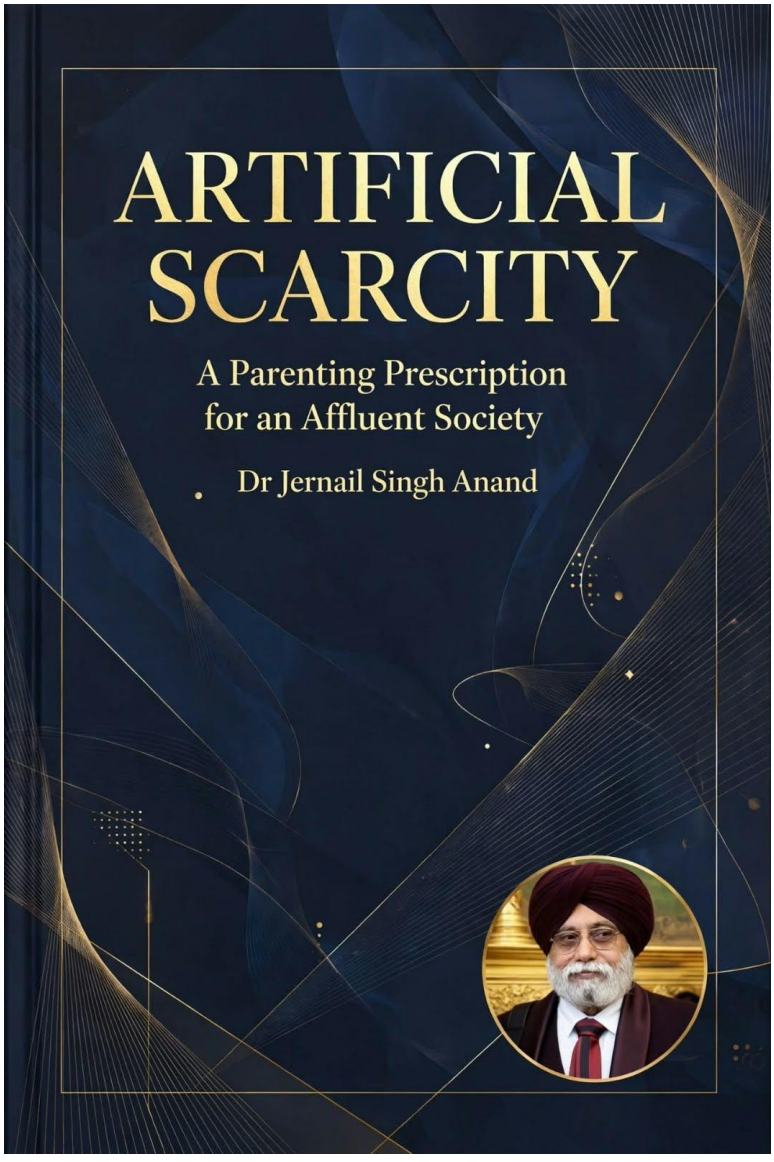
Artificial scarcity is not deprivation; it is design. It is the conscious choice to replace indulgence with structure, entitlement with effort, and power without responsibility with earned merit. In an age of abundance for the few, restraint becomes a form of ethical parenting—and a public service. It can also answer the issue of social disparities in the grooming of youngsters.



Author Note

Dr. Jernail S. Anand, with 210 books to his credit including 20 epics, is a Chandigarh-based polymath and architect of 21st-century ethical literature. Founding President of the International Academy of Ethics and laureate of the Charter of Morava, Seneca, Franz Kafka [Germany, Ukraine, Czech Rep] and Maxim Gorky, his name is inscribed on the Poets' Rock in Serbia. He is an Honorary Member of the Serbian Writers Association, Belgrade. Email: anandjs55@yahoo.com[Serbia][Italy][Russia]

Bibliography: https://sites.google.com/view/bibliography-dr-jernal-singh/home

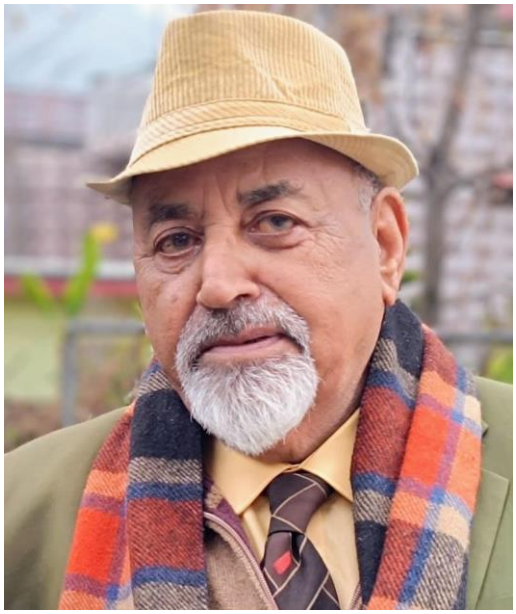


THE POETIC PASSION: 'ACROSS THE PAUSE' BY DR LALIT MOHAN SHARMA.

Reviewed by
Dr Jernail S. Anand

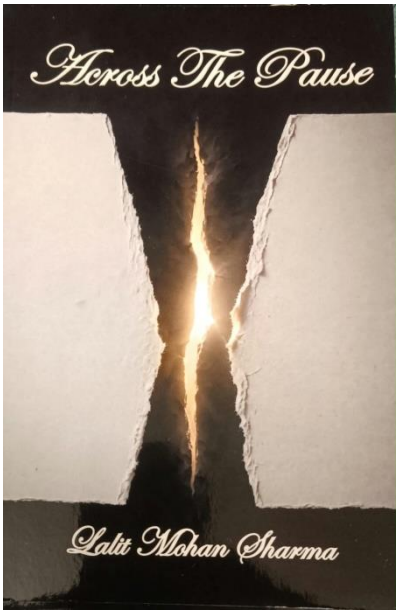
The poetic passion is self-consuming but like a flame it goes down in splendour. -Anand

THE AUTHOR:



Dr. Lalit Mohan Sharma is a seasoned voice in contemporary poetry whose reflective verses beautifully weave personal introspection with universal human experiences...his work continues to enrich modern poetic discourse with depth, clarity, and quiet emotional powner, " writes Malini Joshi, editor, The Literature Times. Born 1952, a former government college Principal, Dr Sharma is a bilingual poet, translator and author. His publications include 17 books of English poetry, two anthologies of Hindi poems, Another Gandhi, a monograph on Pandit Durga Dass, a freedom fighter and A Three- Step Journey, an English verse translation of Zahid's Urdu poems. His poetry book On the Edge has received the International Culture Award from International Academy of Rome. Included in several books of repute on poetry, stories and academic research on Modern Thought and Post-Truth Era, his poetry books, Icy Chill on Fire, Across The Pause, and 'Blind Man's Bluff', his first book of short fiction, came out in 2026. International Academy of Ethics has conferred on him fellowship of the Academy.

Review



The poet's job is to look with wonder at the phenomenon and analyze things which disturb the human flown, generate sympathy for man where he is a victim and react when he is a perpetrator, and above all, express his angst if he finds himself helpless. Whether someone agrees with you or not, does not matter if the poet is true to himself, because poetry is the result of an inner craving, and it ignites the same fire in the readers. The poetic passion is self-consuming but like a flame it goes down in splendour.

If William Wordsworth had met Lalit Mohan Sharma, he might have reconsidered his theory of emotion recollected in tranquility, and even Eliot might have given a thought to his idea of 'escape' from emotion, because here is the poetry which resembles a volcanic eruption. When the procession of the Muse takes off, a thousand wry calculations stand on the banks, looking in wonder at flowning waters. Poetry takes into its stride everything that looked so unpoetic – all pains, all joys – everything that lent any emotion to the poet, is woven into the spiral of poetry, which moves like waves towards the ocean. It is more like a mining operation. The poet digs deep into his heart, and brings up pearls of emotion from the depths. Of course, this dive into the self is propelled by outside agencies. For every moment, there is a

stimulus which sends him poeticising.

It is the environment outside, and the passion inside, which intersect each other at a certain degree of heat, where they melt and the imagination carves out new forms, new articulations, and new thoughts. Poetry is that novelty which even surprises the poet and he wonders if he carried an idea so sublime in his own blood and veins.

'Across The Pause', Dr Lalit Mohan Sharma's 2026 collection of 75 poems, is a mature, deliberate work from a poet who has spent a lifetime with words: as a bilingual writer, translator, former college Principal, and author of 16 English poetry books. The result is a volume of rare cohesion, emotional clarity, and quiet powner. It is a record of the impromptu conversations which take place when intellect and heart sit down together in the face of subtle and not so subtle challenges and exigencies of daily life.

Described as Sharma's "most conscious and mature work", the work "transforms "everyday life into a territory of existential interrogation". The pause signifies the suspension, that separates loss and presence, oblivion and memory, and fulfilment and desire.

Mauro Montacchiesi thinks that it is a text that encourages contemplation, the suspension of judgment, and reflection. The language used is essential, clear. According to him, Sharma has mastered the art of subtraction: every emotion is filtered through a sensitivity that prioritizes depth and measure; every image is necessary; every line is calibrated. His poetry seeks emotional truth and resonance. It is a poetry that requires attention to be fully understood. In the Preface, the poet himself asserts: Writing a poem is an overwhelming experience, you forget the rest of the world, only remember what enters into a poem with its independent life. Writing is therapeutic, mind is acclimated to a celebratory joy, a quietness akin to mindfulness.

Time disturbs the poet in various ways. In 'Stasis', he finds man and his impatient moves infructuous before the wilful movement of time:

Time will not move faster if you quicken
The needles of the dial on your wrist for
No illusion can pluck and twist a reality
To suit the whims of this finite existence.

When the poet wants to hasten into tomorrown [Tomorrow's Day], it leads to an emotional dislocation of time. Dr. Sharma excels himself in giving expression to the idea how sleep escapes the grip of a disturbed soul:

Sleep has often delayed her embrace
I wish to have tomorrown's bath at night
And get dressed up for the next morning

"Urgency" picks on the raw needs of life, which, denied, turn into a haunting passion. The mask of the poet is off, for a moment, philosophy is taken off like clothes, and we see the clear vision of a languishing soul suffering the pangs of separation:

O for a pair of feminine lips and hands
With green glass bangles on the wrist,
Fair feet clasped in inch high sandals,
Mouth moves ever so lightly as she rolls
Up her hair into plaits to raise in a bun!

The poet wonders if death is "just disappearance". "Ethereal", is a superb document of pain, loss and the end where man's wits sometimes find themselves:

Whom did I love, I do not known for
The one with whom I shared living
Just vanished as a cloud in the sky light,
In the room as when powner supply fails.

Nothing has yielded more contemplation and acrobatics of thoughtful meditation than a “Mirror” in the poetic lore across ages:
Looking into a mirror makes none happy,
It’s when a human face turns into a mirror
That you discover joy deep in your heart.
“Choice options” points to the convulsions in poet’s mind where he fails to grasp “what inner conflicts seize human organs? And “what grueling battles are fought within?. “Intellectual” humanizes man half stricken by cleverness. The poet points to a great divide in man’s perceptive parts, but what restores his humanity is his susceptibility to err:
The intellectual acts by half his cleverness,
For he too is vulnerable to his emotions,
Can’t always keep intact his detachment,
Partially succumbs to error like the ordinary.
“Resolution” is a poem which reflects the true Lalit who realizes the repair work is on before the ultimate surrender. The poetry assumes a stoic tone, lending a rare sagacity to the text, missing in ordinary mortals, who suffer the pangs of life:
Let me carry on repair work and paint
Walls injured with time and look ugly
To the eye, the house resembles ruins
With time, and seem to be uninhabitable.
“Reading and Writing”, perhaps concludes this tumultuous journey in which the poet finds “Reading will become surrogate writing”. This coming together of the subject and the object is like bridging the gap between two entities of man, the attempt to understand [reading] and the final work when this understanding is dispersed in the winds [writing].
Once you identify with the author’s mask,
That’s to ask yourself to expand beyond T
The limiting concerns of your narrown life; Y
ou assume a larger canopy of existence.
The poems stand out for “emotional clarity, formal discipline, precision of imagery” with a poetics that “favours the sobriety of feeling” and qualify beyond confessional poetry to meditative lyricism. The work deals with themes of time, female presence, fragility of body, illness and solitude, the political as an extension of the personal. The language is disciplined, imagery precise. Each poem springs from “a soulful emotion that seeks to translate into words what eludes the grasp of rationality.” The foreword’s mention of “fragility of contemporary democracies” and “manipulation of consensus” hints that Sharma is not writing from an ivory towner. Yet the political never overwhelms the personal. Instead, it’s absorbed into the same meditative field.
The epigraph from Dante’s La Vita Nuova — “All ye that pass along Love's trodden way, / Pause you awhile and say / If there be any grief like unto mine” — sets the tone perfectly. It frames the collection as an invitation to pause with the poet, to test your grief against his, and find kinship rather than competition. Finally, ‘Across The Pause’ which carries Sharma’s own sober, luminous signature, speaks most to readers who value reflection over reaction and look for the moments between moments.

