



THE ARCHER

MULTILINGUAL INTERNATIONAL LITERARY MAGAZINE

Editor-in-Chief
MASUDUZZAMAN

POETRY
FICTION
ESSAY
MEMOIR

PRICE
5 US \$

ISSUE 1
MAY 2021

THE ARCHER

ISSUE 1 MAY 2021

Editor-in-Chief

Masuduzzaman

Editor

Rashid Askari

Executive Editor

Anna Maria Stepień

Associate Editor

Sikandar Ali

Assistant Editor

Mainul Islam Manik

Art Director

Najib Tareque

CONTACT

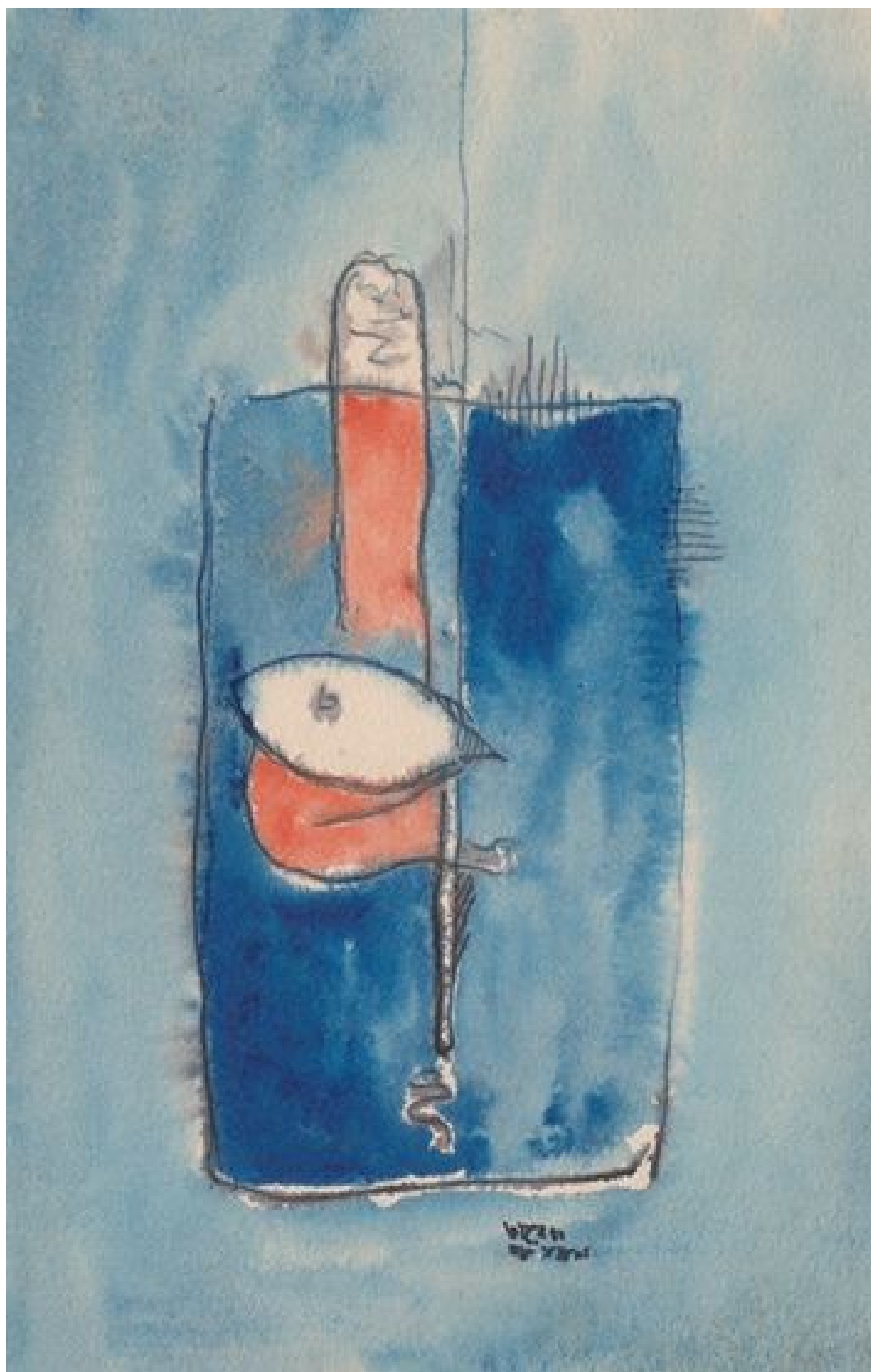
E-mail

masud11111@gmail.com

annastep@op.pl

PUBLISHED FROM BANGLADESH





CONTENTS

POETRY

Protiti Rasnaha Kamal 7
Alicja Maria Kuberska 9
Anna Maria Dall'Olio 12
Anna Maria Stepień 14
Antje Stehn 17
Bharati Nayak 29
Borche Panov 31
Brunhilde Román Ibáñez 25
Deepika Singh 38
Doan Manh Phuong 40
Daniela Andonovska-Trajkovska 42
Gili Haimovich 44
Gordana Karakashevska 46
Ionuț Calotă 75
Iwan Dartha 79
Jasmina Sfiligoj 82
Janelyn Dupingay Vergara 84
Julie Ann Tabigne 87
Ljubica Katic 90
Maid Čorbić 93
Mai Văn Phần 97
Maria do Sameiro Barroso 100
Marian Dziwisz 121
Mihaela Anca Farcaș 125
Myriam Ghezaïl 128
Nadica Ilić 134
Lesya Bakun 136
Isilda Nunes 138
P.D. Jonakii 141
Richard Spisak 144

146 Stanislav Klín
149 Roberto Marzano
153 Sofia Skleida
155 Eliza Segiet
157 Marija Najthefer Popov
161 Marilynne Bertoncini
165 Ewith Bahar
167 Mircea Dan Duta
171 Anna Canić
173 Anna Tlalka
175 Danica Hrnčiarová Šišlákova
177 Teodozja Świdarska
180 Masuduzzaman

FICTION

20 Darcie Friesen Hossack
50 Rashid Ashkari
63 Carolina Corvillo
103 Kiều Bích Hậu
114 Mio-Yi Tu

MEMOIR

194 Maria Angeles Lonardi

ESSAY

185 Sikandar Ali
202 Mohammad Nurul Huda

USED ART WORK
BY NAJIB TAREQUE

FOREWORD

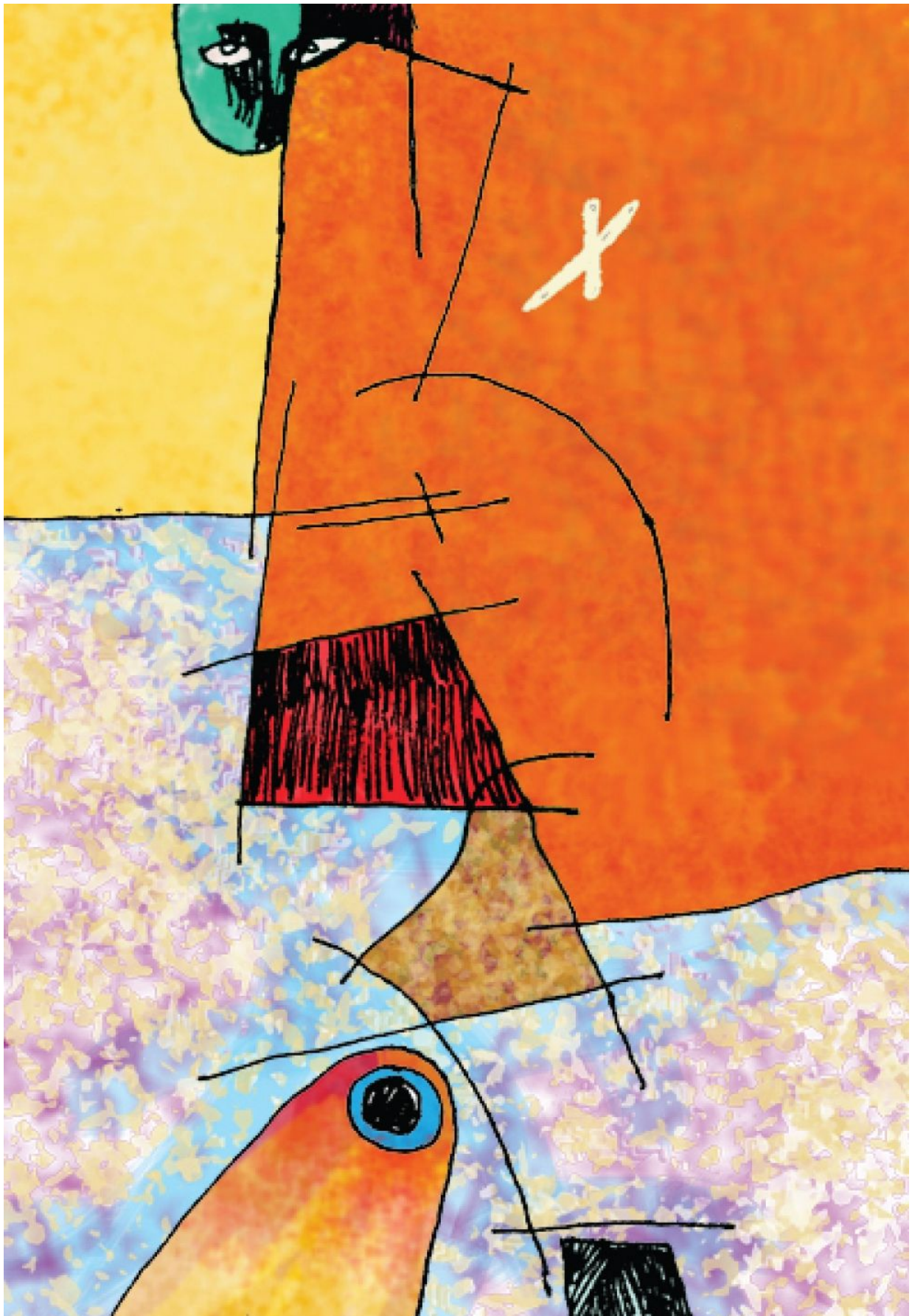
Dear writers and readers, I am delighted that, finally, we have embarked on our much longed-for literary expedition. The monthly literary-cultural magazine—The Archer, showcasing the work of numerous writers from different countries across the globe, has seen the light of day. This is a multilingual magazine meant for the writers of different countries and languages who, at this moment in time, are writing poetry, fiction, essays and memoirs or writing brilliant and thought-provoking pieces on culture in elegant prose. It is noticeable that English translations have been juxtaposed with the original writing from various languages. This will help you understand a broad spectrum of what is coming from the pen of this wide variety of writers, their creativity, originality, technical skill and the depth and wisdom of their writing. Our ultimate goal must be the creation of a global literary and cultural forum and an international community of writers with a shared destiny. What else could be a better option than creating such a forum on fostering the unity of thoughts among the writers of the globe?

Anyway, we have experienced some delay in the publication of the maiden issue. We make our apologies for this. There might have been inadvertent errors and omissions. We, however, will be more cautious in the publication of the next issue onwards.

I would put in a request. Do contribute to the magazine—The Archer, as you please. Do write in it. Best wishes.

Masuduzzaman

Editor-in-Chief



POETRY

Protiti Rasnaha Kamal

BANGLADESH

Nomad

The night's been cold to the travelers' stream
Yet they pull an ocean out of a hat
Spray it onto the blind star, trailing the path of a seeker
Unfolding in the ripened rain.

For a promise of some miles their feet could sing of
Unraveling a muddy glimpse of the path
That collects possessions as they dive,
The journey mops clean the route that held its heart.

A nomad knows the magic of the fireflies
The nocturnal flame pulls in both tribes
They inhabit the smoke diffused in their bedsheets –
Grasses, deserts and all of this earth.

When you are the refugee of this world
The water pleases you, as you please each drop
The tent you are promised, swells up with slumber
The world you notice, glances back.



Protiti Rasnaha Kamal holds a BA in Neuroscience from Mount Holyoke College, USA. She writes in English. Her poetry and short stories have been published in local newspapers and journals such as The Daily Star, Dhaka Tribune, The Daily Observer, Bangla Academy Journal, Teerandaz (online), and Dhaka Review. Her poetry has appeared in The Mount Holyoke review, The Bombay Review and The Alipore Post. She can be reached at protitirasnaha@gmail.com

Alicja Maria Kuberska

POLAND

Deszczowa sonata

Gwałtowne podmuchy wiatru
uderzają mocno o okno.
Krople deszczu dzwonią na szybie.
Ulewa komponuje sonatę.

Na niewidocznych pięcioliniach
zapisują przezroczyste nuty.
Pojedyncze dźwięki
łączą się w grzmiące akordy.

W muzyce drgają zimne krople,
kruszą się antarktyczne lodowce,
parują gorące źródła gejzerów,
rzeki spływają w rytmie allegro.

Woda jak Żyd Wieczny Tułacz
ciągle wędruje po Ziemi.
Nigdy nie zazna spokoju
w przemianie od pary do lodu.

Wczoraj była oceanem,
dzisiaj jeziorem,
jutro popłynie lżą.

Rainy sonata

Sudden gusts of wind
Tap rhythmically upon the window

Raindrops jangle on the glass.
Downpour composes a sonata.

It records transparent notes
On the invisible staves.
Single sounds join together
to create the thundering chords.

Cold drops vibrate in music,
Antarctic glaciers crumble,
hot springs geysers steam,
river flow down rhythm Allegro

Water, as the Eternal Wanderer,
will never know peace.
It will continue roaming
between steam and ice.