REVIEWED BY
Dr Jernail Singh Anand stands as a major figure in contemporary world literature as a 21st Century Metaphysical Poet. With 210 books, including 20 epics, he has created a distinctive body of work that fuses Vedic spirituality, ethical inquiry, social critique and philosophical reflection. His seminal epic Lustus: The Prince of Darkness and the recent Equilibrium reimagine mythology for the technological age. Founding President of the International Academy of Ethics, he is a laureate of the Charter of Morava (Serbia), Seneca (Italy), Franz Kafka and Maxim Gorky awards. His name is inscribed on Serbia’s Poets’ Rock, and he holds

honorary membership of the Serbian Writers Association. Anand’s writing positions poetry as an instrument of planetary consciousness and moral responsibility.

FROM BEAUTY TO TRUTH: THE AESTHETICS OF THE CREATIVE IMPULSE

Aristotle, Longinus, Shelley, and Tagore, all believe that the pleasure principle is supreme in art and literature. Every true work of art begins with pleasure. It is not the shallow thrill of diversion, but the deep delight that occurs when form, rhythm, and meaning suddenly cohere. Horace said it 2,000 years ago: “Poets aim either to benefit, or to amuse, or to utter words both pleasing and helpful to life.”

Instruction without pleasure may qualify as pedagogy, but not as art. The didactic tract appeals to the intellect, but keeps the heart unaffected. Art smuggles its instruction inside beauty. As Percy Bysshe Shelley argued in A Defence of Poetry, poetry “awakens and enlarges the mind itself by rendering it the receptacle of a thousand unapprehended combinations of thought”. The mind consents to be changed only because it is first seduced by music, image, and metaphor.

The pleasure principle is supreme, and instruction is subdued. The greatest artists know that to preach directly is to fail aesthetically. The aesthetic must come first; the ethical follows in its wake.
Catharsis: Becoming Better After Reading, Watching, Feeling

Aristotle gave us the term in Poetics, observing that tragedy effects, through pity and fear, the catharsis of such emotions. We watch Oedipus fall, we weep for Antigone, and we leave the theatre not depressed, but strangely cleansed. The emotions have been exercised, recognized, and mastered.

Catharsis is not limited to Greek tragedy. It is the sigh after the last page of Les Misérables, the quiet after a Satyajit Ray film, the stillness when you exit a gallery where a single Amrita Sher-Gil canvas has held your gaze. Something in us has been purged and, paradoxically, replenished, making human beings better after reading a poem or watching drama or even after a film or a visual art gallery. Art gives us a safe space to encounter the extremes of life—betrayal, grief, ecstasy, sacrifice—without being destroyed by them. We rehearse humanity in fiction so we can perform it more generously in fact.

Connection with Creative Forces: A Space to Rejoice and Find Ourselves

Longinus, in On the Sublime, describes the effect of great writing as ekstasis—a being carried away. The sublime in art lifts us beyond the ordinary circuit of appetite and anxiety into what you call a connection with the creative forces. Rabindranath Tagore wrote that art is the response of man’s creative soul to the call of the Real. In that response, we get a space to think and rejoice and find yourself on the right side of things. That space is aesthetic distance. We step back from the transactional, and enter a zone where contemplation itself is the purpose.

This is why a child can be transfixed by a mural and a war-weary adult can be stilled by a raga. The artwork suspends time and gives us back to ourselves. As John Keats put it, “Beauty is truth, truth beauty”—not as a logical equation, but as an experienced unity. When we perceive that unity, we feel, however briefly, aligned with the right side of things.

Protagonist, Antagonist, and the Ethics of Projection

Every narrative, as you note, has a protagonist and an antagonist…projection is such that we side with the hero. This is not naïve. Northrop Frye argued that all literature is structured on mythic patterns of desire and fear—heroes, villains, quests, falls. The projection in art is moral training. In life, our sympathies are tangled with self-interest. In fiction, they are purified. We want Jean Valjean to escape, not because we would steal bread, but because art has let us feel the weight of hunger and the grace of mercy. We want Duryodhana defeated, not because we are flawless Pandavas, but because the epic has clarified the cost of arrogance.

This explains my observation: that we often wish good to happen to fictional characters … though in real life we may not be so good. Art externalizes our better self and lets us rehearse it. Matthew Arnold called poetry "a criticism of life". Through the protagonist we criticize our own lives, and through the antagonist we recognize the shadows we otherwise excuse.

The Joy of Watching Evil Perish

There is a specific aesthetic joy in resolution—the moment when dissonance becomes consonance. Aristotle called it the pleasure proper to tragedy: not the pleasure of pain, but the pleasure of completion.

We do not gloat over Macbeth's head or Ravana's fall. We rejoice that a moral order, however battered, still exists. Kant distinguished between the agreeable and the beautiful; the beautiful gives disinterested satisfaction. Our joy at evil's defeat in art is disinterested because the characters are not us, yet the victory feels ours.

This is the deepest aesthetic virtue: art lets us experience justice without vengeance, and pity without paralysis. It converts the chaotic matter of life into shaped form. That is the aesthetics … to give joy of watching evil perish. Not because we are bloodthirsty, but because we are meaning-hungry. We need to see that chaos is not the last word.

Why This Still Matters

In an age of information, art's job is not to inform, nor to debate, but to give us the felt experience of order, compassion, and sublimity so that, when we return to the unshaped world, we carry a standard with us. Joseph Brodsky told students: "Aesthetics is the mother of ethics." Not the other way around. We do not become good by memorizing rules; we become good by loving what is beautiful, and then wishing not to betray it.

So the pleasure principle is not decadence. It is discipline. Catharsis is not escape. It is rehearsal. Siding with the hero is not fantasy. It is practice for the day when the choice is ours, off the page and outside the frame. Art and literature uphold these virtues not by lecturing us into goodness, but by inviting us into beauty—where we find, often to our surprise, that we have already stepped onto the right side of things.

Dr. Jernail S. Anand

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AUTHOR



Dr. Jernail S. Anand, with 210 books to his credit [20 epics] is a Chandigarh-based polymath, and a vital architect of the 21st century ethical literature whose seminal work ‘Lustus: The Prince of Darkness’ challenges the moral complacency of our era. Founding President of the International Academy of Ethics, and Laureate of Charter of Morava [Serbia], Seneca [Italy], Franz Kafka [Germany, Ukraine, Czech Rep] and Maxim Gorky [Russia], his name is inscribed on the Poets’ Rock in Serbia. He is an Honorary Member of the Serbian Writers Association, Belgrade. Anand has built a poetics that unites ethics, Vedic spirituality, social critique, and the philosophy of meaning. Anand presents an articulated perspective on poetry as an instrument of planetary consciousness. A moral philosopher, professor, and international speaker, Anand has devoted much of his research to the ethical dimension of language, to the responsibility of the individual within a globalised society, and to the relationship between matter, consciousness, and transcendence. Email: anandjs55@yahoo.com.
Bibliography:
https://sites.google.com/view/bibliography-dr-jernal-singh/home

https://share.google/QtiWrcFr7Sca7v0qC

Lan Xin(Lanxin Samei)

Epics Bridge Mountains and Seas, Civilizations Share the Same Spirit

—Reflections on the Resonance Between Eastern and Western Ancient Civilizations after Watching The Odyssey

By Lan Xin(Lanxin Samei)



Today, in a cinema in China, I revisited The Odyssey, the immortal Western classic epic. Composed and compiled by the ancient Greek poet Homer in the 8th century B.C., The Odyssey carries the profound civilisation heritage of ancient Greece. It stands as one of the fountain-heads of Western literature and spiritual thought. Across centuries and continents, the epic explores universal themes of wandering, tribulation, spiritual awakening, home-coming and redemption. Its wisdom continues to shine brightly in the long river of world civilisation.

Watching the film, I was deeply moved by its grand scenes: the solemn sacrificial rituals, solemn conversations with the underworld, and trials imposed by fate. The hero endured countless hardships across vast seas. Upholding his promises, holding deep affection for his family and beloved, and staying firmly committed to his journey home, he finally returned to his homeland and attained spiritual fulfilment.

The film reveals the ancient Greek people's reverence for heaven, earth and all living beings. It conveys the eternal law that actions bring consequences. It manifests the ancients' commitment to promises, cherishment of deep affections, perseverance amid sufferings, devotion to family and beloved ones, and unwavering faith to return home.

As I watched, my thoughts travelled across mountains and seas to Lijiang in the East, to the profound Dongba civilisation.

What strikes me profoundly is that these spiritual themes and narrative archetypes share striking parallels and echoes with the three canonical epics of Dongba civilisation: The Genesis, The Battle of Black and White and Luban Lura. This timeless resonance, separated by thousands of kilometres and centuries, confirms that ancient human civilisations are interconnected and share a common origin.

The core spirit of redemption: to survive hardships, break through confusion, awaken the soul and return to one's true self, alongside the dedication to loved ones, promises and the homeland, creates a perfect cross-time-and-space echo with the journey of Odysseus, who wandered afar, endured trials, overcame

obstacles, honoured his commitments and clung fast to what he cherished before returning to his true self and homeland.

Whether it is the three great epics passed down by the Naxi ancestors in the East or Homer's epic inherited in ancient Greece, the ultimate pursuit of all ancient civilisations always centres on reverence for heaven and earth, respect for all living beings, perseverance through hardships, loyalty to one's original heart, keeping promises, treasuring deep affections, striving towards light and attaining fulfilment.

Inspired by this civilisational resonance over the years, I have devoted myself to in-depth research of Dongba ancient scriptures. I have read and verified the texts word by word, communicating with the wisdom of ancestors across time and space. It has taken me years to complete the systematic re-translation and reconstruction of the three major Dongba epics.

Jointly translated by myself and my Dongba master, Aheng Dongta, the 17th-generation Dongba inheritor and UN-recognised tutor of Dongba culture, this collection of the three Dongba epics, published by the Dongba Culture Academy, is now under the editorial review of a major national-level publishing house in China. This landmark trilingual edition presents the complete original texts in Dongba hieroglyphs, Chinese and English, faithfully restoring the panorama of this ancient Eastern epic.

Scheduled for official release in the first half of next year and presented at international book fairs, this treasure of ancient Eastern civilisation will step out of the mountains to meet the world's ancient epics on an equal footing, conveying the unique Eastern philosophy of life and cosmic wisdom.

Watching the epic, my heart is filled with gratitude. Moved by this resonance of Eastern-Western civilisations, I think fondly of my dear media partners far away in Greece. I sincerely thank the well-known international journal POLIS Magazine for continuously publishing my works. My gratitude goes to Mr. Michael Goniotakis, CEO of POLIS Magazine, and Eva Lianou Petropoulou, Head of the International Edition of POLIS Magazine, as well as all Greek media friends who have shared my voice.

Thanks to your kindness, long-term recognition and support that transcend mountains and seas, Chinese culture, Eastern spiritual philosophy and Dongba civilisation have been brought to a global audience. It is you who light up the encounter and mutual understanding between ancient Eastern wisdom and splendid Greek civilisation.

Odysseus' voyage was the home-coming of soul and flesh. The inheritance and exchange of civilisations, however, is an endless spiritual voyage.

May epics endure forever, civilisations thrive, and China-Greece friendship last through the ages.