Yesterday it was the ocean.
Today it is the lake.
Tomorrow it will be a tear



Alicja Maria Kuberska an awarded Polish poetess, novelist, journalist, editor. She is a member of the Polish Writers Association in Warsaw, Poland and IWA Bogdani, Albania. Her poems have been published in numerous anthologies and magazines. She received awards from her country and from outside She was twice nominated to the Pushcart Prize In 2021 Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage awarded her a medal for activities in benefit of Polish culture.

Anna Maria Dall'Olio

ITALY

Voglio uscire

Nella liquida lunga notte
tra strani squilibri sconvolte
ali di membra trasparenti
sperando porte con le mani ...

lontane grida più vicine
d'improvviso fuse con l'ansia
d'improvviso falce di luce
in sabbie mobilitisucchia.

I need to get out

In the long, long liquid night
amid incredible imbalances
wings or transparent limbs
hopefully groping for doors ...

far cries so nearer & nearer
suddenly acting with anxiety
suddenly a flash of light
in dark quicksand does drown.



Anna Maria Dall'Olio is an Italian writer. She devoted herself to fiction, poetry and playwriting. She published a novel, *Segreti* (2018), and five collections of poems. Finally, she wrote two plays. She is widely published in various literary magazines and webzines.

Anna Maria Stępień

POLAND

Żywy cud

Mężczyzna i kobieta
Serce i umysł.
Czerń i biel
Muzułmanin, żyd czy chrześcijanin
Podziały wiodą donikąd...

Czyż nie odczuwamy tak samo?
Czyż nie płaczemy, nie śmiejemy się, nie marzymy,
Nie kroczymy przez życie wszyscy
W poszukiwaniu szczęścia?

Dlaczego wciąż walczymy,
Nakładamy innym kajdany,
Usiłujemy ograniczać,
Szerzymy nietolerancję?
Jak długo jeszcze będzie to trwać?

Różnorodność to
Bogactwo
Esencja.

Wiedz, człowieku!
Twój brat
Twoja siostra
To cud żywy.
Naucz się
Doceniać
I z innymi żyć w harmonii.

A Living Miracle

Man and woman
Heart and mind
Black and white
Muslim, Jewish or Christian
The divisions lead nowhere...

Don't we feel in similar ways?
Don't we all cry, laugh, dream,
Go through life
In quest of happiness?

Why do we keep fighting,
Put chains on others,
Try limiting,
Spread intolerance?
How long will it last?

The diversity is
The richness
The essence.

Know it, human!
Your brother
Your sister
Are living miracles.
Learn
To appreciate
And coexist in harmony.



Anna Maria Stępień born in 1980 in Tarnobrzeg, Poland. She studied Economics, English Philology and Advanced Translation. She teaches English as well as translating about two decades. She is the Director of Association of World Writers (AWW), editor and the editorial secretary in the World Taifas Literary Magazine, Coordinator of the Teerandaz International Festival of Poetry and Fiction. She is also one of the International Editors of Teerandaz Multilingual International Literary Magazine. She writes poems, short stories, memoirs and anecdotes, both in Polish and in English. Her poems have been translated into other languages, such as Bangla, Hebrew, Spanish, Portuguese, Uzbek, Macedonian, Hindi, Romanian, Serbian – and published in domestic and international online groups, magazines as well as anthologies.

Antje Stehn

GERMANY-ITALY

Regenwürmer -The Social Dilemma

Kein Algorithmus kontrolliert
diejenigen die im Untergrund arbeiten
langsam, mit Beständigkeit,
kaum beachtet in der Muttererde
Gänge aus kontinuierlichen Ausscheidungen geformt
Langeweile mit Dopamin-Schüssen weggeputscht.

Unser Gehirn eine Art Olympus
die ewige Suche nach Identität
über Millionen von Jahren entwickelte Sensibilität
ein vorrausschaubares Modell
was du magst, wie sehr du es magst und was du mögen wirst
der Regenwurm weiß es bereits.

Earthworms – The Social Dilemma

No algorithmic machine controls
those who work in the underground
slowly, steadily
inside the earth, undervalued
with passages made of continuous excrement
and boredom canceled out by dopamine shots

Our brain a kind of Olympus
infinite divinities
in search of identity

vulnerability developed over millions of years
simply a predictive model
What you like, how much you like it and what you will like
the earthworm already knows.

Translation by Betty Gilmore



Antje Stehn is a German poet, visual artist, video producer, art curator based in Italy. Since 1990 she has been showing her work in international exhibitions around Europe and the US. She is a part of the international collective “Poetry is my Passion”. She is editing for TamTamBumBum, for Los Ablucionistas and Teerandaz. She is member of the scientific committee of the Piccolo Museo della Poesia in Piacenza, Italy.



FICTION

Wallpaper

by **Darcie Friesen Hossack**

CANADA

The moment Michaela saw it, she knew the wallpaper in the entryway of her mother's new house was a door to another world. And with its snaking swirls of gold foil and raised black velvet, it couldn't lead anywhere good.

"We should scrape this off," Michaela said, running her fingers along the wall to see if she could sense anything about the other side.

"Do you really think we need to?" Michaela's mother said.

Michaela's fingers trembled a little against the velvet. "Yeah. It's not even a big area. We could have it down today if we rented a steamer right now."

"Your stepfather said he likes it, though."

That's when Michaela felt it. A touch. Just the slightest pressure against her fingertips, along with a crackle of slippery energy that scurried up her arm and left her dripping to her elbow with a wet sort of cold.

"Let's go to the Home Hardware," Michaela said, wiping her hand on her jeans. "I'll bet they have a steamer in stock."

"I don't know, Mich—"

"I'll help you pick out paint colours."

At the store, Michaela went straight to the rental counter and put a steamer on hold.

Her mother loved Home Hardware. Especially the decor section, with its fancy curtain rods and whimsical signs.

A Hug Would Make My Day, said one that was already in her mother's basket, and seeing it, Michaela took an unintentional step back.

"This is a nice colour," Michaela's mother said. They were in the paint section, standing in front of an amphitheatre of tinted chips, when suddenly Michaela was presented with a pink-coloured slip of paperboard in three shades of Easter Bunny.

"How about this?" Michaela said, reaching for a blue from the store's heritage collection. "It's old but new. And see? It would go really well with this ivory one." She paused. "You wouldn't believe how what's on a wall can affect you."

Michaela handed the chips to her mother, who looked at them for a few seconds, while chewing the underside of her lip. "I guess maybe we don't have to decide today," she said before almost putting the chips in her pocket. "Obah no! They are to take with us, though, aren't they?"

"Yes, Mom. We can take as many as we need."

"Well, that's nice of them. But, I don't know that I need these ones, then," she said and carefully placed the blue and ivory cards back where Michaela had found them.

At first, it seemed like the wallpaper was not going to put up much of a fight. Even without the steamer, Michaela found an edge that lifted up with ease, and she was about to peel it back.

"What's that for?" her stepfather said, having come, unnoticed, home for lunch from the meat packing plant. He pointed at the steamer, which was already filled with water and coughing out the occasional little cloud of vapour.

"It's to take this down."

Darryl moved in close and ran his hand, slowly, along the grain of the velvet.

"Did you ask me first?"

"I did not," Michaela said and ripped off a strip.

As she did, she received a sharp swipe from the other side that left three invisible stripes across the back of her hand.

"Dammit," Michaela said. Along with the wallpaper, she had also gouged out a chunk of the wall.

"Fucking little shit," Darryl said, fingering the hole Michaela had left behind.

Leaving her for a moment, he went to the kitchen and dragged over one of the chairs they had brought from the house across street. He sat down with his arms crossed and one leg bouncing with irritation.

"You know, we practically lived over there for free," he said. "Your mother only bought this place so you'll come visit more often."

Michaela crouched down, picked up the steamer wand and applied it to the wall.

"Mom went over there for a minute, but she's going to be right back."

From behind the wallpaper, as she dragged the steamer wand across its surface, Michaela heard a low and rasping sort of growl.

This time, when she tried to get her fingers around another scrap of edge, the paper was more stubborn. Michaela had to pick at it with her fingernails, and when a little more paper finally came away, it was with another chunk of wall.

Michaela could feel, more than hear, her stepfather grinding his teeth.

"I wonder what your mother will think of that?" he said, as an ooze of something smelled but not seen began to seep out from under where the paper had been torn.

Michaela held the steamer in place longer this time, but had begun to suspect that the wallpaper was being held there with something other than paste.

As she continued to steam, she felt a breath on her face, hot and sour, and from over in his chair, Darryl took a swallow from a bottle that he fetched from his pocket.

"Want some?" he said.

"I'm eighteen," Michaela said, the sickening smell of Rye mingling with the breath from inside the wall.

She set down the wand and started to peel another strip.

Even when a hand emerged—its skin a camouflage of scorched black and pulsing veins of gold—and wrapped its fingers around her wrist, Michaela continued to peel. When she peeled back another strip, another clump of drywall crumbled to the floor.

"God, you're useless," Darryl said, and took a sandwich from inside his jacket. "It's your favourite," he said, wafting the smell of headcheese and strong mustard towards Michaela.

Michaela could almost taste the first time he had made her eat headcheese, all knucklebone jelly and offcuts of meat.

"I'm a vegetarian," Michaela said, receiving a snort in exchange for her words.

Michaela stepped back to look at what she'd done so far, knowing she about to reach the most dangerous time.

"Oh, but what's happened here?" said Michaela's mother, returning with a grilled cheese sandwich for Michaela and one for herself. "Darryl, I didn't know you'd be coming home for lunch."

"I thought you two might like some company."

"That's nice," said Michaela's mother, biting again at her lip. "I hope you don't mind about the wallpaper, Darryl. Michaela thought—"

"Whatever the two of you decide," Darryl said, getting up, then returning moments later to hand Michaela a bottle of Coke. When

he did, a slow, scraping laugh escaped from the other side of the wall.

"You could help, you know," Michaela said, setting down the bottle and returning to the wall.

Each time she peeled now, Michaela felt her hands become covered in the fluid from before, which she wiped invisibly away onto a series of yellowed rags.

"I prefer to watch you work," Darryl said, as a set of sharpened fingernails grated along the back of the velvet and foil.

A few minutes later, Michaela had removed an entire vertical seam when her mother came alongside and squeezed out a ribbon of toothpaste into one of the gashes Michaela had made.

"This is how we did it back home," her mother said, and for one fresh moment, Michaela breathed in the reassuring smell of mint.

It was not, however, enough to cover a now sulfurous stench exuding from behind the paper.

"Doesn't anyone smell that?" Michaela said.

"I think you're going to need more than just toothpaste for this one," Darryl said, lighting a cigarette and coming over to inspect the damage.

"I think they must have used glue to put this up," Michaela said when her mother left the room and Darryl came to stand behind her.

"These old walls. You never know what's holding them together," Darryl said, his whiskey breath now falling on Michaela's neck, as the sharpened outline of a face pressed itself through the paper.

"I'll go downstairs and look for some spackle," Michaela's mother sang from the kitchen, as Michaela grasped and peeled away a strip where the face had just been.

Michaela applied more steam, and when she was ready, she gripped yet another edge and started to pull.

This time, the paper, instead of tearing, began to stretch away from the wall.

It bulged until it formed a kind of pouch, and when it had stretched enough, something the size of a man dropped into it as through into a womb.

The hand that had grasped at her before now slit a nail through the softened paper, like a reptile using its egg tooth, opening a window into its grease-some world.

Michaela's heart began to drum against the inside of her chest.

"I found some other wallpaper down here, you two," Michaela's mother called from downstairs. "This one has got some real nice flowers."

"What do you think? Wanna put up some flowers?" Darryl said from behind. At the same time, the paper in Michaela's hands finally gave way and tore a little more.

"You are such an asshole," Michaela said. She pulled harder now, and moved her head just in time to avoid a swipe across her face.

Seeing inside the creature's world now, bubbles of acid mud rose into domes before bursting back into the swamp from which they came.

"A bunch of stupid flowers would be better than this," Michaela said, brushing back against Darryl as she placed one foot on the wall for leverage and continued to pull.

"Hand me that chair," Michaela said. "I need to get up high."

"Why should I—"

"For fuck's sake, just give me the chair. Just give me one thing I ask for."

Darryl laughed and pulled over the chair he had sat on to eat his lunch.

"Consider it a gift."

"Thanks," Michaela said and quickly stepped up. The paper was coming away now. All of it. Unless she acted fast, though, the creature that was caught in the swelling between their two worlds might come spilling through the gap it had made.

"I still need your help, Darryl. Just come up here with me for a second," Michaela said at the sound of her mother's footsteps returning up the stairs, and as the creature from the wallpaper pushed itself close and tasted the scent of Michaela's sweat.

"I don't know what you think this will accomplish," Darryl said. "You, meddling with things here." He didn't step up like Michaela had asked, but moved instead to a spot just in front of the chair. Ever since you were that snotty little kid who tried to call me Dad."

"That's fine. Right there," Michaela said.

"Mich? Darryl? Do you want to see what I found?"

"I do, Mom. I want to see it," Michaela said, reaching up to the top of the wall and getting ready to rip the paper down in one last tear. "Just give me a second. I'm almost done."

From in front of her, Darryl opened his mouth to speak.

"Shhh," Michaela hushed. And as Darryl looked up, Michaela pulled at the paper with all her strength.

"Come on up, Mom," Michaela called, just as the paper began to come away.

With the paper in her hands like a flag, and one edge still attached to the wall, Michaela jumped down behind Darryl and pushed.

"What the fuck—" Darryl said as he fell towards the wall.
"Where's your stepfather?" Michaela's mother asked as Michaela wadded up the last strip of paper and held it tightly together in a ball.

"I think he went back to work," Michaela said, pressing the wad into the ribbons of other wallpaper at her feet.

"Did he say what time he'd be done tonight?"

"No," Michaela said, pushing the paper into her mother's hands to throw out. "But he did want me to tell you not to wait up."



Darcie Friesen Hossack is an author and poet from the edge of Jasper National Park in Alberta, Canada. Her short story collection, *Mennonites Don't Dance stories*, was shortlisted for the Commonwealth Writers' Prize. She is the Managing Editor of *Word City Monthly*, a global online literary journal dedicated to themes of diversity and peace-building, and has lately completed a novel called *Stillwater*.



POETRY

Bharati Nayak

INDIA

Earth

How terrible will it feel
If blue seas vanish
Leaving there only craters deep?

What an ugly look will it be
If we do not find
Fluffy clouds floating
Nor the joyous birds flying?

Where will go the lions
Monkeys and bears
If there are no forests
What shall we drink
If all rivers dry
Or the sky has no clouds to bless?

How dark will it be
If from this earth
All colors are wiped
Leaving only a color black?



Bharati Nayak born in 1962, is a bilingual poet, critic and translator from Odisha, India. She writes in English and Odia. Her poems have been published in many magazines, journals, anthologies and e-books of national and international repute. She has published three poetry books and co-authored five.

Borche Panov

REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

ЕСКИМИТЕ ЗБОРУВААТ

земјата се измести

сонцето е повисоко, а источниот ветар посилен
одевме со кучињата рано наутро за да ловиме фоки
имавме само еден саат светлина
денес имаме два
денот е повисок на хоризонтот
сонцето повторно излегува од истото место
но зајдисонцето е поместено

земјата се навалила од нејзината оска

сонцето некогаш беше близу врвот на планината
сега е повисоко од највисокиот врв
и потполо е -
не лебдат снежните јазици на северниот ветар
и не ни го кажуваат повеќе патот во белината
денот е поширок од цртата на очилата од китова коска

навалена е земјата

приказните што ги резбаме на клоните од морските лавови
сè уште прикажуваат за белите мечки
што ги ловевме со смрзнати топки од китово сало
во кои стававме свиткана еластична и остра китова коска
што се развиваше во желудниците на мечките
и им ја распоруваше утробата, сега промените

нам ни го прават тоа — ни го изместуваат животот
од чашката на зглобот на млечниот пат
па и ѕвездите ни се наредени во погрешна насока

се измести земјата

не лебдат снежните јазици на северниот ветар
и не ни го кажуваат патот во белината повеќе
а источниот ветар сега е како северниот
и лошо време носи и лошо нешто се случува со земјата...

The Eskimos are Speaking

the earth has shifted

the sun is higher, and the east wind — stronger
we used to go hunting seals with the dogs early in the morning
we had only one hour of light
today we have two
the day is higher on the horizon
the sun is rising from the same spot again
but the sunset is shifted

the earth has tilted axis

the sun used to be on the top of the mountain
and now it's higher than the highest top
and it's warmer —
there are no snowy tongues of the north wind hovering
and they don't show us the path in the whiteness anymore
the day is wider than the line of the glasses made of baleen
the earth is tilted

the stories that we are carving on the sea lions' tusks

are still telling us about the white bears
that we were hunting with frozen balls of whale blubber
in which we put rolled and elastic, but sharp whale bone
that was growing in the bears' stomach
just to make a rapture, and now the changes
are doing it to us – they shift our lives
from the socket of the Milky Way's joint
so the stars are lined up in the wrong direction, too

the earth has shifted
there are no snowy tongues of the north wind hovering
and they don't show us the path in the whiteness anymore
the north wind is like the east wind, now
and it brings us bad weather and something bad is happening to the
earth...



Borche Panov was born in The Republic of North Macedonia. He has published many books of poetry. His poetry was published in a number of anthologies, literary magazines and journals both at home and abroad. Panov works as the Counselor for Culture and he is also Arts Coordinator for the “International Karamanov’s Poetry Festival”, held in Radovish annually.



Brunhilde Román Ibáñez

SPAIN

La Salvaje

Soy la oscura y la indomable
la manzana que vive en tus pupilas
y que lleva una serpiente dentro
soy la revelación y la palabra que nunca fue dicha
soy la dicha azul del grito de las Amazonas
soy la sabiduría de la sangre de Astarté
soy una y soy incontable
soy los senos erguidos que hacen cambiar el curso de las aguas
soy los siete cielos,
en el séptimo descansé y ascendí a mis infiernos
Y mis lágrimas hicieron la luz en ellos
y mi risa pobló la tierra
y de mi cuerpo crecieron gritos en flor,
el arma de todas las primaveras
y de mí creció la vid y el vino
el oro del Rhin, los frutos de la tierra
Yo soy la salvaje, concebida en el fuego de Beltane
la noche en que los dioses de piedra empezaron a resquebrajarse
Yo soy la que baila en las hogueras
para que puedas contemplar tu propio resplandor

The Wild Woman

I am the dark and the untameable
the apple that lives in your pupils
carrying a snake within

I am the revelation and the word
that was never uttered
I am the blue joy in the amazons' scream
I am the wisdom of Astarte's blood
I am one and I am countless
I am the upright breasts which change the course of water
I am the seven heavens,
in the seventh I rested and ascended to my hells
and my tears made the light in them
and my laughter populated the earth
and my body bloomed in screams,
the weapon of all Springs
and from me vine and wine grew
the Rhine gold, the fruit of the earth
I am the wild one, conceived in the fires of Beltane
the night the stone gods started to crumble
I am the one who dances in the bonfires
so that you can contemplate your own radiance.



Brunhilde Román Ibáñez (Palencia, Spain) holds a degree in English Studies, a degree in Hispanic Studies and a postgraduate diploma in Social Anthropology. As for her poetry, she has published two books, *Gifts of Wind* and *Profound Animal*. She has

received various poetry awards and her work has been translated into different languages. In addition to that, her poems have been included in several national and international anthologies and journals. She is also the creator of performances in which she combines poetry and dance. She is currently collaborating in different artistic projects as a poet, storyteller and speaker. She also works as a teacher, translator and collaborates in the creation of textbooks for students of Spanish as a foreign language.

Deepika Singh

INDIA

Barren Flesh

She gave birth to man,
And he endorsed her in the flesh emporium.
His greed polluted her.
In the session of the debauchery,
Made to dance like a jaybird.
She is labelled as disrespected thing
That is shared by the respected.
Even the little girl is also not spared
Can't utter a word, her tongue is sliced
She is no more the object of our
So called 'civilized society'.
All she wished was not to be born as SHE
These lips that poured love,
These lips they bargained in.
The womb that moulded their bodies,
The body from which they sprouted,
That body they disgraced
It is the lust of man,
That is called woman's sin.



Deepika Singh from **Margherita** Assam India. She is teacher by profession. Some of her poems also got featured in Bharat Vision, The Poet Magazine, Web Poesia, Womensweb, The Literary Mirror, Atunis Galaxy Poetry etc.



Doan Manh Phuong

VIETNAM

Dấu hỏi

Bàn chân làm nên những con đường
Hay con đường làm nên những bàn chân?
Dấu hỏi đặt dọc ngang trời đất
Ngẩng mặt nhìn,
bắt gặp cái lắc đầu ba phải của trời xanh...

Thời gian biến thiên theo sức sống của cỏ cây
và hơi thở muôn loài
Sinh ra những con đường không thể đi bằng chân
mà đi bằng ánh sáng
Và dấu hỏi lại đặt dọc đặt ngang
Ánh sáng gọi tên những con đường
Hay con đường đã gọi tên ánh sáng?

Bao tâm thế xoay ngược xoay xuôi
Và chỉ thấy bốn bề im lặng...

Bóng chân lý cháy trong làn khói trắng...

Question Mark

Feet make the roads
Or the roads make the feet?
The question mark is placed across the ground and the sky
Raising the face to look,
We see the double-think shaking of the blue sky...

Time varies according to the vitality of plants
and the breath of all kinds
Making the roads that cannot be walked on by foot
but by the light
And the question mark is placed horizontally and vertically
Light calls the names of the roads
Or the roads call the name of light?

Many states of mind turn around and around
And we only see four sides of silence.

The shadow of truth burns in white smoke...



Doan Manh Phuong is a Vietnamese poet and journalist. He has published four books of poetry. He got many awards on literature and arts by the National Committee of the Vietnam Union of Literature and Arts, writers association, etc. Currently he is editing a magazine published from Vietnam.

Daniela Andonovska-Trajkovska

REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

ПРОСТА РЕЧЕНИЦА

Го гребеме мразот од Арктикот
што го носиме како панцир
и фрламе солени кристални очи зад нас
за да го обележиме патот
до планината што се влече на нашите петици
со лава од неслучени настани
кои уште откако знаеме за себе
се обидуваме да ги поврземе во низа
за да составиме проста реченица
и да се разбереме конечно како луѓе

Simple Sentence

We scratch the frost of the Arctic
that we are wearing like a bulletproof vest
and we toss salty crystal eyes behind us
to mark the path
to the mountain that crawls on our heels
with lava of unanticipated incidents
that we are trying to bond into a sequence
since the beginning of our existence
to make a simple sentence
and to understand each other as humans at last



Daniela Andonovska-Trajkovska born in Bitola, North Macedonia. She is a poetess, scientist, editor, literary critic, doctor of pedagogy, university professor. She writes poetry, prose and literary critical essays. She has published one prose book and eight poetry books. She has been awarded many prizes. Her poetry was published in a number of anthologies, literary magazines and journals both at home and abroad, and her works are translated into many languages.

Gili Haimovich

ISRAEL

Flawed Gift

Everything we noticed gave back its gift of expanding to other dimensions:

the green echo of the trees reflected on the Formica closet,
the golden brownsimmersthe girls' curls with deeper hues,
the gray net of the fingerprints spread around the white light switch,
the night –

we gained seeing in them a world concealed within our own
separated world
in which we take no part.



Gili Haimovich is a bilingual poet in Hebrew and English published internationally. She is the author of six books in Hebrew, four in English as well as a multilingual of her poem Note. She won two international poetry competitions in Italy as the best foreign

poet: *I colori dell'anima* (2020), and *Ossi di Seppia*, a grant for excellency by the Ministry of Culture of Israel (2015) and other prizes. Her poems are published in 30 languages and featured worldwide.



Gordana Karakashevska

REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

Скриен живот

Тишината трупа камењаза да изгради дом. Уморно,
Уморно секавањето ги става рацете
на моите раменици- Те познавам многу добро
- вели со глас во кој отчукува времето нерамномерно
Нерамномерно!Тик - так, ток - так, тик - ток - так...
Твојата младост е уморна, прободена е со стрела
- Те познавам многу добро- вели со глас во кој
просторот станува бесконечен
а бесконечноста станува поезија во мојата крв.
Можеби затоа не умееш да дишеш,
Можеби затоа не научи да пливаш,
затоа незнаеш како да живееш.
- Понекогаш во твојот ден -уморно ми вели секавањето
Ја среќавам водатаво нежна преградка
заедно со љубовта гладна,
брза, ита кон староста во неповрат.
Знаат ли тие декауметноста никогаш не може да се поправи?
И кога ќе ти досади кругот,
ќе го испуштиш каменот,
каменот од кој си направена ќе се распака,
ќе пукне, тесно ќе му стане, ќе те напушти,
ќе се сокрие од својата сенка,, ќе се сокрие од себе,
ќе се сокрие од тебе.Тишината подига ѕидови
за да изгради домво нејзиното срце, внатрево моето срце.

Автор; Гордана Каракашевска

Hidden Life

The silence piles up stones to build a home. Tired,
tired memory puts its hands up
on my shoulders: "I know you very well,"
it says in a voice that beats unevenly.
Uneven! Tick - tak, tok - tak, tick - tok - tak...
Your youth is tired, it was stabbed with an arrow
- I know you very well - it said in a voice in which
space becomes infinite
and infinity becomes poetry in my blood.
Maybe that's why you can't breathe,
maybe that's why he taught us to swim,
therefore you do not know how to live.
- Sometimes in your day - my memory tells me tiredly -
I meet the water in a tender
embrace together with love hungry,
fast, rushing to old age irreversibly.
Do they know that art can never be repaired?
And when you get bored of the circle,
you will drop the stone,
the stone you are made of will crack,
it will burst, it will become tight, will leave you,

will hide from its shadow, will hide from itself,
will hide from you. Silence raises walls to build a home
in its heart, inside in my heart.



Gordana Karakashevska was born in Pehchevo, Macedonia. She poems and short stories in Macedonian, Italian, Serbian and in English. Her poems have been translated into many languages and published in domestic and international online groups, magazines as well as anthologies. Her three books are now under the process of printing.



FICTION

Virus

by **Rashid Askari**

BANGLADESH

Aftab Sahib was admitted to Dhaka Samarita Hospital with a high unremitting fever. He was a referral from Rangpur Medical College Hospital. Doctors had been putting him on all possible fever-reducing drugs for last fifteen days, but to no avail. There was no sign of remission. The fever had rather reached a high pitch and sat tight. His tongue felt as if it was boiling in the mouth-oven. Aftab Sahib had never suffered such a terrible fever in life. It was much worse than the kalaazar he had suffered with during his childhood. He was not allowed boiled rice for long eighteen days. The fever, finally, left him but with an enlarged spleen. Even then, that stood no comparison with the one at present.

Aftab Sahib was a retired High School teacher. A redoubtable headmaster! A case-hardened man! He had enough experience to realize the magnitude of a problem. He knew it was not a common fever. It would be something severe. He would call it a death fever. It would sure be accompanying him to the grave. He felt completely crushed. But his children resolved never to quit so easily. They were all father-mad. It was a rarity as people go these days. They were competing against each other for attending to their ailing father. Not only now, but they were always attentive to him. As a matter of fact, every one tried to outdo others in father-care. If one bought him a panjabi, the other presented a mobile. If he stayed with his son for a month, the daughter would keep him for a double time. Aftab Sahib would enjoy this sibling contest with his whole being.