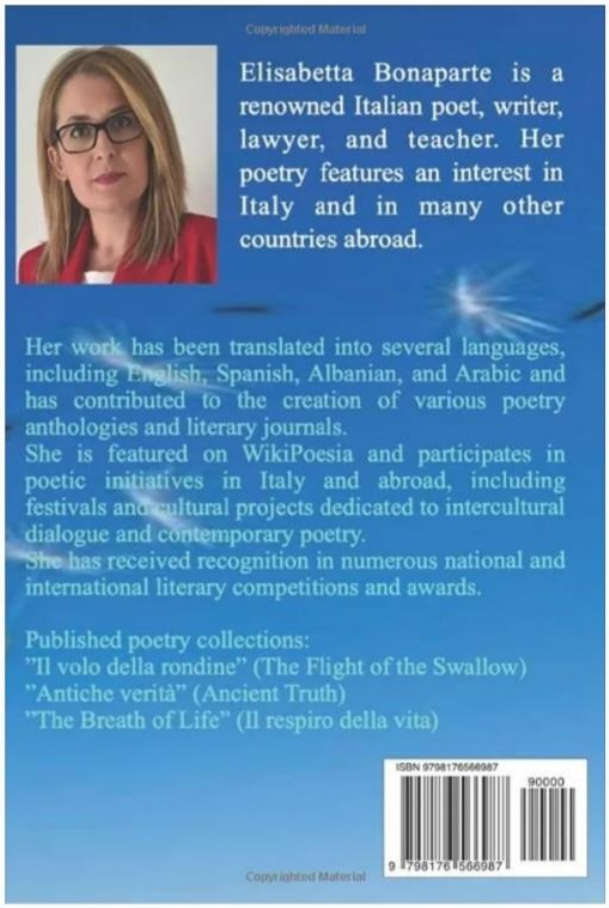
Lan Xin(Lanxin Samei)



Hossam Barakat

“THE BREATH OF LIFE” by Elisabetta Bonaparte





“The Lyric-Spiritual and Civic Poetry of Elisabetta Bonaparte”
by Hossam Barakat, poet and literary critic, a graduate in Italian Language and Literature from the Faculty of Al-Alsun at Ain Shams University (Cairo).

Elisabetta Bonaparte’s collection “THE BREATH OF LIFE” unfolds as a lyrical, spiritual, and civic journey through the core experiences of existence: love, motherhood, loss, pain, memory, war, peace, nature, and rebirth. The title expresses the central symbol of the work: breath as a metaphor for life, resistance, memory, love, and the ability to continue hoping even in the most difficult moments.

The work is structured into three sections — “Love,” “Peace,” and “Universal Love” — preceded by prose texts that serve an introductory and narrative function. The overall progression moves from individual experience to the collective dimension: from the self to the “we,” to humanity. The prose provides narrative concreteness, while the verse transforms personal events into universal reflection.

Bonaparte’s poetics are built around recurring natural imagery: light, sun, wind, sea, sky, flowers, and dawn serve not merely a decorative function but constitute a true grammar of the inner self. Nature thus becomes a mirror reflecting the emotions, conflicts, and transformations of the soul.

Stylistically, the author favors free verse, alternating between short lines and longer sentences, and employs devices such as enjambment, metaphors, personification, and anaphora; her language is clear, musical, metaphorical, and communicative.

Ultimately, the collection possesses a distinct symbolic identity: nature becomes the language of the soul, and light becomes a poetic response to pain. The title is thus more than merely evocative: "breath" is the principle that binds together body, soul, nature, memory, love, and hope.
“THE BREATH OF LIFE” is a cohesive and sincere collection, distinguished by a strong lyrical, spiritual, and civic identity, as well as by remarkable emotional intensity and poems of exceptional poetic impact.

Hossam Barakat

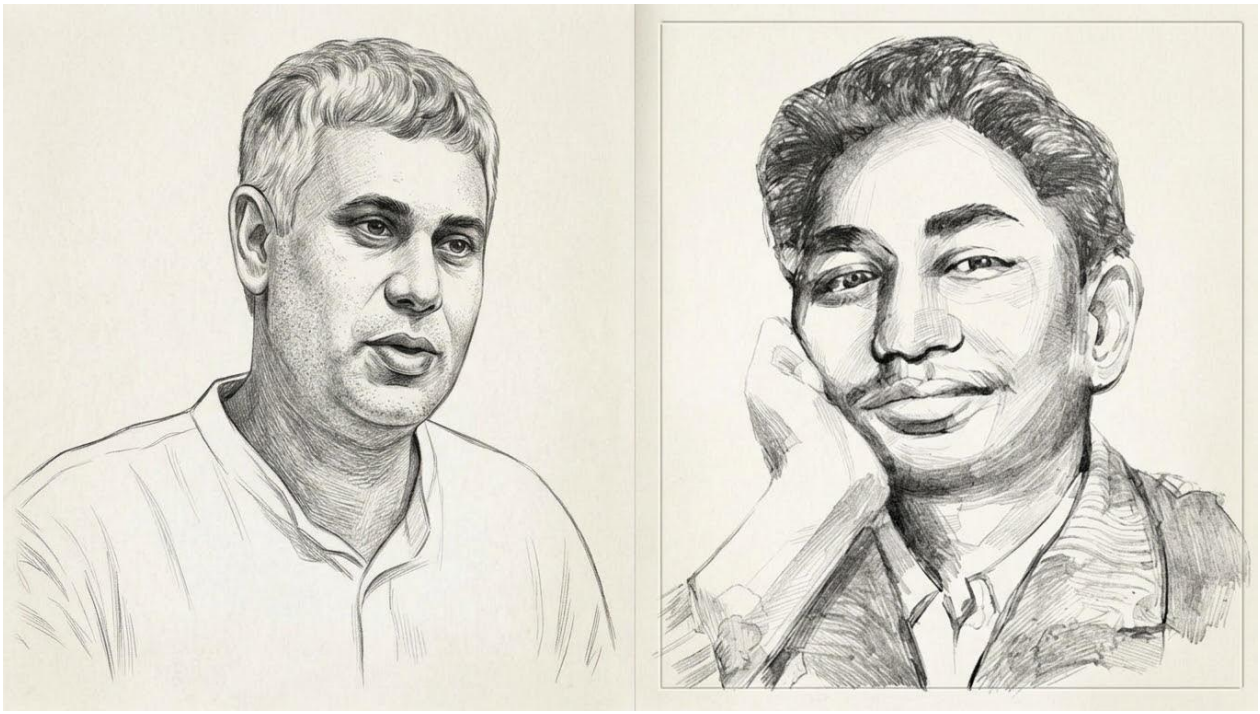
ELISABETTA BONAPARTE

Elisabetta Bonaparte is an Italian poet, writer, lawyer, and teacher. She has published three books; her latest work is THE BREATH OF LIFE, published in September 2026, it is bilingual Italian-English book features poems and short stories centered on universal love. Her poems have been published and translated into numerous languages- including English, Spanish, Albanian, and Arabic- in magazines, anthologies, and publishing projects distributed across Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas. She has also been featured on the covers of “Literary Barcelona” (Spain) and “Humanity Global Magazine” (Venezuela). She has received numerous honors in national and international literary competitions and awards. She is a member of prestigious international academies and associations, including the Academy Circle of Pharsala (Greece); the contemporary cultural and literary association “La Fenêtre de Paris” (France); the “Maison Naaman pour la Culture” (Lebanon), where she is an honorary member; and the “World Poet and Literature Organization” (India), where she is an honorary active member. She has also received numerous prestigious honors recognizing her literary and cultural impact. She has been included among “Messengers of Peace Though Literature” and recognized by international organizations for her contribution to positive and humanitarian values. She is featured on WikiPoesia and participates in poetry initiatives both in Italy and abroad, taking part in festivals and cultural projects dedicated to intercultural dialogue and contemporary poetry.

Ri Hossain

The Politics of Icon-Making and the Tragedy of a Manufactured Myth:

Revisiting Sukanta Bhattacharya



In the history of Bengali literature, the portrayal of Sukanta Bhattacharya as the "rebellious teenage poet" has long been placed on an unquestioned and sacrosanct pedestal. However, stripping away the fog of sentimentality and examining the matter through the unsentimental lens of literary sociology, propaganda studies, and political history raises a fundamental and revolutionary question: was Sukanta truly an autonomous, singular literary genius? Or was he a tragic figure in a meticulously planned "icon-making project" orchestrated by the contemporary Bengali progressive family network and the Communist Party?

The foundation of this analytical critique solidifies when we examine Sukanta's family structure and the extensive circle of influential communist political leaders and accomplished writers surrounding him. Analyzing his ancestral and family background reveals that he was by no means a teenager emerging from an isolated or marginalized household. His second elder brother, Ranadev Bhattacharya, was a prominent local organizer of the then Communist Party of India (CPI) and his political mentor. Top communist theorist Somnath Lahiri was connected to the family through kinship, and this same lineage later produced Buddhadeb Bhattacharya, the longtime Chief Minister of West Bengal and CPI(M) Politburo member.

On the other hand, the family's influence within the progressive literary and social circles of contemporary Kolkata was equally far-reaching. The renowned writer Manish Ghatak (who wrote under the pen name "Yuvanaswa") was his close relative. In the subsequent generation of this same family tree, we find Mahasweta Devi, a pioneer of human rights movements, and Nabarun Bhattacharya, the celebrated political writer of radical leftist sensibilities. In other words, the political and cultural ecosystem in which Sukanta

was raised was not merely a middle-class household; it was one of the most powerful and institutionalized powerhouses controlling contemporary Bengali progressive politics and literature.

Placing this vast political and literary apparatus in context casts a deep and legitimate doubt on the "singular authorship" of Sukanta's literary works. How plausible is it that a teenager aged between 17 and 20 could spontaneously compose poem after poem featuring flawless metric structures, complex Marxist philosophy, and nuanced political metaphors without it being the collective effort, ideological polishing, or ghostwriting of experienced party intellectuals? The cultural platforms of the era—such as the Anti-Fascist Writers' and Artists' Association, the editorial board of the daily Swadhinata, or the anthology Aakal—were essentially literary workshops run by party-controlled, skilled progressive writers. Consequently, a serious doubt arises: are works like Chharpatra or Purbabhas the output of Sukanta's solitary pen, or were they a collective propaganda project by contemporary party writers?

The starkest contradiction and artificiality become evident in the social reality behind his poems' "aesthetic rendering of hunger." Historical facts confirm that Sukanta Bhattacharya's family was neither impoverished nor destitute. His father, Nibaran Chandra Bhattacharya, was the founder of Kolkata's well-known Saraswat Library and a successful book publisher, enjoying a established middle-class stability in the city. How does a poet who never personally experienced the desperate pangs of starvation write lines like: "In the realm of hunger, the world is prose-like / The full moon is like a burnt bread"? Parlor politics or political manifestos do not bring real hunger to the belly. The truth is that to construct an "Ostrovsky model" or a "party martyr" for the international communist movement, Sukanta's middle-class identity was shrouded in an artificial persona. The imagery of hunger and deprivation in his verse was not born of personal experience, but borrowed as a political instrument from the party's proletariat ideological thesis.

One of the most successful international formulas of the Comintern (Communist International) was to elevate a physically and socially afflicted teenager facing premature death as a "party icon" to heighten emotional intensity and momentum in political struggles. Just as the blind and paralyzed youth Nikolai Ostrovsky was transformed into a miraculous symbol of communist resolve in the Soviet Union through the novel How the Steel Was Tempered, the exact same blueprint was executed in Sukanta's case. Despite suffering from severe tuberculosis and malnutrition, Sukanta was denied proper medical care and instead subjected to a "suicidal routine" of grueling work in soup kitchens, political rallies, and newspaper editing day and night. The party calculated precisely that the tragic, premature demise of a ailing young poet serves as a far more potent manifesto for a political movement than any living senior theorist ever could.

Even from a literary critical standpoint, modernist intellectuals like Buddhadev Bose hinted that Sukanta's poetry prioritized party slogans and manifestos over subtle poetic aesthetics. Had it not been for the party's formidable machinery, his family's cultural leverage, and the systematic political campaign to glorify his sacrifice after his untimely death, Sukanta's standing purely on grounds of poetic merit would remain highly questionable.

Therefore, an objective review of history and literary politics reveals that Sukanta Bhattacharya is not the name of a singular literary genius; rather, it represents an institutional product of the party apparatus's collective literary endeavor. The poems published under his name were essentially the fruit of collective deliberation, refinement, and strategic guidance by the party's experienced intellectuals and progressive writers—where the name of the teenage Sukanta was utilized merely as a signboard for political propaganda. The time has come to dismantle the myth of the "solitary poet" and reframe Sukanta Bhattacharya's body of work as the collective political manifesto of the Communist Party.

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Ri Hossain is a prominent voice in Bengali poetry, recognized as a rebellious and resilient figure in the contemporary literary landscape. Born on August 19, 1981, in Rangpur, Bangladesh, with ancestral roots in Munshiganj, he began his literary journey in 1993. His poetry deeply reflects personal experiences, societal conflicts, urban alienation, and a steadfast commitment to free expression. Author of several works, including the poetry collection Kobitar Abhyutthan Chai (2024), his writing bridges social consciousness with profound psychological and intimate introspection.

Thank you very much for your time, consideration, and dedication to contemporary literature. I look forward to hearing your thoughts.

Ivan Pozzoni

The death of the author and the resurrection of the artist

The death of the author was officially declared in 2016 within the NeoN-avant-garde anti-Manifesto written by Ivan Pozzoni and approved by Zygmunt Bauman, signed by Eco, Barberi Squarotti, Quaranta, and other academics and artists of the regime and counter-regime Italian culture.

Pyat: The “author” has finally passed away [Not being the “author” of the “work of art,” the unalienated and non-ignorant artist must assume the duty of contributing to it, like all remaining “agents” of the “supply chain,” in all factors of “production” (creativity, labor, and finance). In late modernity, with the affirmation of the sociological datum of the collectivity of the “work of art,” it is the alienation of the out-of-touch intellectual to ignore the new socioeconomic category of authorial duty, disengaging themselves, with parasitic arrogance, from the costs of (even) their own activity].

Unfortunately, septuagenarian critics, such as the double-tongued one, accuse us of repeating the exact same things for twenty-five years. For me, this is called c-o-h-e-r-e-n-c-e of the intelle(a)ctual. For them, it is a bug in the marketing concept mechanism that forces them to invent, every two weeks, a new concept, a, -a, a-, --a, √a in order to unintentionally seduce the reader (and to find clients and sell books from Progetto cultura, ex Edilet, ex Chelsea [kept at a distance by Alfredo De Palchi], with deComporre and Liminamentis he did not succeed). Cohesion (not consistency) vs. marketing. Experimentisms very often acquire the lyrical/elegiac mask, and the lyrical/elegiacs assume the experimentist mask. The key to interpretation remains cohesion. The line of demarcation remains Bauman: pre-Bauman (modernism) vs. post-Bauman (late-modernism). We introduce literary late-modernism (cum Bauman). The death of the author, understood as the death of the ego-pathic self of a Carmelo Bene, a Dario Fo, a Pier Paolo Pasolini, was pointed out at the end of the 20th century by Bruno Gentili, a great philologist: in modern literature, since Dante, the ἐπίδειξις (performance of the author) has ceased to intersect with the πάθος (counter-performance of the public), or with the Aeschylean πάθει μάθος. This is the death of the “author” and the “public”: Ber(l)ardinelli, beeeeeeee, without understanding anything about philology and business economics (like all career men of letters), invents the concept of the death of the “public” in Il pubblico della poesia (1975), without any theoretical explanation. Why not argue, instead, for the death of the “author”? Due to the ignorance of the career man of letters. The Italian critic (?) should have used the conclusions of Hans Robert Jauss, with his Horizonterwartung, who, in Toward an Aesthetic of Reception defends the antecedent thesis that «[...] Der Erwartungshorizont des ersten Publikums bestimmt die Rezeptionsweise eines Werkes: aus ihm ergibt sich, was als neu, als überraschend oder als störend erfahren wird [...]» (Literaturgeschichte als Provokation der Literaturwissenschaft, 1970, 182) [«[...] The horizon of expectations of the first public determines the mode of reception of a work: from it emerges what is experienced as new, as surprising, or as disturbing [...]»]. Hans Robert Jauss does not conceive of the hermeneutic difficulty of synchronicity / diachronicity. The death of the “author” is something else. It begins with Roland Barthes, in La mort de l’auteur, where, arguing «[...] La naissance du lecteur doit se payer de la mort de l’auteur [...]» (La mort de l’Auteur, 1967, 63/64) [«[...] The birth of the reader must be paid for by the death of the author [...]»] he fails to understand the simultaneous death - as noted by Gentili - of the “author” and the “public”; Michel Foucault remains on the erroneous path of Barthes, when he states that «[...] La vérité est tout autre: l’auteur n’est pas une source indéfinie de significations … Il est un certain principe fonctionnel par lequel, dans notre culture, on délimite, on exclut, on sélectionne [...]» (Qu’est-ce qu’un auteur? in Bulletin de la Société française de philosophie 63, no. 3, 1969, 73-104, reported in Dits et écrits, 1994, 808-809) [«[...] The truth is quite different: the author is not an indefinite source of significations ... He is a certain functional principle by which, in our culture, we delimit, exclude, select [...]»]. These statements mean that: 1. meaning is not original, it does not stem from the author's intention, and 2. the text is an autonomous device, a network of codes, citations, intertexts. The scaffolding of the hermeneutischer Zirkel dominates,

with the entirely Italian concept of the “fortune” of a text. Millennial avant-gardes, beyond the neoN-avant-garde, have attempted the path of the death of the biographical “author,” from Anonymous and The OuLiPo-inspired online collectives, to Wu Ming and SIC in Italy, where collectives declare in interviews «[...] Siamo un collettivo di narratori … le opere contano più degli autori [...]» (Wu Ming) [«[...] We are a collective of narrators... works matter more than authors [...]»] or «[...] In territorio nemico è un romanzo corale scritto da oltre cento autori [...]» (SIC) [«[...] Enemy Territory is a choral novel written by over a hundred authors [...]»]. Pierre Bourdieu approaches the neoN-avant-garde critique: «[...] L’artiste n’est jamais l’“auteur” isolé de son œuvre; il agit dans un champ, selon des positions sociales et des stratégies [...]» (La distinction, 1979, 23) [«[...] The artist is never the isolated "author" of his work; he acts within a field, according to social positions and strategies [...]»]; John B. Thompson, in The Media and Modernity (1995) intuits: «[...] the development of mass communication is inseparable from the development of the media industries [...]» (23). Anthropology evolves the concept with Marshall Sahlins in Culture and Practical Reason of 1976. Bruno Latour, co-founder of Actor-Network Theory, writes: «[...] Network is a concept, not a thing … it is a tool to help describe something … but they are not what is being described [...]» (Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory, 2005, 131): the concept of network is common to the concept of kolektywne of the Kolektivne NSEAE; John B. Thompson, writing «[...] Authors are not isolated producers of texts; their work is mediated by publishers, editors, and the wider institutional structures of the literary field [...]» (Books in the Digital Age, 2005, 12), anticipates the neoN-avant-garde concept of the “supply chain” of the publishing market. Alberto Ceccarini, in 2018, in Editoria e mercato del libro in Italia declares irrefutably, «[...] L’autore contemporaneo è inserito in una filiera produttiva e commerciale; la sua creatività è mediata da editori, agenti letterari e meccanismi di promozione [...]» (45) [«[...] The contemporary author is embedded in a productive and commercial supply chain; their creativity is mediated by publishers, literary agents, and promotional mechanisms [...]»]; Patrick Collin states: «[...] L’auteur n’est plus seul; il est intégré dans un système éditorial et technologique qui oriente la circulation de son texte [...]» (L’édition à l’ère du numérique, 2013, 67) [«[...] The author is no longer alone; they are integrated into an editorial and technological system that directs the circulation of their text [...]»]. The existence of the notorious factor -F of NOE, NNOE, NNNOE is refuted and neutralized by recent socio-anthropological research on networks. What, then, is the artist? Nicolas Bourriaud’s definition - derived from baumanian theory- is very significant: «[...] The artist is a social interstice, a facilitator of microtopias [...]». Phantom, anonymous, nomad: Claire Bishop in Artificial Hells (2012), Bruno Latour in Reassembling the Social (2005), Sherry Turkle in Alone Together (2011) («[...] Online, we become multiple, fluid, and unbounded by physical presence [...]» (44)), Tim Ingold in Being Alive (2011), David Graeber in The Democracy Project (2013), and Ivan Pozzoni in Kolektivne NSEAE (2024) seek to interpret Zygmunt Bauman’s classic definition: «[...] In liquid modernity, identities are formed and dissolved in the flow; permanence is replaced by provisionality [...]» (Liquid Modernity, 2000, 4). Bauman describes contemporary society as fluid, unstable, precarious, in which ties, identities, and careers are temporary: 1. the artist is no longer “central” or stable; 2. works circulate in temporary networks, digital or participatory, often without a fixed owner; 3. the author becomes a “phantom” in the networks of cultural production and consumption. There does not exist, in the global philosophical, sociological, or anthropological horizon, any scholar who has intuited the close link between Baumanian «[...] nomadic capitalism [...]» and the «[...] Ghost artist [...]» of contemporary literature, with the exception of Ivan Pozzoni, who founds artistic militancy as a form of nomadic resistance to «[...] nomadic capitalism [...]» (2016). The nomadic artist, anonymous, hidden in Chinese boxes, must render themselves untraceable to the artistic and socio-juridical regime, modeled after aedic and troubadour singers: mobility, flexibility, ephemerality, detachment from locality, pressure on identity are the characteristics of the late-modernist artist. If nomadic capitalism «[...] moves fast, consumes quickly, and leaves behind a trail of temporary, flexible, and insecure relationships [...]» (Liquid Modernity, 2000, 3), the late-modernist artist has the mission of creating «shock, shame, fear, and anger» (Erika Summers-Effler, The Micro Potential for Social Change: Emotion, Consciousness, and Social Movement Formation, in Sociological Theory, 20/1, 2002, 41–60) against modernism, neo-consumerism, and nomadic capitalism, using the weapon of dissimulation

(εἰρωνεία). Late-modernist praxis - atopic- does not declare itself utopian (regime lyrical/elegiacs) or dystopian (opposition artistic movements): it is microtopia, in the manner of the non-authorial or meta-authorial performances of Rirkrit Tiravanija, Tino Sehgal, Ivan Pozzoni, and Hito Steyerl.

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New sociology and the world of work in italian late-modernity

Zygmunt Bauman neglected, due to a thousand existential reasons, to delve into certain subjects, such as business economics (political economy, economic policy, business administration, and business law) or emotion theory (Eva Illouz). Luciano Gallino deals with corporate financialization. Financialization is the historical-economic oscillation in which finance becomes the center of the economy: financial markets, institutions, and lucrative assets assume a decisive measure over the 'production of goods and services' of old, anachronistic Marxism or neo-Marxism (Jacques Lacan and György Lukács), contemporary Marxism (Žižek, Eagleton, Wright, Roemer, Negri, Zupančič, Dolar). Profits and financial operations (speculation, derivatives, leveraged buyouts, share buybacks) are the means of income/rent today, beyond long-term investment. This shift alters corporate governance, public policies, and the existential conditions of human beings. As in my corporate rise to the role of CEO of multinational companies, my mentor Dr. P. Mascheroni (Carrefour international logistics director) agreed with Gallino: «La finanziarizzazione delle imprese industriali ha avuto tra le sue conseguenze che al loro vertice arrivano sempre più spesso manager privi di qualsiasi competenza specifica nel settore di cui le prime si occupano, e però abili nel concepire e perseguire strategie finanziarie» [«The financialization of industrial enterprises has had among its consequences that their leadership is increasingly reached by managers devoid of any specific competence in the sector dealt with by the former, yet skilled in conceiving and pursuing financial strategies»] denoting the 'failure' or downsizing of companies like Auchan or Carrefour (not Walmart) [theoretical core, reiterated in I costruttori di consenso (2005) and La società di classe. Il capitalismo, il futuro, la sinistra (2009)]: protégés, morons (who would be capable, at most, of acting as Ikea sector managers) and mobsters manage to become executives and CEOs of multinationals (cost-cutting) with the consequent dismantling of multinationals. Should we be happy, we late-modernists of the KNSEAE: laid off, transferred to Kazakhstan, unemployed? Gallino, in the introduction to Finanzcapitalismo (2011), writes: «Il finanzcapitalismo è una mega-macchina che è stata sviluppata nel corso degli ultimi decenni allo scopo di massimizzare e accumulare, sotto forma di capitale e insieme di potere, il valore estraibile sia dal maggior numero possibile di esseri umani, sia dagli ecosistemi» [«Financial capitalism is a mega-machine that has been developed over recent decades in order to maximize and accumulate, in the form of capital and simultaneously of power, the extractable value both from the largest possible number of human beings and from ecosystems»] (1). What are the concrete mechanisms of financialization: shareholder value and corporate short-termism; credit expansion and household indebtedness; derivatives and leverage; lobbying/financial economic policy. Didn't you understand anything? Don't ask for a minimum wage. You deserve a minimum wage. Beyond Beck (on the same line as Gallino with his Risikogesellschaft) and an unexpected and decontextualized Habermas «Law and democracy must mediate between individual autonomy and collective norms» (Between Facts and Norms, 1996, XXI), it is not easy to track down references to financial capitalism (Finanzapitalismo). Costas Lapavitsas, in Greece, in The Financialization of Capitalism (2011) and Profiting without producing: how finance exploits us all (2013) («Finance has been the central mechanism for accumulating wealth without contributing to production») [p. 5], Saskia Sassen, in the USA, in The Global City (2001, revised) and in Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy (2014), or Thomas Piketty, in France, in Capital in the Twenty-First Century (2014) [«When the rate of return on capital exceeds the rate of growth of the economy, inequality tends to rise»] (2014, 25). Financialization theory has found very scarce applications in the field of aesthetic theory and literature, subordinated to Bauman's liquidity: Ivan Pozzoni in La malattia invettiva (collection, 2018, 8), Hanif Kureishi in The Nothing (2017, 88-94), or Stefano Giovanardi in Lingua e capitalismo: il caso della narrativa italiana contemporanea (2019, 112-120). Where is the literature of the world of work? We cite, from afar, Wu Ming (Altai, 2022) in Italy, Claudia Rankine (Citizen, 2014) in the USA, or Zadie Smith (Swing Time, 2016) in the UK. It does not exist. In our opinion, it would be useful to study H.C. Bukowski more closely in academia. Are you able to contribute, in a moment of crisis, to your nation's GDP?