Aftab Sahib was really a successful man. A pardonably proud father of five worthy children--a judge, a magistrate, a doctor, and a university teacher! A daughter, however, could not cross the boundary of secondary education. Aftab Sahib would call her 'like mother like daughter' just for the fun of it. His wife would not mind. She was as artless as a child sometimes to the point of foolishness. But Aftab Sahib had no anguish about it. He suffered his family fools rather gladly, and loved his wife and children quite heartily. He justified everybody's position in the family equitably.

"You see, pure gold can't produce jewelry without alloy. My children are all my soul's ornaments made of solid gold and its alloy. I love both the gold and the alloy."

Aftab Sahib was very happy with his gold and alloy. But happiness seemed too brief. He had just started enjoying the sweets of success after a lifelong hardship. But it came to a halt at a moment's notice. It was sure a call from the other side. If not, why was he running a constant high temperature? The nurse was coming to take his temperature at every hour. He was under close observation. The symptoms did not seem good to him. He had a premonition that he would not be out and about at all.

At last, the biopsy of his liver tissue solved the fever-mystery. It was not a usual viral fever. It was the symptom of a fatal disease called 'carcinoma' in pathology. In plain language-'cancer'. The most awful thing about Aftab Sahib's cancer was that, it was at the last stage, and was beyond the reach of all treatment humanly possible. Doctors had prescribed only some palliative drugs for a month, and suggested his children to take the patient back home. The children could get the message of the prescription. They broke down, but did not let their eyes betray their secret pains before their ailing father. They wanted him to stay ignorant of his disease, and die unperturbed. His eldest son dropped a hint to the doctor not to tell him the truth.

"What am I suffering from?" Aftab Sahib wanted to know about his disease right from the horse's mouth.

"Nothing serious, uncle. You'll be alright." The doctor gave a reassuring pat on his shoulder.

"Will my temperature fall?" Aftab Sahib asked in a piteous voice.

"Sure, it'll." The doctor knew the palliatives would effect a cure.

"How long would I continue the drugs?" The doctor's reassurance bolstered his morale.

"Until you're OK," the doctor replied falteringly without looking at his eyes.

"Thank you, doctor, thanks a million! Now then, when shall I come to you again?"

Aftab Sahib was overly pleased with the doctor.

The doctor gave no answer to this question. He pressed the doorbell, and pretended to prepare for the next patient. Aftab Sahib felt a little ashamed of himself for bothering the busy doctor. He left his chamber with a big sense of relief.

"You see, isn't my temperature much down?" Aftab Sahib stretched his hand to his eldest son seated by him in the taxicab. His son tried to take his temperature with his hand. It was abnormally high. But he did not say anything. It tugged at his heartstrings. He gulped back his tears, and gave a nod of approval that brought the broken old man beside him lots of reassurance.

Aftab Sahib had been brought back home. Everybody knew he was dying in a month or so. But Aftab Sahib thought he was recovering. The palliative tablets had relieved his suffering. The nagging temperature was no more. Aftab Sahib's joy knew no bounds. He was talking almost non-stop to all coming to see him. Shamrita hospital and Doctor Banarjee had been his hobby horses. Once he would get on to them, he forgot to dismount. This happened mostly when his village-men would come to see him.

"You won't understand. This is called a doctor. He's diagnosed the disease in the twinkling of an eye, and prescribed a few drugs. Just two tablets a day. One in the morning, and the other at night! No sooner had they dropped into the stomach than the temperature fled away like magic. But they're very pricey. One for five hundred! Every time I'm gulping down a five hundred taka note with a glass

of water. Per day- one thousand; per month- thirty thousand; and per year- three hundred sixty thousand! That means, three lakh and sixty thousand! It's worth a king's ransom! Buying life just for money! Money can really get you tiger's milk. Ha! Ha! Ha!"

Aftab Sahib gave a broad cynical laugh. The listeners, most of whom were his tenant farmers, showed endless interest in his semi-marathon talk giving frequent nods and yeses. This filled him with redoubled enthusiasm, and he kept talking up until complete exhaustion.

In a very few days Aftab Sahib's words proved false. Tiger's milk could not always be had for money. The 500-taka pill pitifully failed to fight the fever. His temperature relapsed into long delirium. The eyes turned purple. His eldest daughter was pouring water on his forehead. His half-closed eyelids were quivering with the water sprinkles spouting from the small pitcher held at a slant over his head. He was moaning:

"Do you get me, Ma. Life is very short indeed! Miserably short! That's why, it's beautiful. But however beautiful it is, it's got a very ugly end. You're to give it up much before you live it up. I'm going to resign myself to my exit. I can't help it. I can't. I must accept this senseless waste of life."

The constant worry about death turned him into a gibbering wreck. The daughter wiped her eyes on the end of her scarf. How could a daughter have the heart to bear such words from her father? She knew her father had a tremendous passion for life. He did not want to leave the world so early. Sixty-eight was too early to die. The wizened old turtles of the Bayazid Bostami Shrine are still alive and kicking; whereas young humans are having very bad innings. This is called the whims of Nature. The lower creatures are living to a great age while the higher humans are lamentably short-lived. Aftab Sahib always made such serious humours with Nature.

This was for the first time that Aftab Sahib felt largely down about life. The illness had left him feeling very low and listless. He went through a lot of bad patch in his life, but never felt so vulnerable. He

always held a positive attitude towards life. He devised a wonderful philosophy. He used to tell it on occasions in his own sweet way:

"Look, your life is a pond full of water surrounded by fragile sandy banks. You have to keep a close watch on every nook and cranny to prevent the water from leaking out. The moment you're heedless of or pay less heed to one corner, it'll spring a leak. When you rush to mend it, another corner will have lesser attention, and develop a crack letting water seep through it. The leakage of water from the pond means troubles for you. Throughout the life, you're on the run from one corner to another to patch the holes. You can do one but miss the other. When you're totally incapable, the pond-banks will develop holes on holes all over, and the water would gush out. You can't get all at a time, but you can lose all."

Aftab Sahib's eldest son-in-law was a professor of Philosophy. He was amazed to see his father-in-law's creative thinking and line of reasoning.

"This is precisely original and nicely applies to human life on earth especially in this age of stiff competition. If presented in a theoretical framework, it must bring you fame."

He made a quick assessment.

Aftab Sahib smiled.

"I don't know what it is. But it is extracted from my own life. Your life is your best teacher."

"I also think so." The son-in-law agreed with him.

"No, no, you can't have the real feel. This is not a moment of truth for you. You're too young to attain it. Here lies the paradox. You can't realize life when you enjoy it. You realize it when you can't enjoy."

"Wonderful, wonderful! The son-in-law sounded very enthusiastic about his ideas.

"You're a big philosopher. I'll give a seminar on your thoughts," he proposed.

Aftab Sahib's breast swelled with pride. But it was immediately punctured. He could get the message of his son-in-law's eulogy. This was just a few words of comfort to a dying man. Aftab Sahib did not

get any consolation from it. He was not fishing for compliments. He did not even need to win the Nobel Prize. What he needed was very simple. Some borrowed time. He wanted to hold up the drip of water from his leaky pond a bit more or at least to slow it down. He knew it was not time for him to get all of life. But he did not want to lose all right at this moment. He wanted some time more. A bit more!

But he was not going to get any more. He was going to lose all. All the walls he had built around his pond throughout his life proved sandy and ruptured at once. The water was gushing out of it. Anytime his pond would be empty. A dry pond without a drop! Its other name was 'cancer'. Aftab Sahib had recently discovered his disease. His children did not want him to get in on a thing like this. His blurred vision had paved the way for them. He could not read his prescription, nor could he read the doctor's nameplate. But he was not one to be easily persuaded. When he saw no signs of improvement in his health even after taking the 500-taka tablets, he started casting doubt about it. He asked his five-year-old grandson Aritra to spell the words written on the top left-hand corner of the prescription. An emergent speller Aritra leapt at the chance to do his stuff. He spelled readily: "L- I -V- E- R M- E- T- A- S- T- A- S- I- S."

Liver Metastasis! Yes, this is the disease. Maybe a fatal disease of the liver! Aftab Sahib tried to fathom out its acuteness.

"No Dadu, it's not what you've caught. I know your disease. But I won't tell."

A mischief played on Aritra's eyes.

"What's that, Dadubhai, please tell me." Aftab Sahib hurried him up to speak out before anybody turned up.

"No Dadu, I'm forbidden to disclose it to you."

Aritra tried to be a bit weighty.

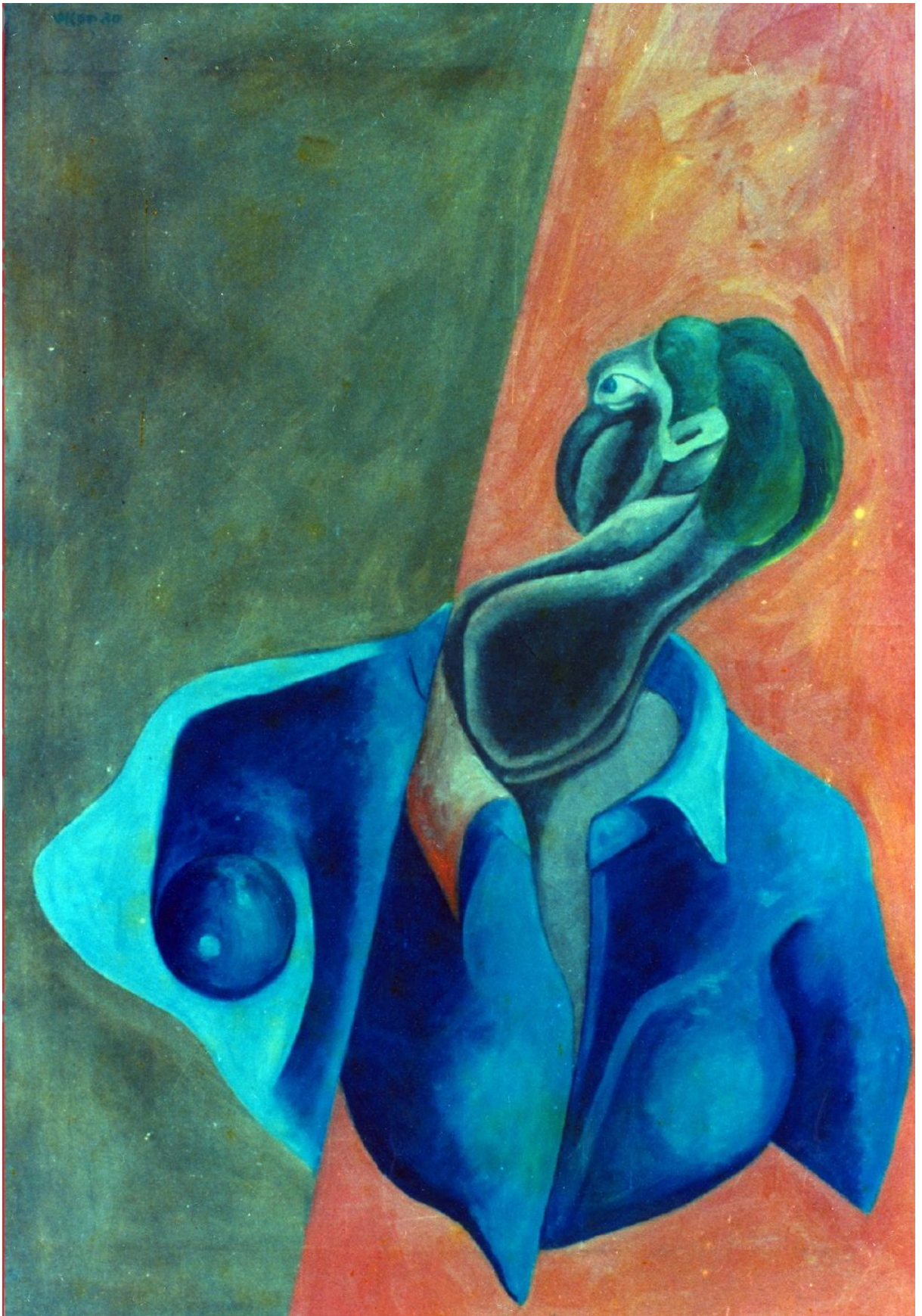
"Please Dadubhai, don't prolong the agony. Out with it! I promise you a box of chocolates." Aftab Sahib shot his bolt.

Aritra swallowed the bait. He looked to and fro, and jabbered out:

"You've caught cancer. I've heard tell of it."

Aftab Sahib turned a deathly shade of white when he heard the term 'cancer'. Everything became clear as day. Now he realized why things about his disease were so hush-hush. Why the doctor skirted round his last question, and why everybody was going so soft on him. He started feeling giddy. There was a big trouble looming on the horizon. Even so, he wanted to know the ins and outs of his disease. He planned to go to the community clinic all by himself to inquire about liver metastasis. Besides, he had to buy Aritra's chocolates.

Aftab Sahib could not accept the doctor's diagnosis. How could he catch liver cancer? Never in all his life did he touch a drop. How could a total abstainer contract liver cancer? Then, what was the point in remaining so careful? He could never think that the enemy would strike him from this side. He was only 68. His father was a centenarian. Had he known the know-how to prevent this disease, he could have left no stone unturned as he did on other things. In fact, his whole life was a carefully orchestrated thing. He had erected the monument inch by inch. There was every reason to believe that his life could have been nipped in the bud. But he had cautiously obstructed all probabilities of breakdown. He had squared the circle. A man from a very humble origin had grown one that counted. He was the first graduate in his subdivision. How he earned his degrees



from the primary school to the university was a moving story in his neighbourhood.