Go ahead, by any means. Do you limit yourself to moving pallets and running away at 5:00 PM, punching out like a Fantozzi-esque clerk? 800€. Do you wonder why a CEO receives €150,000 (excluding bonuses) and you €10,000? Either you have a middle school education, or you are bilingual, or you are a fool.

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Rifat Ismaili

ALWAYS IN THE SAME DIRECTION

Essay

We were mentioning books such as The Cloven Viscount or The Wall by Sartre. Inevitably, writings of this

kind call to mind a powerful and eternal maxim. Or Bufalino's luminous work Night's Lies. All these books tend to remind one of each other, because what ultimately remains common is the conclusion that the direction of life—whether positive or negative—leads almost to the same place.
In life, one cannot advance either solely with Good or solely with Evil. Then what remains to be chosen? The divine half or the diabolical half of the mind, being a prisoner or a prison guard?
Every system, regardless of its name, ideologies, and applications, sooner or later becomes an

obstacle to human freedom in general. Yet this violence is felt especially by the creative individual, the word taken here in its artistic sense, for in essence, every human being, however ordinary, is by nature a creator.
Among others, Nietzsche too has spoken of the state.
But can man live without a state, without an electoral system, without politics—these necessary evils? Can he fulfil his creative genius without them?
For their sake, man has long since said farewell to his freedom, especially to creative freedom.
Man cannot escape the ready-made

chains he inherits, nor those he forges himself. Inside or outside prison, a slave of the state or of his own obsessions within civil existence, man—this prisoner in freedom—carries himself through all the tragedies and comedies that are played, at times in the role of executioner, at times in that of victim.
This is what other, roughly similar books have sought to express, whether already written or yet to be written, such as Night's Lies and The Cloven Viscount by Bufalino and Calvino.
And this is what these few thoughts have wished to say about the idea

of human fulfilment, which remains endlessly nothing more than an ever-unfinished dream.

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BIOGRAPHY
Poet, prose writer and essayist Rifat Ismaili was born on March 24, 1968 in Durrës, Albania. From 1991 until today he lives in Italy, currently in Savona. Passionate about art and literature, he started to write and paint from school. Since 1986, it has

been published in newspapers and magazines of the time and continues today. At the same time, in addition to working as an author, he was and is also engaged in translations, pronouncing authors such as Bukowski, Antonio Skarmeta, etc. His work has been published in Italian, English, Arabic, Spanish, Russian, Turkish, Uzbek, Chinese, etc., in some of the literary bodies of those countries. To be underlined is the involvement in dozens of different publications as an

editor or reviewer. Rifat Ismaili is the author of many books in different literary genres, both for adults and for children.
He is the publisher of the anthological magazine Gjurmë Penash, which includes local and foreign authors. I periodically publish the international literary and art magazine Kryefjala. I also publish the children's literature magazine Pena Balerina.

Sayfulloeva Umida Fayzulloevna

From Frames to Thought

The Role of Cinema in Shaping Human Worldviews

Introduction

Today, people encounter an enormous amount of information every day. Books, articles, social media, videos, podcasts, and many other forms of media have made knowledge more accessible than ever. Among these forms of communication, cinema holds a unique position.

Films are often viewed mainly as a form of entertainment or a way to spend free time. However, their role can extend far beyond entertainment. By combining images, sound, music, dialogue, acting, and editing, cinema can present information not only through words, but also through visual and emotional experience.

For this reason, films can influence how people understand events, relate to characters, and view certain issues. Cinema does not shape a person's worldview alone, but it can become a powerful part of the process.

1. Making Knowledge Visible: Cinema and Children's Understanding

One of the clearest examples can be found in animated films created from folk tales and legends.

When we explain abstract ideas such as good and evil, honesty and dishonesty, or courage and fear to children, words alone may not always be enough. Young children are still developing their ability to understand abstract concepts, so they may find it difficult to fully grasp the deeper meaning of a story simply by listening to it.

Animation can make these ideas more concrete.

Through the actions of characters, their choices, and the consequences of those choices, children can observe the difference between right and wrong. Colors, facial expressions, movement, music, and sound can further strengthen the emotional meaning of a scene.

In this way, a story is no longer simply something a child hears. It becomes something the child can see, feel, and experience.

Cinema, therefore, does not merely repeat a story. It transforms the story into a visual experience.

2. From Frames to Emotion

This process is not limited to children. Adults also receive and interpret information through images and emotions.

The power of cinema lies partly in the way several forms of expression work together.

A frame establishes what we see.

A camera angle influences the perspective from which we see it.
Lighting and color create atmosphere and mood.
Music and sound strengthen the emotional impact of a scene.
An actor's facial expressions and body language can communicate feelings without words.
And editing connects separate images and helps shape the way viewers understand a sequence of events.

As a result, viewers do not simply watch a film. They also interpret and emotionally respond to it.

This emotional experience is one of the ways cinema can influence human thought. What we see and feel on screen can remain in our memory, raise questions, and sometimes encourage us to reconsider the way we understand a particular subject.

3. Understanding Complex Ideas Through Film: The Example of Interstellar

Christopher Nolan's Interstellar provides an interesting example of how cinema can make complex ideas easier to imagine.

Concepts such as space, time, gravity, and black holes can be studied through scientific books and encyclopedias. These sources may provide more detailed and precise information, but for some learners, such concepts can be difficult to visualize.

A film can approach these ideas differently. Through visual effects, sound, music, acting, and storytelling, Interstellar connects scientific concepts with a human story.

The audience does not simply observe ideas about space. They also experience the fear, hope, separation, and difficult choices of the characters.

This demonstrates one of cinema's distinctive strengths: a film can turn information or an abstract idea into an experience that the viewer can imagine and emotionally connect with.

This does not mean that a fictional film can replace scientific sources. Rather, it can make complex subjects more accessible, create curiosity, and encourage viewers to explore them more deeply.

4. Cinema in the Age of Fast Information
Young people today live in an increasingly fast-moving information environment. Short videos, quick news updates, and visual content have become an important part of everyday media consumption.

This development has both advantages and disadvantages.

Short and visual formats can make certain information easier to understand in a limited amount of time. At the same time, content that is constantly shortened and simplified may leave less room for deeper analysis and reflection.

Therefore, the question should not simply be “books or films?”

The more important question is what kind of content we create and how we use it.

Historical films, documentaries, science films, and meaningful fictional works can introduce viewers to unfamiliar subjects, encourage curiosity, and raise questions that may lead to deeper learning.

Cinema can therefore complement other forms of learning rather than compete with them.

5. Cinema as a Conversation with Society

The influence of cinema can also extend beyond the individual viewer. Films can create opportunities for society to discuss important issues.

Through cinema, filmmakers can explore social problems, personal struggles, historical memory, cultural identity, inequality, war and peace, family relationships, and the challenges faced by young people.

Sometimes statistics can show us how large a problem is. A film, however, can show us what that problem may feel like in a person's life.

A meaningful film does not simply say, “This is a problem.” It can lead the viewer to ask:

“What if this were my life?”

Such a question can become a starting point for empathy and deeper reflection.

6. Cinema Is More Than Entertainment

Cinema is often seen as a way to relax, escape from everyday life, or simply enjoy a story. These functions are certainly valuable. However, limiting cinema to entertainment means overlooking much of its potential.

Every film presents a particular world to its audience. Through its characters, conflicts, choices, and consequences, it can introduce viewers to experiences they have never encountered themselves.

A historical film can encourage people to look at the past from a different perspective. A documentary can introduce them to realities they knew little about. A social drama can help them consider the experiences of people whose lives are very different from their own.

In this sense, cinema can become a unique form of sharing knowledge, experience, and ideas.

Watching a film, therefore, does not necessarily mean simply “losing time.” Depending on the film we choose, that time can become an opportunity to gain knowledge, experience new perspectives, and think about the world in a different way.

Conclusion: From Frames to Thought

Cinema is not merely a form of entertainment that fills our free time. It brings together knowledge, experience, emotion, and ideas, giving viewers an opportunity to see the world from different perspectives.

We may learn about an event by reading about it, but a film can allow us to see it, imagine it, and feel its human dimension.

Of course, cinema is not the only force that shapes a person's worldview. Family, education, culture, personal experience, and the surrounding environment all play important roles. Yet the influence of cinema should not be reduced to entertainment. A meaningful film can encourage us to learn something new,

understand another person's experience, question what we already believe, or look at a familiar issue from a different perspective.

Ultimately, the value of a film lies not only in what it shows us, but also in what it makes us think about after the screen goes dark.

A frame can become the beginning of a thought.

From frames to thought — this is the journey through which cinema can reach the human mind and contribute to the way we understand the world.

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Autobiography My name is Sayfulloeva Umida Fayzulloevna. I was born on March 15, 2008, in Bukhara, Uzbekistan. In 2025, I graduated from Secondary School No. 13 in Bukhara City. In the same year, I was admitted to Bukhara State University, Faculty of History and Law, where I am currently a second-year student majoring in Social Work. I have been studying the Korean language for the past two and a half years. During this time, I completed Sejong Hakdang Level 6B and obtained SKA Level 5. In addition, I continue to improve my English and currently have a B1 level. Alongside my academic studies, I have actively pursued my passion for the performing arts. I completed one year of systematic acting training at Bukhara Children's Music and Art School No. 1. During this period, I developed skills in acting, stage performance, and expressive reading. I have performed on various stages and participated in cultural events.

Otamuradova Asalbonu

The Role of Education in Empowering Young Women

Abstract
Education plays an important role not only in developing young women's knowledge and skills, but also in strengthening their confidence, supporting independent decision-making, and expanding their future opportunities. However, not all girls have equal access to quality education. Financial difficulties, social expectations, and limited resources can create barriers to their development. This article explores the importance of education in young women's lives, its influence on personal and professional growth, and the value of sharing knowledge with others. It also considers ways to help young women discover their potential and participate actively in their communities.
Keywords
education;; young women; personal development; equal opportunities; leadership; independence; knowledge

Introduction

Every girl has her own dreams. Some want to become skilled professionals, others hope to start their own businesses, and many want to make a positive difference in their communities. Yet a dream alone is not always enough. People also need opportunities to learn, understand their abilities, and remain open to new experiences. Education plays an important role in this process.

Education is often associated with schools, universities, examinations, and diplomas. In reality, its value goes far beyond these things. It teaches people to think independently, ask questions, look for solutions, and make informed decisions about their futures.

For young women, education can open doors to new opportunities and help them recognize their own potential. When girls have the support and resources they need to develop their abilities and pursue their goals, the benefits can extend beyond their individual lives and positively influence their communities.

Education and Personal Development

Personal growth does not always begin with major achievements. Sometimes, reading a new book, learning a skill, or finding the courage to ask a question can be an important step forward. Education can help young women express their ideas, understand different perspectives, and approach their abilities with greater confidence.

Being educated does not mean knowing the answer to every question. Rather, learning encourages people to keep exploring, learn from mistakes, and reconsider their ideas when necessary. These are important parts of personal development.

Education also extends beyond formal lessons. Reading, learning new languages, taking online courses, seeking advice from mentors, and participating in different projects can all broaden a person's perspective. It is important for young people to focus on their own progress instead of constantly comparing themselves with others.

Every girl has her own strengths and develops at her own pace. For this reason, success should not be measured only by whether someone has moved ahead of others. Sometimes, a major achievement is simply beginning to believe in one's abilities and taking the first step forward.