The reason for his disease had greatly frustrated Aftab Sahib. He had learnt it from the community doctor. On checking the test reports, the doctor told that his liver cancer was caused by a very rare virus infection. In medical language it is called 'Hepatitis C Virus' (HCV). It is a small 50 nm RNA virus far deadlier than all Hepatitis viruses. It eats into the liver bit by bit, and eventually kills the man. The most frightening thing is that, there is no vaccination against it. But how had it entered his body?

"By blood to blood contact that usually occurs through the hypodermic needles and barber's razors," the doctor explained.

But Aftab Sahib was used to using the disposable syringe and private razors.

"But, what about your early life?" The doctor hinted at his boyhood days.

Aftab Sahib's heart jumped in fear. Two faces floated through his mind. He was then in his village home in Askarpur. There were two frequent visitors to the village. One was Mukunda doctor and the other was the barber Krishnacharan. Mukunda doctor was the one and only medic in the village. Although a quack doctor, he had a good reputation. He used to treat all people of his village, and also make calls in the neighbouring ones. His only means of transport

was a ramshackle old bicycle with almost no or little brake-service. Whenever he needed to get off, he would jump from it onto the ground, and start running to the rhythm of its velocity until gaining enough balance to stop. A worn-out leather bag remained strapped to the carrier of his bicycle. There was a hypodermic syringe with the one and only needle in his bag. After every use he would wash them by sucking water in and forcing it out in a thin stream upwards and downwards. Then, he would use the very needle for another patient. Thus the same hypodermic would travel the whole neighborhood rendering a full-time service.

Similar was the case with Krishnacharan's razor which used to shave hundreds of heads and faces untiringly. After one use, Krishnacharan would sharpen it by rubbing against a small flat piece of slate, and give it a professional finish by wiping on his thin hairless thighs fully exposed by a dirty whitish dhoti scantily worn around his hips like a loin-cloth. He had a serious squint almost to the point of blindness in one eye which would usually fail to give his hand with razor the right direction. So he often would cut people shaving. Nobody's hair could be shorn off at his hand without cuts on their heads. Aftab Sahib had been a regular client of both the doctor and the barber for more than one third of his life. Was he then the worst victim of Mukunda's hypodermics and Krishnacharan's razor? Maybe! But he could not help it.

Since last night, Aftab Sahib's condition had been far worse than the doctor's prognosis. He was denied admission to the hospital. He was continuously bleeding. Probably the virus had eaten up the last cell of his liver. The napkin folded round his bottom had turned purple. All his sons and daughters were sitting around his bed. The youngest daughter was reading the Koran aloud. The doctor was vainly trying to find out his veins to inject drug into. His blood was fast running out. The youngest son was standing at his feet with a bag of fresh blood of his own. But the veins had died down. This is symptomatic of nearness of expiration. Everybody knew the final moment was drawing near. But Aftab Sahib seemed to be in a good fettle. He tried to force a smile on his ashy gray face.

"You don't worry. I'm not dying today. I'm feeling heaps better. Maybe the transfused blood hasn't been adjusted, or the excess blood is oozing out."

He seemed to be feeling the warmth of the anxious faces of his family members. There was pleasure in dying in their midst. He had to give way to his offspring. Life is like a relay race. Aftab Sahib had already run his part. Now the next members of his family would start from where he had finished. This was wonderful!

"Turn the TV on. I think it's time for the evening news. Aftab Sahib tried to sit up in his bed, but failed.

"These were the headlines. Now in details." A heavily made-up woman was reading the news:

"The violent activists of JMB have exploded hundreds of bombs across the country almost at the same time. At around 10.00 a.m. this morning, numerous bombs were dropped in 63 districts of the country at the courtyards and Government office premises. Buildings and houses rocked as the bombs exploded. More than ten people were killed and a lot injured in the blasts. JMB has claimed responsibility for the attacks, and threatened with greater violence in near future. The police have yet to arrest anybody in this connection."

Aftab Sahib forgot about his disease. He was filled with a deep sense of foreboding. Was his country going to turn into a 'Death Valley' like Pakistan and Afghanistan? A militant sanctuary! After putting the whole Muslim world to trouble the Islamist militants had now targeted on Bangladesh. Their sudden outbreak was symptomatic of threats against the Liberation ideals. They were the same old wine in new bottles. Aftab Sahib felt a deep sadness for the dearly bought Independence. He was not an active freedom fighter. But he wholeheartedly supported their cause. He wanted his grandchildren to be raised with the liberals, not with the closed camp of fanatics. The terminally ill man, Aftab Sahib was now worrying over his country's health. The secular health of Independent Bangladesh was

going to be infected by a nasty virus. The Militancy Virus! It was deadlier than Hepatitis C Virus. It would eat up all the sublime achievements of our Liberation War. Hepatitis C Virus kills a man, but Militancy Virus would kill a nation. Hepatitis C could be curbed by medication, but the Militancy Virus is uncontrollable. It is like the mythological monster every drop of whose spilled blood breeds its young. Aftab Sahib was afraid of the Militancy Virus. His beloved motherland was sicklier than him!!!



Dr. Rashid Askari: Bengali-English writer, fictionist, columnist, media personality and former Vice Chancellor of Islamic University Bangladesh. Email: rashidaskari65@gmail.com

FICTION

Ostara

By Carolina Corvillo

SPAIN

I'm running on my way to the bus stop. I'm late. I have filled my grocery bags too much - I tend to do it since the quarantine began, like a good copycat - and my arms are paying for the lack of exercise these weeks. I should have filled the bags less, but on the other hand, I didn't want to be intercepted with a single loaf of bread and a box of white-label tea bags, in case I get caught. You have to keep up appearances in the Apocalypse.

He's there. It's a relief he's waiting for me.

"Sorry I'm late," I whisper to the man, dropping the bags on the floor. I feel relieved and ridiculous. He looks me up and down, trying to make sure that my image matches my WhatsApp profile, but he frowns.

"Can you...?" He gestures for me to remove the mask.

"I shouldn't..."

“Come on, fuck, I promise not to spit on you.”

I do it just long enough for him to identify me.

“Did you bring the money?”

“Yes,” I put fifty euros in his hand.

“Here you go, miss. Good trip.”

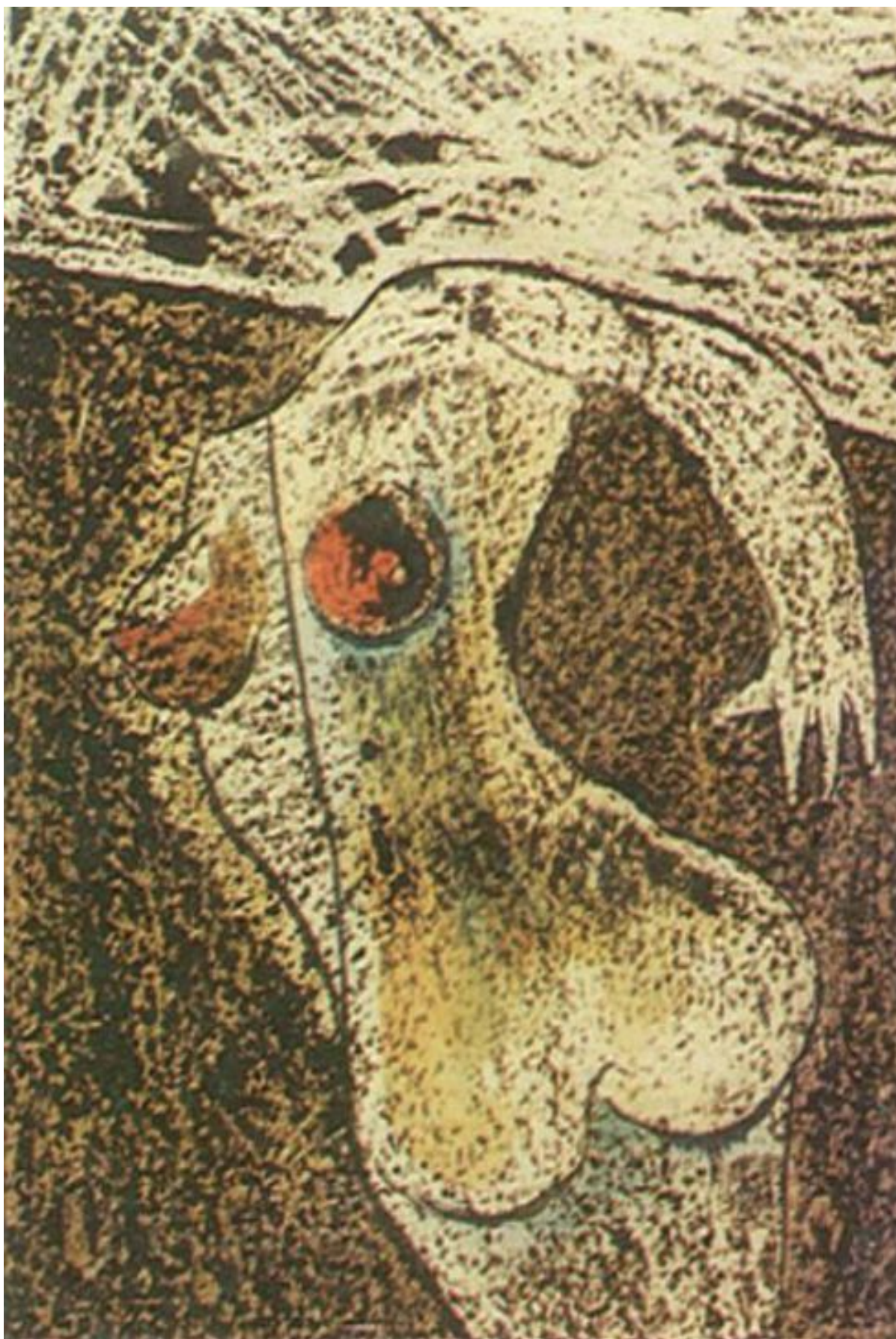
He makes a military gesture to say goodbye and turns around.

I go home, with the substance in my hands and an unusual feeling of lightness. As I close the door I realize that the feeling of lightness is because I have forgotten my bags at the bus stop. “Idiot,” I think. But it doesn’t matter. The important thing is inside the two-inch-high dropper that now lies on my bedside table.

When I open the small jar, spring enters my nostrils. There is beauty and tenderness in the beginning as if it were a polite visitor who arrives thirsty. His gaze is clean, somewhat melancholic, and brings with him a bouquet of wildflowers that look pretty and shy during the day, but that at night emanate the very essence of the forest: that forest in which the spirits of the Bacchantes have been dancing for centuries,

getting drunk and tearing apart the unwary who still think that Dionysus is a silly god. The forest is not alone; the forest is thousands of eyes always open at some time of the day or night. The forest is Ophelia dreaming that her corpse rots in the river. Constant insomnia and constant sleep. The forest is continuous suffering, sap, blood, and rebirth. It is death and cruelty, but also sex and wisdom. The forest is the place where lovers seek refuge, the cabin where children safeguard their childhood and where, being adolescents, they lose it. The forest is where the disturbed man, behind a tree, observes, without being able to avoid touching himself, the shy girl who only in the forest dares to sing.

The polite visitor, after quenching his thirst, tells a story. As his words flow, his body turns into a woman with greenish skin and honeysuckle hair. The only thing left from the previous vision is her hurtful yellow eyes. The roots sprout from the soles of her feet, which bleed sap. She assures that



~ ๐๐ ~

she will stay over tonight, just tonight. She has sown its whispers in the pores of my skin and when they begin to bloom they produce such a pleasant tingle that I want to touch myself, caress, explode. She remains seated, not moving, but at the same time everything, in its most extreme stillness, seems to have more movement than ever as if the same stones were dancing and singing.

The next day I watch her go and stop her at the door.

“What is your name?” I ask, anxious. “Why do you leave my house full of flowers?”

“I plant your house with beautiful corpses because Beauty...” she assures, fixing her yellow eyes on me again, “... deserves the most joyous funeral and the most funereal orgy. This is how its mystery should be honored and celebrated.”

“And your name?” I ask again. She laughs, almost orgasmically. I will understand later that it is the only way she can laugh.

“Ostara,” she answers, smiling and amused as if the answer were more than obvious.

“Please don't go,” I beg her. She laughs again. This time there is no answer. She turns and walks away, spreading her

unmistakable orgasmic giggle to every living thing she encounters.

I wake up within the four walls of my confined apartment. I am naked, with my skin warm. I take my temperature; there is no alarming data. On television, Sabina's song *Quién me ha robado el mes de abril* sounds.

I look out my window, the new frame of the world. Two pigeons are copulating on the street; rashes of red flowers are emerging between the cracks in the sidewalks. The fight for life and the dance of death vibrate within the thousand bumblebees that swarm through the city. One of my neighbors shouts his morning prayers: "We are the viruses!" waving a copy of the fake photo of the dolphins in Venice next to a portrait of Greta Thunberg.

No one has stolen anything from us... perhaps the noise, except for specific cases like that of my neighbor and the applause at eight in the evening. After breaking his throat with "More Simones and less Borbones!" my neighbor stops shouting and silence comes.

It's a delicious silence. A thunderous silence that allows me to hear louder than ever how spring breaks out violently in every corner of this city.

Spring watches us.

Ficción corta

OSTARA

por Carolina Corvillo

Voy corriendo de camino a la parada del autobús. Llego tarde. He llenado demasiado las bolsas del supermercado —tiendo a hacerlo desde que comenzó la cuarentena, como buen monito imitador— y mis brazos están pagando la falta de ejercicio durante estas semanas. Tendría que haberlas llenado menos, pero, por otro lado, tampoco quería que, en el caso de que me pillaran, lo hicieran con una sola barra de pan y una caja de bolsitas de té de marca blanca. Hay que guardar las apariencias en el Apocalipsis.

Está ahí. Es un alivio que esté esperándome.

—Siento llegar tarde—susurro al hombre, soltando las bolsas en el suelo. Me siento aliviada y ridícula. Él me mira de arriba abajo, se cerciora de que mi imagen coincide con la de mi perfil de Whatsapp, pero frunce el ceño

—¿Puedes...? —hace un gesto como para que me aparte la mascarilla.

—No debería...

—Venga, joder, prometo no escupirte.

Lo hago el tiempo justo para que me identifique.

—¿Has traído el dinero?

—Sí.—Le tiendo cincuenta euros.

—Aquí tiene, señorita. Buen viaje.

Hace un gesto militar para despedirse y se da la vuelta.

Vuelvo a mi casa, con la sustancia entre mis manos y una sensación inusual de ligereza. Al cerrar la puerta me doy cuenta de que la sensación de ligereza se debe a que me he olvidado las bolsas en la parada de autobús. «Idiota», pienso. Pero no pasa nada. Lo importante se encuentra dentro del gotero de cinco centímetros de altura que ahora se encuentra sobre mi mesilla de noche.

Cuando abro el pequeño frasco, la primavera se adentra en mis fosas nasales. Hay belleza y ternura en un principio, como si fuera un educado visitante que llega sediento. Su mirada es limpia, algo

melancólica, y trae consigo un ramillete de flores silvestres que por el día lucen bonitas y tímidas, pero que por la noche emanan la esencia misma del bosque. Ese bosque en el que los espíritus de las bacantes llevan siglos danzando, embriagándose y despedazando a los incautos que aún piensan que Dionisos es un dios bobo. El bosque no está solo; el bosque son miles de ojos siempre abiertos en algún momento del día o la noche. El bosque es Ofelia soñando que su cadáver se pudre en el río. Insomnio constante y sueño constante. El bosque es sufrimiento, savia, sangre y renacer continuos. Es muerte y crueldad, pero también sexo y sabiduría. El bosque es el lugar donde los amantes buscan refugio, la cabaña donde los niños ponen a salvo su infancia y donde, al ser adolescentes, la pierden. El bosque es donde el perturbado, detrás de un árbol, observa, sin poder evitar tocarse, a la chica tímida que solo en el bosque se atreve a cantar.

El educado visitante, después de calmar su sed, cuenta una historia. A medida que sus palabras fluyen, su cuerpo se transforma hasta convertirse en una mujer con la piel verdosa y cabellos de madreSelva. Lo único que queda de la visión anterior son sus hirientes ojos amarillos. Las raíces brotan de las plantas de sus pies, que sangran savia. Asegura que va a quedarse a dormir esta noche. Solo esta noche. Ha sembrado sus susurros en los poros de mi piel y cuando empiezan a florecer producen un cosquilleo tan placentero

que quiero tocarme, acariciarme, estallar. Ella permanece sentada, sin moverse, pero al mismo tiempo todo, en su quietud más extrema, parece tener más movimiento que nunca, como si las mismas piedras danzaran y cantaran.

Al día siguiente la veo marcharse y la detengo en la puerta.

—¿Cómo te llamas?—, le pregunto, ansiosa —¿Por qué dejas mi casa llena de flores?

—Siembro tu casa de bellos cadáveres porque la Belleza...— asegura ella, volviendo a clavar sus ojos amarillos en mí—... merece el funeral más alegre y la orgía más fúnebre. Así es como su misterio debe ser honrado y celebrado.

—¿Y tu nombre?—vuelvo a preguntar. Ella se ríe, casi de forma orgásmica. Más tarde entenderé que es la única forma en la que puede reírse.

—Ostara —contesta risueña y divertida, como si la respuesta fuera más que evidente.

—No te vayas, por favor —le suplico. Ella vuelve a reírse. Esta vez no hay respuesta. Se da la vuelta y se marcha, contagiando su inconfundible risa orgásmica a todos los seres vivientes con los que se topa.

Me despierto entre las cuatro paredes de mi apartamento confinado. Estoy desnuda, con la piel caliente. Me tomo la

temperatura; no hay ningún dato alarmante. En la televisión suena *Quién me ha robado el mes de abril*, de Sabina.

Me asomo a mi ventana, el nuevo marco del mundo. Dos palomas copulan sobre la acera, sarpullidos de flores rojas surgen entre los resquicios de las aceras. La lucha por la vida y la danza de la muerte vibran dentro de los mil abejorros que pululan por la ciudad. Uno de mis vecinos grita sus oraciones matinales: «¡Los virus somos nosotros!», agitando una copia de la foto falsa de los delfines en Venecia junto a un retrato de Greta Thunberg.

Nadie nos ha robado nada. Tal vez el ruido, salvo casos puntuales como el de mi vecino y los aplausos a las ocho de la tarde. Después de desgañitarse con «¡Más Simones y menos Borbones!» mi vecino se calla y viene el silencio.

Un silencio delicioso. Un silencio atronador que me permite escuchar más fuerte que nunca cómo la primavera brota con violencia en cada esquina de esta ciudad.

La primavera nos observa.



Carolina Corvillo born in Madrid in 1988. She is the author of the book of stories *Hambre de Pájaro*, a novel *Yodesobedezeo o cuento de Ámsterdam*, and co-author of the plays *Collectors* and *Reservoir Cats*. She got the Ediciones Oblicuas 2019 narrative award for the novel *La Secta del Cuerpo*. She is the coordinator of the anthology *Delirios de Cuarentena* and co-author of the anthology *Latidos del Mar*. Screenwriter for the short films *Inside*, and the comedy *Dame un Verso*. She is also the co-creator, singer, lyricist and vocalist of the music bands Blacksleeves and Sybiliam.

POETRY

IONUȚ CALOTĂ
ROMANIA

într-un cerc pătrat

mă trezesc speriat noaptea
și deschid pe pipăite frigiderul
să văd dacă mai trăiește
mi se pare că e tot mai rece
că orbesc când îmi stingi lumina
sunt salvat abia dimineța
când mă bărbieresc
și văd că în loc de barbă
îmi crește iarba
cineva mă sună de câteva zile insistent
ca să-mi dea explicații
să-mi vândă umbre
ies în stradă să-l caut
nu-l găsesc așa că împietresc
între statuile semafoarelor reci
care chicotesc în toate culorile
știu că într-o zi o să-ți scriu o poezie
fără cuvinte

știrea asta e atât de șocantă
acel cineva iese din televizor
și îmi mănâncă toată cina

English translation by Gabriela Tindall

In A Square Circle

I wake up scared at night
and hesitatingly open the fridge
to see if it is still alive.
It seems to me that it is getting colder,
that I am getting blind when you are turning off my light.
I am saved only in the morning
when I am shaving
and I can see instead of my beard,
I grow grass.
someone has been calling me insistently,
for a few days
to give me explanations,
to sell me shadows.
I go out in the street to look for that someone
I can't find him
so I am petrified between the statues of the cold traffic lights
that gossip in all colours.
I know that one day I will write you a poem
without any words.
this news is shocking
that someone is coming out of the TV
and eating my dinner.



IONUȚ CALOTĂ is the co-founder in 2014 of the *Emergency Literary Cenacle*. From 2019 he coordinated the literary magazine *The Poetry Monitor*. Published book of poetry: *How to survive in love* (debut prize at the National Festival Carianopol, at the National Contest Poetry – Mirror and at the National Literature Contest Eminescu), *Proclamation for the globalization of poetry* (1st place at The International Literary Contest Nature 2018), *How I save the world* (it includes other literary genres), *Nudes and signs* (awarded at the International Festival Titel Constantinescu).



Iwan Dartha

INDONESIA

TEROMPET CANDU

Biarkan mereka bangga
pada mimpi-mimpi maya
dan izinkan mangkir
dari ruang-ruang pikir
menghindari kamar pengap
berbau lembab

Tebar pesona dalam diksi
imaji mendayu hibur diri
jiwa terhipnotis maya
Kau terjebak paradigma
kerajaanmu terkubur pasir
memaksa majas bak hadir

Di alam maya
bahkan mereka bohong
menjadi raja gadungan
bagikan penghargaan
kerajaan khayalmu

Larik bengis beraksara liar
benamkan sendi rindumu
dalam kolam-kolam susu
yang kau bangun dari tulang
di atas mercusuar suara
Kau raja di negeri khayal..!!

Opium Trumpet

Let them be proud
of virtual dreams
and allow absenteeism
of thought spaces
avoid stuffy room
that smells damp

Scatter charm in diction
seductive image amuse you
virtually hypnotized the soul
You're stuck in a paradigm
your kingdom is buried in the sand
forcing figuratively to be present

In the cyber space
they carry on falsehood
being a fake prince
distributes illegal awards
the kingdom of your illusions

Savage lines of wild characters
immerse your joints of longing
in pools of white milk
the ones are built from bones
above the lighthouse of sound
You're the king of fantasy land!



Iwan Dartha lives in Jakarta. He has been writing poetry since childhood. His poetries are included in several local and global anthologies. He has edited several poetry anthologies and books.



Jasmina Sfiligoj

CROATIA

OTUĐENOST

Kako je bolno
Gledati tu ravnodušnost
U tvojim očima
Taj ledeni pogled
Na rubu prezira

Tijelom si ovdje
Iako želiš biti daleko
Smišljaš način
Na koji bi nestao
A da imaš dobar izgovor
I da te ne peče savjest
Ako je uopće imaš
Jer ljubavi u sebi nemaš

Još uvijek si tu
Iako davno si otišao
Ostala tek je prazna ljuštura
Bez sadržaja i svrhe
Kao tragovi u pijesku
Koje prvi val će isprati

Estrangement

How painful it is to watch
That indifference in your eyes
That icy look
At the edge of disdain

Your body is here
Although you want to be far away
You're figuring out a way
How to disappear
Having a right excuse
Without guilty conscience
If you have conscience at all
Because you have no love inside

You're still present
Although you left a long time ago
All that remains is an empty shell
Without content and purpose
Like footprints in the sand
Which the first wave will wash out



Jasmina Sfiligoj was born on August 9, 1963 in Zagreb, Croatia. Her poems have been published in twenty-five international poetry anthologies and several literary magazines. She has received numerous certificates and accolades for her work.

Janelyn Dupingay Vergara

PHILLIPPINES –SINGAPORE

Kirot ng Pangingibang Bansa

Kasabay ng pagtilaok ng tandang
Ay ang pagpatak ng isang butil na luha
Hanggang sa tuluyang mamalisbis
At aking malasahan ang alat
Ng likidong patunay sa bigat
Ng nararamdaman ng aking kalooban.

Oras nanaman ng paglisan
Maikling sandali na aking ninamnam
Kulang na kulang upang takpan
Ang lahat ng pangungulila
At pagtitiis na nilabanan
Sa lumipas na dalawampu't apat na buwan.

Tila ba isang bangungot
Ang bawat segundo na lumipas
Habang sa kamay ay tangan
Maletang ang lama'y tuldok na pag asa
Na balang araw ay hindi na muling
Magpapaalipin sa lupaing banyaga.

Sa mahiwagang kahon
Aking isinilid ang lahat ng pangarap.
Babaunin ito sa aking paglipad
Upang sa tuwina'y magsilbing gabay.
Gaano man kabisig ang mga pasanin
Mananatiling matatag para sa dalang mithiin.

The Agony of Migration

As the rooster crows
A single tear drops
Until it slowly pours down
And I tasted the saltiness
That shows the weight
I'm feeling within.

The time has come for me to leave
Though I indulge for a short while
But it will never be enough to cover
The longingness
I endured and fought
For the past twenty-four months

It seems like a nightmare,
Every second that passes by
While I'm holding in my hand
A luggage filled with a single hope
That someday I will no longer need
To be a servant in a foreign land.

In that invisible box
Where I keep all my dreams,
I'll bring it with me as I fly
To be my constant guide
No matter how heavy the burden is
I'll remain strong for the yearning I carried.



Janelyn Dupingay Vergara is a poet from Diadi, Philippines and working in Singapore. She found writing a helpful tool in sending her voice of motivation to her fellow migrants through poem and essays. She is actively involved with Singapore Writers Festival and migrants writers. Her poems have been included in an anthology of migrant and local writers of Singapore.

Julie Ann Tabigne

PHILLIPPINES -SINGAPORE

Pangarap!

Bagong araw, bagong pag asa!
Bawat sinag ng araw
na dumadantay sa aking mukha.
Nagbibigay sa akin ng lakas
Para harapin ang bukas.

Hindi man tayo pinalad
Sa bawat araw na pakikibaka
Kumapit lang sa Lumikha
Alam kong may plano siya.
Kaya huwag mong kitilin.

Ang mga binuo mong pangarap.
Pasasaan man ito'y iyong matutupad.
Basta iyong pagsumikapan
At pagtrabahuan.

Ang buhay ay parang isang gulong.
Minsan nasa ibabaw, minsan nasa ilalim.
Pero kahit nasaan ka mang parte nito.
Laging mapagkumbaba at huwag magmata ng kapwa.
Para tuloy tuloy ang biyaya.

Dreams

A new day, a new hope!
Every ray of sunlight,
that touches my face

It gives me energy
To face my struggles

Though sometimes,
We are not lucky, to have it all
Trust the Creator,
And I know, he has a better
Plan for us!

So, do not be disappointed
In all your dreams, you created
Someday, somehow it will come true
As long as you work hard for it

Do not give up
To achieve all your goals in life
But when it's in your hand already
Always be humble
And do not belittle anyone



Julie Ann Tabigne is a young poet from Philippines. Since 2014 she has been living in Singapore and working there as a team leader of a non-profit organization. She is a member of Migrant Writers of Singapore.