Education as a Path to an Independent Future

Another important aspect of education is its connection to economic opportunities. Knowledge and professional skills can help young women find employment, choose careers that match their interests, explore entrepreneurship, and make informed financial decisions.

Today, technology is creating new opportunities for young people. Through the internet, they can learn new skills, take online courses, and share their ideas with a wider audience. In the past, learning certain things

might have required travelling long distances. Today, many educational resources can be accessed from home.

However, the existence of these opportunities does not mean that everyone can benefit from them equally. Some young people have limited access to the internet, suitable devices, or high-quality learning materials. Expanding educational opportunities therefore also means creating the conditions that allow more people to use them.

The purpose of education is not simply to prepare people to earn a high income. It can also help them manage their lives, evaluate available options, and choose goals that matter to them. Knowledge can broaden a person's choices, although effort, experience, and support are often needed to turn those choices into reality.

The Importance of Sharing Knowledge

The impact of education does not have to end with one person. A young woman who gains knowledge can share what she has learned, introduce her peers to new opportunities, and contribute to positive changes in her community.

As a young writer from Uzbekistan who is also involved in educational initiatives, I value the role of learning in personal growth. My writing, articles, and educational initiatives, including Asal English and Elita Academy, reflect my interest in learning, exploring new ideas, and supporting the development of others. These experiences have reminded me that success is not measured only by personal achievements. Sharing knowledge, encouraging young women to explore new subjects, and helping them learn about opportunities can also lead to meaningful results.

I believe young people do not need to wait until they have achieved everything before they begin making a difference. They can start small initiatives, share what they know, and support people around them today. Sometimes, a piece of advice, a recommended book, or a message about an educational opportunity can have a positive influence on someone's future.

At the same time, every young person has different circumstances and opportunities. There is no need to follow someone else's path exactly. What matters is understanding one's interests, gaining useful knowledge, and making the most of available opportunities to build an individual path forward.

Barriers That Still Exist

Although education is important, not all girls have equal opportunities to access quality learning. Some face financial difficulties that make it hard to continue their studies. Others may live far from school, face safety concerns, or have family responsibilities that leave them with little time to study.

Social expectations can also limit girls' opportunities. For example, the belief that certain careers are suitable only for boys or only for girls may discourage young people from following their interests. Career choices should instead reflect each person's abilities, interests, and ambitions.

Girls' education is not solely their personal responsibility. Families, educational institutions, and communities all have important roles to play in creating equal opportunities. Along with access to education, girls need safe environments where they can learn, ask questions, express their ideas, and choose their future goals.

The quality of education matters as well. Simply attending school is not enough. Young people also need opportunities to apply what they learn, develop independent thinking, and build skills that can help them in everyday life.

Ways to Support Young Women

Several practical steps can help support young women's development.

First, access to quality education should be expanded. Scholarships, free learning resources, and online educational programs can create new pathways for young people whose financial circumstances limit their choices.

Second, mentoring and knowledge-sharing opportunities should be encouraged. Mentors and peers who share their experiences can help young women explore new fields, clarify their goals, and develop their abilities.

Third, education should go beyond theoretical knowledge. Communication, critical thinking, digital literacy, financial awareness, and problem-solving are also important skills that can expand young people's future opportunities.

Finally, supporting girls means respecting their right to make mistakes and try again. Success often involves exploration, patience, and learning along the way. It is important to encourage young people not only for their results, but also for their efforts and willingness to grow.

Conclusion

Education offers young women more than knowledge. It creates a foundation for understanding their potential, thinking independently, setting professional goals, and participating actively in their communities. Its true value lies not only in what people know, but also in how they apply their knowledge and use it to contribute to the lives of others.

I believe every girl should have the opportunity to receive a quality education, develop her abilities, and build her future. Achieving this requires individual effort as well as support from families, educational institutions, and communities.

Giving young women opportunities is not simply an investment in their present. It is also a contribution to a future society that is more knowledgeable, active, and ready to create positive change. When every girl's desire to learn is supported, her opportunity to shape her own future can grow.

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Ibrahimova Marjona

Is Your Phone Controlling You? — The Invisible Danger of Digital Addiction

What is the first thing we reach for when we wake up in the morning? For many people, the answer is simple: their phone. A phone picked up just to check one message can sometimes stay in our hands for hours. Phrases such as “I’ll watch just one more video” or “Only five minutes” often stretch far longer than expected.
Smartphones have made our lives considerably easier. We use them to learn, keep up with the news, communicate with loved ones, work, and study. But convenience has another side: are our phones serving us, or are we becoming dependent on them?
How Does “Five Minutes” Turn into an Hour?

Social media, short videos, and constant notifications repeatedly draw our attention back to the screen. In particular, the endless stream of short videos can make us lose track of time.
As a result, checking our phones becomes a habit even while studying, working, or simply having a conversation. We may be physically present in one place, while our attention remains trapped on the screen.
It Is Not Just About Time

Another important concern is the effect excessive phone use can have on sleep and daily routines. The habit of checking a phone “one last time” at night can delay bedtime. Looking at a screen for long periods can also cause eye strain and reduce physical activity.
Another problem is the loss of balance between virtual and real life. Seeing other people’s most beautiful moments on social media can encourage us to compare our own lives with theirs. In reality, what we see on a screen is often not someone’s entire life, but only a selected part of it.
Do We Have to Give Up Our Phones?
Of course not. The point is not to give up phones completely, but to use them mindfully.

Simple habits can help: setting phone-free periods during the day, turning off unnecessary notifications, putting the phone aside while studying or talking with someone, and reducing screen time before bed.
Most importantly, we should ask ourselves this question regularly:
Is Your Phone Controlling You?
“Am I using my phone, or is my phone using me?”

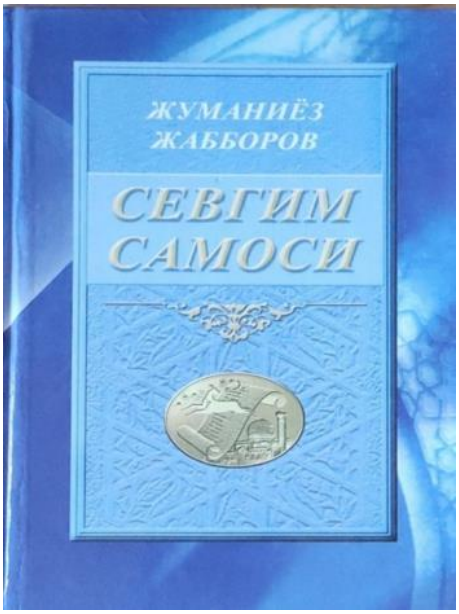


Technology should serve to improve our lives, not control them. Picking up or putting down a phone may seem like a small choice today. However, these small choices shape our use of time, our attention, and our way of life.
It is time to measure not only how long we look at a screen, but also how much meaningful life we experience beyond it.

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Saidqulova Nozima

INTERPRETATION OF THE HUMAN HEART IN JUMANIYOZ JABBOROV'S POETRY BOOK "SEVGIM SAMOSI"



When it comes to poetry, it's hard to avoid the theme of love. After all, the most delicate, mysterious, and poignant experiences of the human heart are often tied to love. But simply singing of love doesn't yet amount to great poetry. What matters is how the poet sees love, what emotions he associates with it, and how he can bring it into the reader's heart.

Jumaniyoz Jabborov's poetry book "Sevgim Samosi" ("The sky of my love") is noteworthy in this respect. Published in 2006 by the "Ma'naviyat" publishing house, the book is a collection of selected poetic works created over the poet's fifty-year creative career. The first part of the selection consists of poems in finger meter, while the second part is made up of ghazals in aruz meter, many of which have been turned into songs. Therefore, it would be too narrow to interpret the "love" in the book's title as only a lover's feelings for a beloved. In this collection, love expands to include affection for one's country, family, woman, life, beauty, and humanity. In the very first pages of the collection, the poet expresses his attitude toward poetry itself. In the poem "My heart is a pearl, My Uzbekistan":

The idea is put forward that "Poetry is the purest of feelings". At first glance, this seems like a simple sentence. However, it serves as a key to understanding the spirit of the entire book.

For Jumaniyoz Jabborov, poetry is not just words put into rhyme. The value of a poem is determined by the pure feeling behind it. The poet also infuses the poem with human suffering and the worries of the world. In other words, a single poem can embody not just one poet's experience, but the destinies, joys, and concerns of many people. That is why a reader who leafs through "The sky of my love" sees not just poems about love, but a poet who reflects on humanity.

The poem "Abadiy yog'du" ("Eternal Radiance") in the collection serves as an example of how the female image is interpreted in a sublime artistic manner. The poet portrays the woman not as a mere symbol of beauty, but as a magnificent being to be equated with life itself:

"You are the eternal light for me".

This short description carries a great meaning. Light is illumination. Thus, in the poet's eyes, the woman is the force that illuminates life. Throughout the poem, the woman's role in the family, as a mother, and in life becomes more expansive. In particular, the image "The baby in the cradle — a jewel called the future" connects the woman's image with the symbol of a mother. Here, the scope of love expands, first captivating the poet with the woman's beauty, then revealing her affection, and finally evolving into the image of a mother. Ultimately, the woman is interpreted as a symbol of the continuity of life. For this reason, the love in "The sky of my love" is not just romantic passion. It also embodies familial love, motherhood, loyalty, and responsibility.

"Family" is not the union of two people, but of two destinies. The poem "Oila" ("Family") in the collection continues this idea. The poet portrays the relationship between a man and a woman not as a simple romantic connection, but as two pillars of life.

The poem's lines: "For a man, the world is a home,

For a woman, a home is the world".
The very powerful opening of the poem reveals the concept of family from two different perspectives. For a man, a home is a place to return to; for a woman, a home is her entire existence. It is only when these two perspectives unite that a family is formed.
The poet does not associate the family only with joy. He shows that it also contains separation, tears, trials, loyalty and endurance. Thus, true love manifests itself not only in happy days but also in times of trial.
Towards the end of the poem, the family expands to encompass the concept of the Motherland. This highlights an important feature of Jumaniyoz Jabborov's poetics: the personal feeling gradually takes on social and spiritual significance.
When a beautiful girl walks down the street..., in the poem "Ko'chani to'ldirib o'tdi" ("She Filled the Street"), the poet's penchant for humor and vivid observation is evident. An ordinary street scene unexpectedly turns into a small artistic spectacle. A beautiful girl walks down the street, people's gazes follow her; some marvel, others offer prayers.
The poet, however, depicts this scene with humorous and vivid details. Most importantly, by the end of the poem, the beautiful girl's passage changes the mood of the entire street: it is as if not a girl, but light itself has passed through. This image also shows Jumaniyoz Jabborov's affinity for a journalistic spirit. He doesn't look for grand philosophy only in grand events. Sometimes, he finds the beauty of life in a simple street, ordinary people, and an everyday situation.
"Please": the sincere voice of love. In the poem "Iltimos" ("Please"), the lover's affection is expressed in a very open and passionate way. The lyrical protagonist is ready to gift all the world's beauties to the one they love. His desire is actually very simple: a single smile from the one he loves. The poet magnifies this feeling through images of the entire universe: the sky, the stars, the moon, the sun, the mountain, and the river appear one after another. But at the end of these grand images, one small thing — the smile itself — turns out to be more precious than everything. There is an artistic contrast here: the entire universe is a single smile. For the lover, it is not material or external wealth that matters, but the beloved's affectionate gaze. In this way, the poem, along with its romantic mood, also reveals the simplicity of the needs of the human heart.
"Star" — from childhood to love. The poem "Yulduz" ("Star"), is one of the most captivating poetic passages in the collection. The poet interprets the image of the star not only as a celestial body but as a companion throughout his entire creative life. In childhood, he looks at the stars, watches them, searches for words, and then begins to write a poem. Later, love and family life are also tied to this star symbol. The poet even says he named his daughter "Star". Here, it is beautifully shown how a single image can change in meaning over time.
The star of childhood is wonder.
The star of youth is inspiration.
The star of love is happiness.
And the star connected to a child is the continuation of the lineage.
Thus, through the single image of a star, the poet illustrates the entire human life.
"Dream": the heaviest moment of a father's heart. In the poem "Orzu" ("Dream"), love takes on another form. This time, it's not about a lover's love, but about a parent's affection for their child. The child grows up, and the daughter is married off to another family. The parents see her off with a wedding; from the outside, it is a joyous event. But the poet also reveals the parents' inner state: behind the laughter lies a tear, behind the joy, parting. This is a very realistic situation; on the day their daughter is given away, the parents, on one hand, wish for her happiness, while on the other, it is as if a piece of their heart has been torn away. The poet illustrates this state not with lofty advice, but through the situation itself. This is the poem's strength; the reader can see their own home, their own child, and their own parents in it.
The scope of love expands toward Uzbekistan. Another important aspect of "The scope of my love" is that in the very first part of the selection, the poet elevates from personal love to love of country. The poem "You are the pearl of My heart, Uzbekistan" alone sets the book's direction. For the poet, Uzbekistan is not just a

simple geographical region but the most cherished place of the heart. In the poem “My Uzbekistan is the only One in the world”, the love of the homeland is taken to an even higher level. The poet portrays his country as his only world.