Ljubica Katic

MONTENEGRO-CROATIA

BIO SI

Bio si moj Svemir
bio si moj nemir
moja jutarnja rosa,
moj sjaj u oku
moja zvijezda u noći
bio si proljeće u meni
najljepši cvijet u mojoj bašti,
bio si sve naličje u mojoj mašti,
bio si drhtaj moga tijela
u trenutku kad sam te željela,
bio si izvor moga života,
san nedosanjani,
rijeka koja teče
bio si moje jutro
moje veče,
bio si zvijezda sjajna
koja je znala u noći sjati,
sada si bolna rana
koja je ostala u mojoj duši,
koja boli, zbog koje se pati...

You Were

You were my Universe
You were my uneasiness

my morning dew
my sparkle in the eye
my evening star.
You were the spring in me,
the most beautiful flower in my garden.
You were all the beauty in my imagination,
you were a tremble of my body.
The moment I wanted you,
you were the source of my life,
a dream unfulfilled,
a flowing river.
You were my morning,
my evening, too.
You were a star
shining in the night.
Now you are a painful wound
on my soul,
that hurts,
that makes me suffer.

Translated by Prof. Aira Tudor



Ljubica Katic was born in Montenegro in 1957. She has been writing since early childhood. She has won many awards and

recognitions. Her poems have been translated into many foreign languages and represented in over 70 joint collections, 7 of which are anthologies. In May 2020, her first independent collection was published, a bilingual Croatian-English edition entitled *Between Love and Pain*. She is a member of many literary societies. She lives and works in Split.



Maid Čorbić

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

ZA LJUBAV NEĆU MOLITI

Ja idolopoklonik sedmog kruga Pakla
Neću dozvoliti da od mene ti odeš ikada više
Jer život si moj, nisi anđeoski prah nastala
Erupcijom vulkana čudesnog

Uzavrela mašto, nemoj da me napustiš sada
Kada mi je u životu tako najljepše
Znaš, ponekada od snova mogu da živim
U promenadi raznih godišnjih doba

Vrijeme nije moj saveznik nikada bio
Jer uvijek sam čekao da se snovi obistine
A uvijek sam živio i razmišljao drugačije
Od velike populacije Zemljom što hode

Ljubav je časna, poštena tanka nit
Kojoj je potrebno samo malo nježnosti
A ja dajem je uvijek ka onima
Koji nikada je nisu ni zaslužili

Ne proslavljam se sjajno oko ljubavnog gnijezda
Jer trčim uvijek ka svima da udovoljim
I jedna laž košta me uvijek svega
Ali ja nikada lagao i varao nisam

Tragao bih za onime što mi suđeno nije
Jer ja sam heroj svoje bajke neslavne
Za ljubav nikada neću da molim nikoga

Jer uvijek će da pronađe svoj put istine
Onda kada se najmanje nadam!

I Will Not Pray for Love

I am an idolater of the seventh circle of Hell
I will never let you leave me again
Because you are my life, you are not an angelic dust
The eruption of a miraculous volcano

Boiled imagination, don't leave me now
When my life is so beautiful
You know, sometimes I can live a dream
In the promenade of various seasons

Time has never been my ally
Because I always waited for dreams to come true
And I always lived and thought differently
From a large population walking the Earth

Love is an honorable, honest thin thread
Which only needs a little tenderness
And I always give it to those
Who never even deserved it

I'm not celebrating great around a love nest
Because I always run to everyone to please
And one lie always costs me everything
But I never lied and I didn't cheat

I would search for what I was not destined to do
Because I am the hero of my infamous fairy tale
I will never ask anyone for love
Because he will always find his way to the truth
Then when I least expect it!



Maid Čorbić from Tuzla. In his spare time, he writes poetry that has been praised and rewarded on several occasions. He also selflessly helps others around him, and is the moderator of the WLFPH (World Literature Forum for Peace and Humanity) for unity and world peace in Bhutan. He is also the editor of the portal of the First Virtual Art Universe, headed by Dijana Uherek Stevanović.



Mai Van Phan

VIETNAM

Nắng mới

Con bồ câu
Bay dẫn đường
Đám mây lớn

Chim sẻ

Mùa xuân
Tắm
Cả nơi không có nước

Giẫm lên vật nặng

Giữ chặt
Cho tới khi
Nó không còn cử động

Mưa đầu mùa

Nước ngập vườn
Bông hoa đào trôi
Như chạy

Hoa mận trắng

Trời tối
Ghé sát hoa
Độc nốt trang sách

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

New Sun

A pigeon flies
Leading the way
For a large cloud

Sparrows

In spring
Bathe
Even in places without water

Stepping on a Patch of Sunlight

I hold tight
Until
The yellow no longer moves

Rain

Water fills up the garden
Peach flowers drift
As if running away

White Plum Flowers

As it grows dark
I lean close to them
To finish the page I'm reading

Translated by Nhat-Lang Le



Mai Van Phan was born in North Vietnam. He won a number of prestigious awards such as the Vietnam Writers Association Award, the Swedish Cikada Literature Award and a number of other international awards. He has published 16 poetry volumes and one criticism. Mai Van Phan's poetry has been translated into 33 languages and published in many magazines.

Maria do Sameiro Barroso

PORTUGAL

Sacerdotisas da luz

A terra segrega cosmogonia radiosa,
amplificando as vozes nocturnas
em ribeiros azuis e flores delicadas;
arbustos escuros desenredando
canções antigas de gárgulas
e cascatas.

Então, a lua imprime a sua tatuagem secreta
no mundo cintilante dos sonhos,
a poesia jorrando no seu leite
de silêncio e névoa.

E as sacerdotisas da luz
reúnem-se, procurando a sua raiz lunar,
os selos brancos,
quando o amanhecer profere os seus
segredos mais puros,
e as pombas, como chamas brancas
limpando as sombras,
vêm beber nas águas mansas.

Priestesses of Light

The earth secretes its mysteries
in a radiant cosmogony,
amplifying nocturnal voices
in blue stream sand delicate flowers;
dark bushes disenthraling

ancient songs of gargoyles
and waterfalls.
Then, the moon prints its secret tattoo
in the bright world of the dreams,
poetry gushing in its milk

of silence and mist.
And the priestesses of the light
assemble, craving their lunar root,
their white seals,
when the dawn utters its purest
secrets,
and the doves, like white flames
clearing the shadows,
come and drink in gentle waters.



Maria do Sameiro Barroso (Portugal) is a multilingual Poet of the World, also a medical doctor, translator, essayist and researcher in Portuguese and German Literature, Translation Studies and History of Medicine. She has authored over 40 books of poetry; her poems are translated into over twenty languages. She is a recipient of prestigious national and international prizes and literary distinctions.



FICTION

Smart Hotel

Kiều Bích Hậu

VIETNAM

- Why don't you find a hotel to stay through this Tet holiday?

The question arising her mind awakened Giang. For a month before Tet holiday, her office work was chaotic, but once arriving home, Giang was depressed when thinking about the coming Tet holiday. Indeed she did not know how she would be during Tet.

A shock from her childhood makes her afraid to stay home alone. She has never overcome that obsession even though she is over 40 years old now. And since her husband left with another woman, she has been more afraid.

Giang must go somewhere to stay through the Lunar New Year. Her parents passed away when she was a child, and she does not have siblings. She did not want to stay at anybody's home nor her friends' home.

Finally, she thought that a hotel would be a fairly good solution.

She searched for special hotel services in the internet to somewhat relieve her loneliness in the Lunar New Year. A strange advertising image attracted her attention: Smart Hotel - Turn everything impossible into possible!

Giang immediately visited the hotel's website, and she was completely convinced. VND100 million for 7 days of Tet at Smart Hotel. How high the rate was! But Giang thought that why not she

deserve something special in this life. Life has sent her unforgettable pranks. Moreover, she was too curious about what Smart Hotel promises.

The driver in the black uniform quickly opened the car, holding her hand to help her get off. The warm sea breeze of the South blew her hair. She raised her hand to remove the wool scarf on her neck, just as a low voice raised:

- May I help you to keep the coat?

The tender hands professionally helped her get out of her three-layer coat. Giang turned back and suddenly became soft hearted in front of a medium-sized man walking in, probably at her age, with dark brown skin and a mysterious smile.

- How warm! - Giang exclaimed – Who expects that after more than 3 hours, I could get out of the biting cold of the North.

- I heard that the North is really cold during Tet holiday - The man welcomed Giang with his words – Your smart choice to enjoy Tet in the South! Lemme introduce myself. I'm Viet, your private guide during your special Tet holiday.

- Is your hotel there? - Giang pointed out the hotel complex floating on the sea, knitting together into a paper fan shape.

- Yes, there and anywhere. - The man smiled mysteriously again.

He put his strong hand to help Giang get on the canoe. The white canoe stood out on the blue sea, splashing waves, leading Giang to the hotel. She curiously looked at the floating houses on the sea. What a spectacular scene, as in a dream.

- How can you guys build a floating hotel like this? - Giang asked Viet.

- Building a house on the sea with any depth is our latest technology.

- Viet replied. - This is one of the technologies responding to climate change and potential risks from natural disasters as well as the way to satisfy the most crazy human dreams. You have chosen a floating room, but we have many sunken rooms. Do you want to visit a room “floating” under the ocean?

Following Viet, Giang visited some rooms under the sea. There were rooms surrounded by glass wall, and she can watch the sea living creatures in their own world. The feeling of sleeping in the middle of the sea made her feel vibrant. The most comfortable and modern apartment can be located in the middle of the immense ocean. While enjoying a cup of coffee, she can talk to any fish that swim and stop at the glass wall. Touching the glass, she can hear the sound of the caudal fins of the fish twitch, the screen will appear the fish's line of thinking... What a life experience.

- We have a road under the ocean, connecting buildings in the whole hotel complex. - Viet said while preparing dinner for her right in the apartment she rented - If you want to go the whole road called Water Lane, you have to spend a week.

- I didn't expect a man like you can cook so great. - Giang complimented after tasting a small spoon of fish soup.

Good men are men who make a successful career, and also have to know kitchen stuff, cook well and enjoy the dishes with their women in happiness. The conception of housework is women's duty is so old! - Viet laughed loudly.

- For years, I didn't even dare to let my husband put a hand in a dirty bowl, I bent down to pick up each of his dirty socks and and carefully washed them just to see him finally leave me...

Giang looked down to the soup plate, hiding her eyes. She did not want Viet to clearly see her failure.

- I'm sorry if I accidentally recalled a bad feeling for you. - Viet stood up, walked to the window. He pushed his hand slightly, a doorway opened and the sound of sea waves harmonizing with the sea music melted into the room.

Giang looked up as she dreamily watched the mysterious footsteps of wind, waves and sound. Strangely enough, her emotional channel was rapidly transferred, from the resentment of failure to the happiness in cherishing and loving care in the romantic space. Every bond of prejudice and ties was removed. She has no haunting past, nor threatening future. Only the present moment. She can escape from the perception of the time divided by year and the

stereotype New Year. She is simply a woman with the desire and dreams of women.

On the warm and soft bed like a cage covered with feathers, Giang closed her eyes, relieved and waited for a deep sleep...

Suddenly a long sound appeared and her smart phone vibrated to alert. She got startled, reaching for the phone.

The notification of Smart Hotel application flashed on the screen: Error!

Truyện ngắn

(khách sạn ảo)

Tác giả Kiều Bích Hậu

- Tại sao mình không tìm một khách sạn để sống qua dịp Tết này?

Câu hỏi vang lên trong đầu khiến Giang bừng tỉnh. Cả tháng giáp Tết, công việc cơ quan bộn bề, nhưng mỗi khi về tới nhà, là Giang lại chán nản khi nghĩ đến những ngày Tết sắp tới. Quả thực chị không biết mình sẽ sống ra sao.

Một cú sốc từ thuở nhỏ khiến chị luôn sợ hãi khi phải ở nhà một mình. Chị chưa bao giờ vượt qua được nỗi ám ảnh đó, dù đã hơn 40 tuổi. Và kể từ khi chồng chị bỏ đi theo một phụ nữ khác, chị càng sợ hãi hơn.

Giang phải đi đâu đó để ở qua dịp Tết. Bố mẹ chị đã mất khi chị còn nhỏ, chị không có anh chị em ruột, chị không muốn đến nhà ai cả. Nhà bạn bè cũng không.

Cuối cùng chị nghĩ ra khách sạn ở là một giải pháp không tệ. Chị vào mạng tìm kiếm những dịch vụ khách sạn đặc biệt để phần nào xoa dịu sự cô đơn trong những ngày Tết. Một hình ảnh quảng cáo lạ lùng thu hút sự chú ý của chị: ***Smart Hotel – Biến mọi thứ không thể thành có thể!***

Giang lập tức truy cập vào trang web của khách sạn. Chị bị thuyết phục hoàn toàn. 100 triệu đồng cho 7 ngày Tết tại Smart Hotel. Cái giá quá cao! Nhưng Giang nghĩ, lẽ nào chị lại không xứng đáng được hưởng một điều đặc biệt trong cuộc đời này? Cuộc đời từng chơi khăm chị những cú nhót đời... Hơn nữa, chị cũng quá tò mò về những điều Smart Hotel hứa hẹn.

Người lái xe trong bộ đồng phục màu đen nhanh nhẹn mở cửa xe, đỡ tay cho Giang bước xuống. Làn gió biển nồng ấm phương Nam òa tới thổi tung tóc Giang. Chị giơ tay gỡ chiếc khăn len trên cổ, vừa lúc một giọng nói trầm trầm cất lên:

- Tôi giúp chị cắt áo nhé?