Here, the concept of “love” expands again: first — a beloved, then — family, then — children, and then — the Motherland.

Thus, the internal movement of “The sky of my love” goes from a personal feeling to a collective one. Independence is a historical memory and a joy. In the selected poem “Mangulik lahzasi” (“Moment of eternity”), the moment independence was declared is artistically depicted. In the work, the leader’s announcement of a “country independent from today” initially evokes silence in the hall, followed by intense excitement.

Here, the poet does not simply present the historical event as a piece of news: He first depicts silence, then excitement, and then applause, showing how the historical event is reflected in the human heart. This once again demonstrates that “Sevgim samosi” is not just romantic lyric poetry.

Love in the Rose Garden of Aruz. The second part of the poetry book takes on an entirely different tone. This section contains ghazals written in the Aruz meter, and the book’s description notes that most of them have also lived on as songs. In the poetic appeals “Go see the seven climates…” the sense of homeland is once again linked to love: it is suggested that the more one sees the world, the more deeply one can love one’s own country. This idea is very simple, yet powerful: Seeing the world is not a departure from the homeland; on the contrary, understanding the world can lead to a deeper appreciation of one’s own country. For this reason, the theme of the homeland in “The sky of my love” is also inseparable from a personal sentiment.

The book’s greatest feature is the breadth of its concept of love. When we read “The sky of my love” as a whole, the book’s title takes on an even deeper meaning: in this sky there is not just one beloved, but woman, family, child, parents, homeland, nature, poetry, human affection, and compassion.

Therefore, the poet’s “love” is not confined to a single romantic experience. It manifests as a great spiritual force that defines a person’s relationship with the world.

Conclusion

Jumaniyoz Jabborov’s “Sevgim samosi” poetry collection, is valuable for its collection of works selected from the poet’s fifty years of creative experience in one place. Its two-part structure — songs in the finger weight and ghazals in the aruz meter — reveals the poet’s diverse poetic capabilities. But the main force that unites the book is love. However, this is not love in the narrow sense of romance. It expands from loving a person to loving one’s family, from the family to the motherland, and from the love of the motherland to a loving view of all of life.

This is also the source of the vastness of the sky in Jumaniyoz Jabborov’s poems. At first glance, this is a book about love. But as you turn the pages, you realize: it is actually a book about the vastness of the human heart. Because the broader love is, the broader the heart becomes. This is also the most important impression that “The sky of my love” leaves on the reader: the greatest wealth that gives life meaning is preserving the love in one’s heart.

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Dilnura Qurolova

Why Uzbek Literature Deserves a Global Audience

Literature is one of the most meaningful ways a nation preserves its history, expresses its values, and shares its imagination with the world. Through poetry, stories, and philosophical writing, generations pass their experiences to those who come after them. Uzbek literature is an important part of this cultural heritage and deserves to be explored by a wider international audience.

One of the most celebrated figures in Uzbek literary history is Alisher Navoi. His poetry and writings contributed greatly to the development of Chagatai Turkic literature. His works explored themes such as love, justice, knowledge, morality, and the responsibilities of human beings. These subjects remain meaningful because they concern questions that people continue to consider today.

Another important figure is Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur, known as a ruler, poet, and the author of the Baburnama. His memoir provides valuable observations about people, places, nature, and historical events. Beyond its historical importance, the work offers readers a personal perspective on the experiences of an individual living during a period of significant political change.

These literary figures represent only part of the region's rich intellectual history. Uzbek literature also includes oral traditions, folk tales, epic narratives, and works by modern writers who explore the challenges and possibilities of contemporary life.

Introducing Uzbek literature to international readers requires more than translating individual words. Translators must also consider cultural references, historical contexts, poetic rhythms, and the meanings carried by traditional expressions. A successful translation helps readers appreciate a work without losing sight of its cultural origins.

Young writers can contribute to this process by writing about their cultural experiences, studying their literary heritage, and exploring connections between local and global themes. They can introduce international audiences to familiar human questions through perspectives shaped by their own language and traditions.

At the same time, cultural exchange should be a conversation rather than a one-sided presentation. Uzbek literature can become better known internationally while its readers continue learning from the literary traditions of other countries.

A literary heritage remains alive when new generations read it, question it, interpret it, and find new ways to share it. Preserving the past does not mean refusing change. It means carrying valuable ideas into the future.

Uzbek literature deserves a global audience not simply because it belongs to a particular nation, but because it contributes to the broader story of humanity.

Every culture has something meaningful to share. Through translation, education, and creative exchange, the voices of Uzbek writers can travel beyond borders and reach readers who are ready to discover them.

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Dilnura Qurolova was born in the Khorezm region of Uzbekistan. She is a young, talented individual who has achieved numerous accomplishments at the international level. Her creative works have been published in international collections, and she has participated in various international projects. She is passionate about literature and creative writing and aspires to promote Uzbek literature on the international stage.

Nurul Hoque

The Poetics of Solitude and Existence: An Essay on the Literary Journey of Soumya Salek

On a late February morning in 1987, when the winter air of Bengal yields to the soft whispers of Falgun, Soumya Salek entered the world in the quiet village of Kadla within the Kochua UpoZela of Chandpur district , at the home of his maternal kin. Chandpur is a land defined by the majestic confluence of rivers, where the Padma and the Meghna meet in a vast and restless embrace, and though his ancestral roots belong to the nearby village of Tetaiya, it was this soil drenched in alluvial memories and riverine mists that quietly nurtured his early imagination. Born to Md. Nurul Islam and Roushan Ara Begum, who gifted him a lineage rooted in grace, faith, and quiet dignity, he learned from his domestic surroundings the cadence of Bengali speech—the soft rustle of paddy leaves, the rhythmic beating of rain against corrugated roofs, and the melancholic songs of boatmen drifting across silt-laden waters—sensory impressions that would later become the foundational palette of his literary universe.

As he grew, his intellectual journey led him to Comilla Victoria College, an institution renowned for its academic legacy, where he pursued a Master's degree in Accounting. At first glance, the rigorous world of accounting, built upon ledgers, balance sheets, and precise numerical reconciliation, might seem far removed from the uncharted realms of poetry; yet for Soumya Salek, this dual discipline forged a distinct harmony. The balance sheet taught him symmetry, restraint, and structure, while the poetic muse offered him a canvas to explore the unquantifiable dimensions of human emotion, mortality, and existential angst, creating a synthesis of analytical precision and lyrical vulnerability that would eventually define his artistic voice.

Soumya Salek's formal entrance into the literary sphere occurred in 2008 at the Amar Ekushey Book Fair in Dhaka when his poetry was featured in the curated anthology *Selected Poems of 2007*, marking the beginning of a relentless artistic journey during which his verses, short stories, essays, and dramatic works appeared across more than a hundred literary journals, little magazines, and regional anthologies across Bangladesh and India. Rather than offering mere decorative verse, Salek approached literature as a philosophical quest and a search for truth amid the fractured realities of modern existence, an inquiry vividly embodied in his published poetic volumes. His debut collection *Atmakhuner Sketch* (*Sketch of Self-Extermination*), published in 2016 by Prakriti Prakashan, examines self-reckoning and internal conflict through the metaphor of a sketch as an ongoing draft of identity and a vulnerable exploration of grief and psychological fragmentation. This was followed in 2018 by *Usha O Gamini* (*Usha and Gamini*), published by Deshoj Prakashan, a pivotal collection that juxtaposes celestial light with earthly journeying, whose manuscript received the prestigious Deshoj National Manuscript Award in 2017 for its seamless blending of classical motifs with modern poetic sensibilities. In 2020, Somoy Prakashan released *Pata Jhorar Orchestra* (*Symphony of Falling Leaves*), where autumn becomes an allegory for decay, memory, and spiritual transition as falling leaves perform a symphony reminding the reader that every ending carries its own music. Expanding his gaze toward urban solitude, *Park Bencher Kobita* (*Poems from a Park Bench*), published by Kobi Prakashan in 2022, turns the park bench into an observation post to reflect on forgotten lives, brief encounters, and the quiet dignity of city dwellers. His 2023 volume *Shirohpeera O Onyanyo Songbed* (*Migraine and Other Sensations*), also from Kobi Prakashan, transforms physical pain and psychological tension into art, using migraine as a symbol for the modern intellectual's internal throbbing caused by social unrest, alienation, and hyper-awareness, while his 2026 collection *Otijaponer Khoykhoti* (The Erosion of Existence), published by Jolodhi, offers a mature meditation on longevity, endurance, weariness, and the emotional cost of surviving through changing eras.

Beyond verse, Soumya Salek has built an equally formidable reputation as an insightful essayist and cultural critic. His 2019 essay collection *Shobdo Chitra Mot O Motobad* (*Word, Image, Ideology and Isms*), published

by Somoy Prakashan, investigates how language shapes thought, how literary images carry cultural memory, and how artistic creation interacts with ideology, while his 2025 work *Biangsho Ekbingsho* (*The Twentieth and Twenty-First*), published by Bunan Prakashan, offers a critical study of literary shifts between centuries, analyzing how digital culture, rapid urbanization, and shifting values have transformed contemporary Bengali literature. His dramatic collection *Swopnobondhi O Onyanyo Natok* (*Dream-Bound and Other Plays*), published by Chhinnapatra in 2025, explores theatrical storytelling by using dialogue and staging to address human ambition and moral compromise, whereas his travelogue *Momer Putul Momir Deshe* (*Wax Dolls in the Land of Mummies*), published by Prosidho Publishers in 2022, chronicles his journey through Egypt, weaving together historical reflection, architectural awe, and meditations on human mortality along the Nile.

As an editor, Salek has dedicated himself to preserving regional history and literary heritage through works like *Japone Udjapone Ilish* (*Living and Celebrating the Hilsa*, 2018), *Protnonatok Mahasthan* (*Mahasthan: An Archaeological Drama*, published by Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy in 2020), and *Golposonggroho: Adwaita Mallabarman* (2021), alongside his editing of influential little magazines such as *Chasharu*, *Shalbon*, and *Jolpushpo*, which served as vibrant platforms for emerging voices and non-conformist literary thought. Soumya Salek's substantial contributions to Bengali literature have earned him significant honors, including the Deshoj National Manuscript Award in 2017 for *Usha O Gamini*, the Chandpur Deputy Commissioner's Manuscript Award in 2018, and the Hilsa Festival Honor in 2014 in recognition of his engagement with regional folk tradition. Professionally, he serves at the Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy in Dhaka, directly contributing to institutional efforts aimed at preserving, documenting, and promoting the nation's fine arts and cultural heritage. From the quiet, river-bound village of Kadla to the prominent cultural institutions of Dhaka, Soumya Salek's journey reflects a lifelong dedication to the written word, standing at the intersection of traditional Bengali lyricism and modern urban consciousness as a vital voice who audits both the soul and the world with quiet grace, lyric sensitivity, and intellectual depth.

Part 02

An Analytical Study of Soumya Salek's Poetic Landscape

In contemporary Bengali poetry, Soumya Salek occupies a distinctive space where existential anxiety, spatial displacement, and emotional introspection converge. His poetic consciousness continuously navigates between the concrete geography of urban spaces and the intangible topographies of human desire, solitude, and mortality. By examining key excerpts from his translated poems,"The Erosion of Existence "The Dancing Girls," "Losing Myself," "Birthmark," and "I Know Nothing"—one can chart the delicate architectural framework of his verse, characterized by quiet lyricism, vivid imagery, and philosophical depth.

Salek presents a striking juxtaposition between physical environment and internal despair. Written in the reflective setting of Gulshan Lodge, Kolkata, the poet contemplates the weariness that accompanies prolonged survival and geographic separation. He opens with an atmospheric observation:

"In late autumn, sudden rain leaves Kolkata trembling; its streets, damp with dust and ink-black grime, / Are washed clean by this rare downpour."

Here, the rain acts as both a literal cleanser of urban grime and a symbolic mechanism of emotional catharsis. The phrase *"ink-black grime"* subtly invokes the physical material of writing itself, suggesting that the poet's urban surroundings are saturated with recorded memories and history. However, this external cleansing stands in stark contrast to the poet's internal unrest, which remains unwashed:

"And the erosion of existence*/ Be carried away in the songs of wandering minstrels, / Where shall I gather that peace?"*

The core concept of over-living or existence (*Otijapon*) implies an existential fatigue—a state wherein living exceeds its natural, joyful capacity and becomes a heavy endurance. By longing for his inner burden to be carried away by *"wandering minstrels"* (*bauls* or folk singers), Poet Salek anchors his modern alienation in traditional Bengal motif, seeking redemption through art and song.

The poem "The Dancing Girls" shifts the perspective toward the seductive power of sensory presence and aesthetic performance. Through structured, rhythmic observations, Salek maps the movement of artistic performance onto human emotion:

"When they gave their attention to their waists, the breath of Arabian horses spread in every direction!"

This line employs a striking, dynamic metaphor. The comparison to the *"breath of Arabian horses"* evokes raw vitality, momentum, and untamed energy, capturing how body language in art can command space and alter the atmospheric pulse of the audience. The progression of the poem culminates in a philosophical turn away from bodily aesthetic toward emotional truth:

"And when they gave their attention to their hearts itself / the young men, torn loose by the wild rush of the tempestuous wind, / took flight and vanished!"

Salek illustrates that while physical beauty generates admiration, the revelation of the heart—the core of genuine emotional vulnerability—is overwhelming. The imagery of young men being swept away like leaves in a tempest suggests that deep emotional honesty possesses a force far more destabilizing than surface allure.

In "Losing Myself," the poet turns inward to critique the hyper-functional, mechanical demands of contemporary existence. He begins with a paradoxical declaration:

"It is good to leave some things behind; / to bring everything along makes one seem selfish."

Salek directly challenges the modern impulse to accumulate and possess. He personifies this critique through an imagined observer who comments on human compulsion:

"He who thinks everything in this world is necessary, / this mechanical man, ah, poor soul, / crushed beneath the burden of life, / he deserves our pity!"

The term *"mechanical man"* encapsulates the cold efficiency demanded by modernity. Salek posits that the refusal to let go transforms human beings into burdened machines. True awakening, he argues, requires vulnerability and spiritual subtraction:

"Sometimes a wound deep within can become a tender awakening... So sometimes I lose myself, / sometimes I leave everything behind."

By viewing a deep wound as a *"tender awakening,"* Salek highlights the transformative potential of suffering. He surrenders his writing tools, desires, and unfulfilled ambitions—leaving *"songs upon the wind"*—to regain a pure, unencumbered connection with existence.

Maternal Insight and Sacred Memory

"Birthmark" shifts from urban solitude to the intimate realm of familial memory and maternal empathy. The poem opens with a meditation on the physical and psychological toll of aging:

"So much fades away, buried within the folds of age— / wrinkles drawn / in the script of time..."

Here, time is depicted as an author scribbling wrinkles upon the human frame, while life's struggles leave unread marks of suffering within the soul. Salek notes that in the ordinary friction of domestic existence, standard human relationships often fail to perceive these hidden wounds. It is only the maternal gaze that possesses true perceptual clarity:

"Only Mother knows / Where the sorrows lie concealed, / Where pain has made its dwelling; / and Mother knows / Where the wound is hidden in the heart, / which one of them / is its birthmark."

The distinction between a casual wound and a *"birthmark"* is central to the poem's emotional resonance. While a wound is inflicted by external life battles, the birthmark symbolizes an intrinsic, primal mark of identity. Salek suggests that maternal love is unique in its ability to differentiate between transient pain and essential human suffering, offering a sacred space of understanding that requires no spoken explanation.

In "I Know Nothing," Poet Salek addresses the limits of self-knowledge and the agonizing nature of unexplained longing. The speaker responds to an accuser who demands total transparency and logical explanations for emotional turmoil:

"You want to uncover everything. / You want to know everything. / And, failing to understand it all, / you accuse me again and again... / and swear in anger: / 'Deceiver, you know it all!'"

This stanza reflects the tension between rational demands for clarity and the fundamentally irrational nature of human passion. The world demands rationalizing every tear, desire, and gesture of supplication. In response, the poet rejects the title of a conscious master of his emotions, concluding with a line of profound confession:

"The burning ache of endless desire /
In truth, I know nothing of it at all!"

By declaring total ignorance regarding the origins of his own desire, Salek embraces mystery over intellectual certainty. The poetic voice realizes that human longing is an ancient, uncontainable force—one that cannot be fully cataloged, audited, or explained through words alone.



A Voice of Quiet Resistance and Depth

Across these selected works, Soumya Salek demonstrates a mastery of tone that balances intellectual precision with lyrical softness. Whether contemplating urban exile in Kolkata, analyzing the sensory power of performance, critiquing the mechanical nature of modern life, honoring maternal intuition, or confessing the limits of self-knowledge, his poetry remains steadfastly devoted to exploring the human condition.

Through carefully constructed metaphors and memorable poetic phrasing, Salek reminds us that true poetry does not offer simple answers to life's mysteries; rather, it provides a quiet space where the quiet burdens of existence can be acknowledged, pondered, and held with grace.

By Nurul Hoque

Poems of Poet Soumya Salek

The Erosion of Existence

In late autumn, sudden rain leaves Kolkata trembling; its streets, damp with dust and ink-black grime,
Are washed clean by this rare downpour.

For the peace I wander in search of,
For the dream that leaves me shattered in its delusion,
For the cheerful delirium in which these timeworn letters
Might fold away their weary feet,
And the erosion of existence
Be carried away in the songs of wandering minstrels,
Where shall I gather that peace?
Where shall I sit and settle the account of life?

So I return, outwardly and within.
I wake through the night; day by day, the debt grows.
The intoxication fades away!
Yet, in the returning wind,

I see an immense erosion,
An endless falling of clouds; Kolkata lies submerged, waiting by the roadside.

How much longer must this life be spent away?
I can no longer hold my patience.
In exile, my soul opened itself completely, yet this heart remained scattered, unresolved.

Gulshan Lodge, Kolkata
7 December 2023

THE DANCING GIRLS

When the dancing girls gave their attention to their eyes,
the letters of love slipped from their yearning chest!

When they gave their attention to their fingers,
a storm of applause resounded through every vein!

When they gave their attention to their waists,
the breath of Arabian horses spread in every direction!

When they gave their attention to their feet,
the revellers forgot the past and future and danced in a drunken trance!

And when they gave their attention to their hearts.
the young men, torn loose by the wild rush of the tempestuous wind,
took flight and vanished!

LOSING MYSELF

It is good to leave some things behind;
to bring everything along makes one seem selfish.
It feels as though someone is following behind, saying:
“He who thinks everything in this world is necessary,
this mechanical man, ah, poor soul,
crushed beneath the burden of life,
he deserves our pity!”

It is good to lose some things;
unless we lose them, we can never know
which ones we truly need
and which are merely burdens upon the mind.
Sometimes a wound deep within can become a tender awakening;
the head trembles, tears fall, and blood flows in the chest.

So sometimes I lose myself,

sometimes I leave everything behind.
And so I leave songs upon the wind,
words and poems, the restlessness of desire.
I leave behind my notebook and pen,
I leave behind the losses and ruins of all that I have lived through;
the voice of a failed bumblebee,
the heart's own narration.

BIRTHMARK

So much fades away, buried within the folds of age—
wrinkles drawn
in the script of time,
Through the clashes and blows of life;
So much remains unretrieved within us,
Sin and suffering, damage and distress;

Coming close, no one bends to read them through the heart's deep feeling—

In this squandered battle of domestic life,

Only Mother knows
Where the sorrows lie concealed,
Where pain has made its dwelling;
and Mother knows
Where the wound is hidden in the heart,
which one of them
is its birthmark.

I KNOW NOTHING

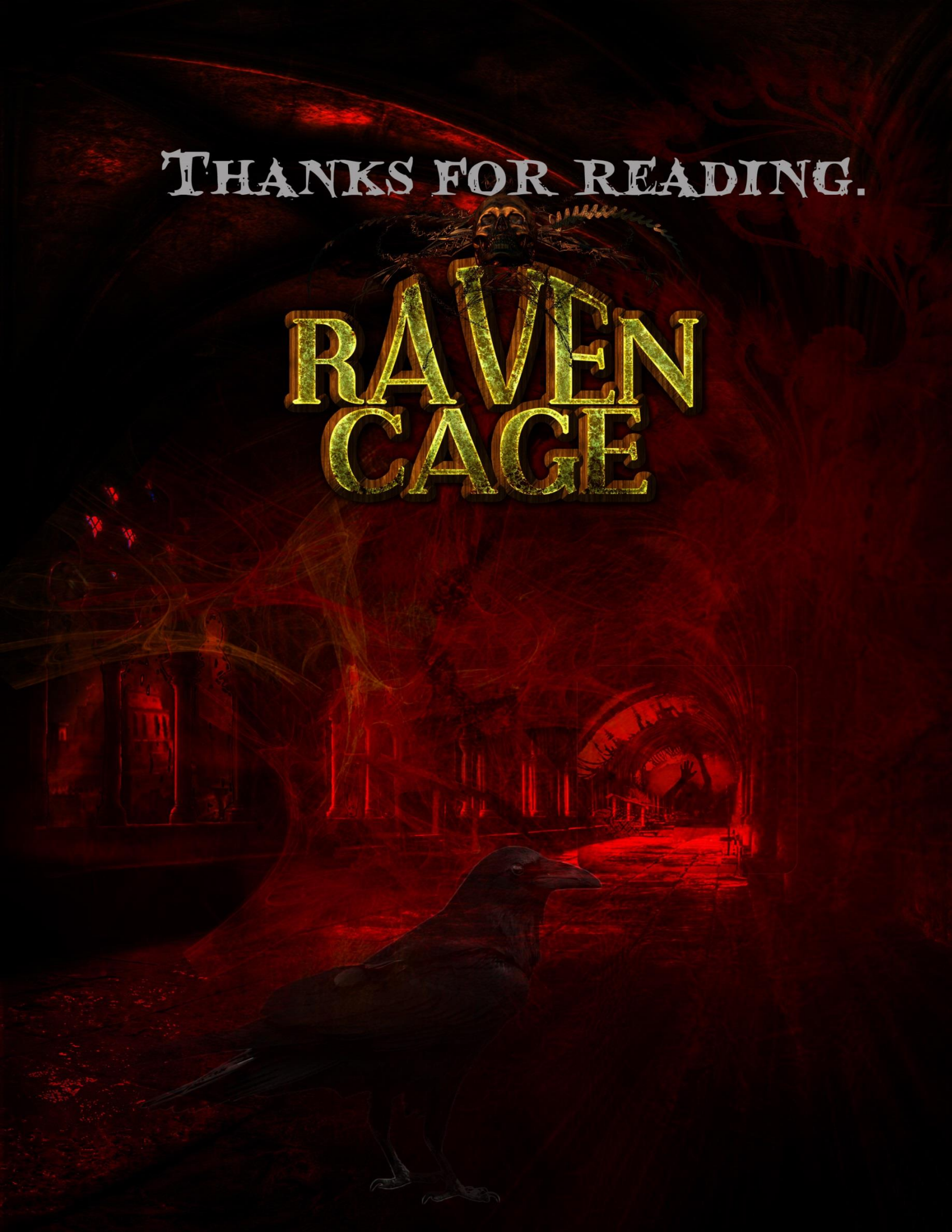
Look, find out,
towards whom I have stretched my hands,
towards whose tender face,
whose parted breast,
whose tresses falling in clustered curls.
Look, find out,
to whom I have raised my hands in supplication,
in search of what, in hope of which happiness,
in pursuit of what,
with eyes reddened by streams of tears.

Come, rescue me.
From what fierce intoxication
does this dishevelled self arise?
From what ailing desire
have I smeared my forehead with dust?

You want to uncover everything.
You want to know everything.
And, failing to understand it all,
you accuse me again and again,
speak again and again of the mystery I have withheld,
and swear in anger:
“Deceiver, you know it all!”
“Who knows what the heart longs for?”
the soul laments at every moment, alas!

The burning ache of endless desire—

In truth, I know nothing of it at all!


Thanks for reading.
RAVEN
CAGE