Đôi bàn tay ân cần giúp chị thoát ra khỏi cái áo khoác dày ba lớp một cách thật chuyên nghiệp. Giang quay lại và chột mềm lòng trước một người đàn ông tầm thước vừa bước tới, chắc vào quãng tuổi chị, có làn da nâu đậm và nụ cười kín đáo.

- Ấm áp quá! – Giang thốt lên – Ai ngờ chỉ sau hơn 3 tiếng đồng hồ, tôi đã thoát ra khỏi cái lạnh thấu xương của miền Bắc.

- Nghe nói miền Bắc có đợt rét đậm đúng Tết - Người đàn ông đón lời chị - Chị vào Nam nghỉ Tết là lựa chọn thông minh. Xin tự giới thiệu, tôi là Việt, hướng dẫn viên riêng của chị trong kỳ nghỉ Tết đặc biệt.

- Khách sạn của các anh ở kia phải không? – Giang khoát tay chỉ ra quần thể khách sạn nổi trên mặt biển, đan nhau thành hình chiếc quạt giấy.

- Vâng, ở kia và ở bất cứ đâu. – Người đàn ông lại nở nụ cười bí ẩn.

Anh đưa bàn tay rắn chắc đỡ Giang lên ca nô. Chiếc ca nô trắng toát nổi bật trên nền nước biển xanh, lao trên những

ngọn sóng đưa Giang tới hướng khách sạn. Chị tò mò nhìn những ngôi nhà nổi trên mặt biển. Thật là một quang cảnh kỳ vĩ, như trong những giấc mơ.

- Làm sao các anh xây được khách sạn nổi trên mặt biển như thế này? – Giang hỏi Việt.

- Xây nhà trên biển với bất cứ độ sâu nào là công nghệ mới nhất của chúng tôi. – Việt đáp. - Đây là một trong những công nghệ ứng phó với sự biến đổi khí hậu và rủi ro tiềm ẩn từ thảm họa thiên nhiên, cũng là cách đáp ứng những ước mơ điên rồ nhất của con người. Chị đã chọn căn phòng nổi, nhưng chúng tôi còn có nhiều phòng chìm. Chị có muốn tham quan một căn phòng “lơ lửng” dưới đại dương không?

Theo bước chân Việt, Giang đi thăm một số phòng dưới mặt nước biển. Có những căn phòng xung quanh là kính, chị có thể ngắm bao loài sinh vật biển sống động trong thế giới của chúng. Cảm giác được ngủ giữa lòng biển khiến chị chấn động. Một căn hộ tiện nghi, hiện đại nhất, lại có thể nằm giữa đại dương bao la. Trong lúc thưởng thức ly cà phê, chị có thể trò chuyện với bất cứ chú cá nào bơi tới và dừng lại bên bức tường kính. Chạm tay vào kính, chị sẽ nghe được

tiếng quẫy đuôi, màn hình sẽ hiện lên dòng suy nghĩ của cá...
Thực sự là một trải nghiệm để đời.

- Chúng tôi có một con đường dưới đại dương, nối giữa các tòa nhà trong cả khu quần thể khách sạn. – Việt nói trong lúc chuẩn bị bữa ăn tối cho chị ngay tại căn hộ chị thuê – Nếu muốn đi hết con đường có tên Water Lane đó, chị cũng phải mất cả tuần đấy.

- Anh là đàn ông, mà sao nấu ăn tuyệt vời đến vậy? – Giang hỏi sau khi nếm thử một thìa nhỏ xúp cá.

- Đàn ông giỏi là đàn ông biết tạo một sự nghiệp thành công, còn phải biết vào bếp, nấu ăn ngon, và cùng người phụ nữ của mình thưởng thức món đó trong hạnh phúc. Quan điểm việc nhà là của riêng phụ nữ đã xưa quá rồi! – Việt cười lớn.

- Bao năm nay, tôi thậm chí chẳng dám để chồng động tay vào một cái bát dờ, tôi cúi nhặt từng chiếc tất bẩn của anh ấy đem đi vò giặt cẩn thận, vậy mà cuối cùng anh ấy vẫn bỏ tôi ra đi...

Giang cúi mặt trên đĩa xúp, giấu đi đôi mắt của mình, không muốn Việt nhìn thấy quá rõ sự thất bại của chị.

- Xin lỗi nếu tôi vô tình gợi lại một cảm xúc không hay cho chị. – Viết đứng lên, bước tới bên cửa sổ. Anh gạt nhẹ tay, một ô cửa mở ra và tiếng sóng hòa cùng tiếng nhạc biển du dương len nhẹ vào phòng.

Giang ngẩng lên, ánh mắt mơ màng như dõi theo những bước chân bí ẩn của gió, sóng và âm thanh. Thật lạ lùng, kênh cảm xúc của chị được chuyển nhanh chóng, từ sự uất nghẹn trong thất bại, sang cảm giác lâng lâng trong sự nâng niu, chiều chuộng trong một không gian lãng mạn. Mọi dây trói của định kiến, ràng buộc được cởi tung. Chị không có quá khứ nào ám ảnh, cũng chẳng có tương lai nào đe dọa, chỉ có khoảng khắc hiện tại, thoát cả nhận thức về sự phân chia thời gian theo năm, thoát khỏi cả những mặc định của ngày Tết. Chị đơn giản là người đàn bà, với những ước ao của đàn bà.

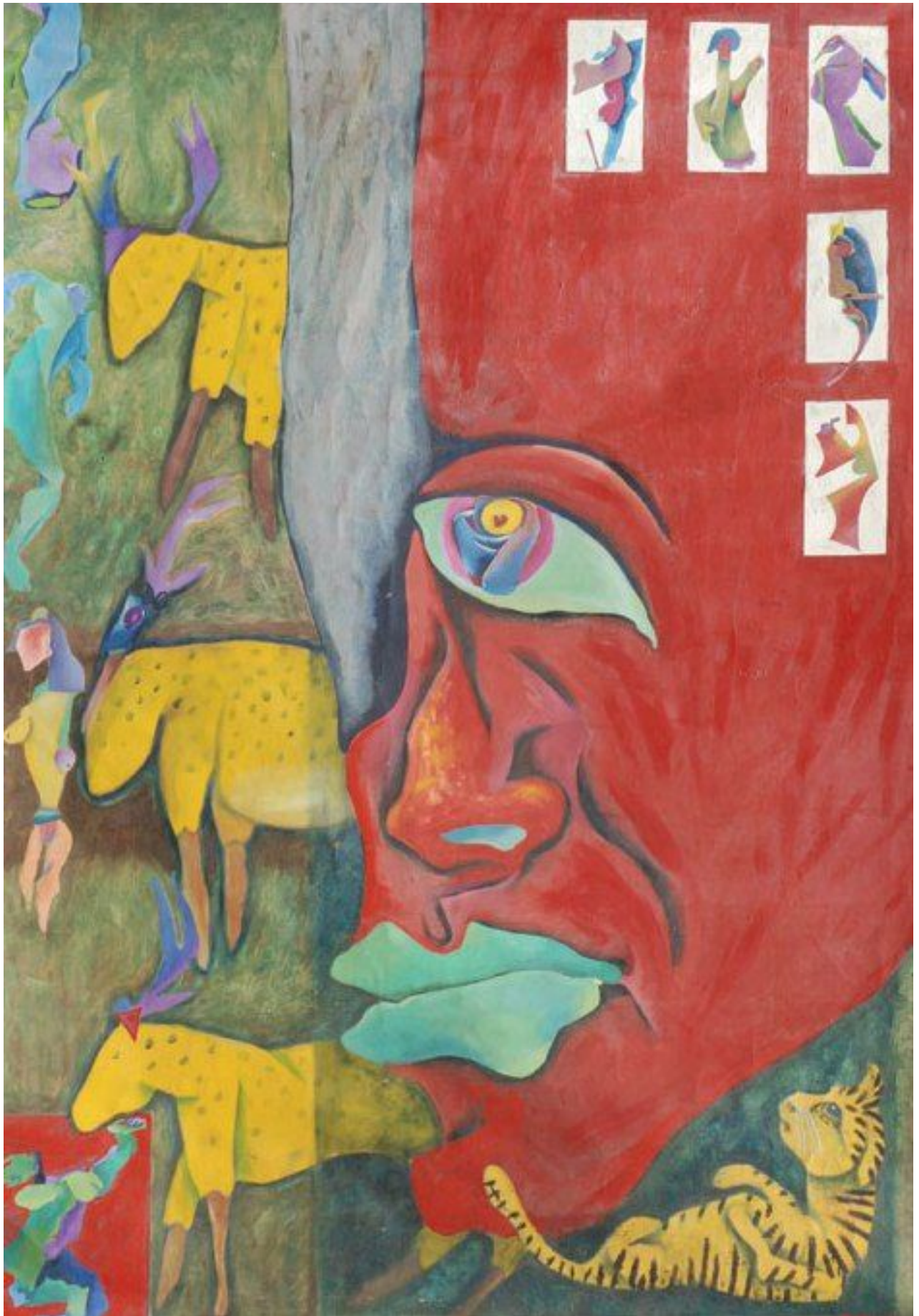
Trên chiếc giường ấm áp, êm như một cái lông phủ dày lông vũ, Giang nhắm mắt, an lòng và chờ đợi một giấc ngủ say...

Bỗng một tiếng rẹt thật dài và smart phone của chị rung lên cảnh báo. Chị giật mình, với tay lấy điện thoại.

Ứng dụng Smart Hotel nhấp nháy trên màn hình. Báo lỗi!



Kieu Bich Hau born in 1972 in Vietnam. She is the Deputy Head of Foreign Affairs of Vietnam Writers' Association. She got a national literary award as a young writer in 1992 and received several awards for short story writing contests. She has already published 14 books of short stories, poems and essays.



FICTION

The Country Girl

By Miao-Yi Tu

TAIWAN

It was summer time. Children played games crazily; playing games was such a wonderful thing to do.

Children in our neighborhood were playing the game “*angu ji*”, hide and seek. There were about eight in the group “Gang 58”. Those children had their particular way to divide territory based on fence boundaries in the community. It certainly followed the way pirates went in the old days—they claimed territory and asserted leadership. She lived in Alley 58 too, but she did not belong to Gang 58. She was new, they had moved from a remote country place to this city. Her parents gave up farming and became urban workers; they wore a humble expression not seen on city people’s faces. Maybe she had that expression too. When she stared at others, her eyes gave her away—she craved friendship, and that made people despise her after meeting her for ten minutes. Other children in this neighborhood always thought she was strange.

They played wildly today. The vigor and spirit of Gang 58 showed completely. Every boy and girl was soaking wet with sweat. Occasionally, mums would peek out from a porch and scold their children to be quiet. Yet, it only temporarily lowered the gang’s noise. Soon the gang’s shouting burst and spread again, just like

cotton of a cotton quilt bouncing and bursting under a master's hand (Note 1). Gosh! They were like little frogs released to a pond in the long summertime; nothing could stop them exploring the big fun world.

From the very start, leaning on a wall at a corner, she had been staring admiringly at Gang 58. Whenever they pushed closer to her, some hope grew inside of her. "Maybe they will let me join the game?" This hope gave her great encouragement. Her heart beat fast; she blossomed. But they dispersed quickly before she could take any action. It seemed Gang 58 could play forever.

Gradually some noticed her and turned to look at her. They still had the smiles from playing with their pals. But they did not look at her for long. They were immersed in the game.

There was a breeze along Alley 58. Some carambola flowers fell on the ground and into the ditch. Few petals touched her flat nose, and then glided to the corner of the wall.

She stood under the shadow of the wall and started to feel irritated—she was worried that her eyes betrayed her thought, even though she pretended she was waiting for her elder brother to come home after school. It was those children that she set her eyes on most of the time, rather than the entrance of the lane. Definitely her thoughts could not escape the eyes of those clever city children.

But she could not move her body at all. She was possessed by hope once more; she was at the mercy of others to solve her dilemma.

Looking further away towards the lane entrance, she could see her brother walking home, carrying his book bag. He wore his hat at a slanted angle. Being four years older, her brother had started Grade Five after recently transferring to a local school. Her transfer process took longer, thus she had to stay home, idle and bored.

"Hey, you, come over!" a girl with braids shouted at her.

The game stopped suddenly. The air of a deadly quiet afternoon returned to Lane 58. All boys and girls stared at her. She smiled hard, "My God! They finally want to play with me." Waves of excitement filled her heart. This was the first test a country child had

to pass in order to be accepted. This was a crucial moment. She continued to smile.

She moved to the middle of the gang, ready to be in the group.

The silence remained for some time. Then the girl with braided hair burst out:

“Don’t play with her!” Her voice came out like fire cracker.

“You wild girl from the country!” another girl with a bowl cut hair pouted her mouth and remarked.

Instinctively, she took a step back; her smile froze.

“Her hair stinks. She got hair lice in her hair,” the girl with braided hair commented loudly.

All children stared at her with big eyes.

“Go away!” All the girls shouted with a malicious look.

“Go away!” All the boys joined in to humiliate her more.

“Go away!” “Go away!” “Go away!”

All the boys and girls surrounded her and shouted, waving their arms, similar to the way some aboriginal people did when trying to expel evil.

All the while, her brother stood with his book bag just outside the small circle surrounding her. Powerlessly, she asked for help from her brother, the last resort in her childish eyes. Her eyes lingered on her brother for a long time.

“Go away! Go away! Wild country girl!”

Why did the city children have to call country children “wild”? She could not understand! In her mind, it was the city children who were wild and uncivilized when they played.

“Go away!” They roared, louder and louder.

“You go home!” her brother spoke timidly, then walked away, like a dog sneaking off after it had done something wrong.

How she wished she could run away. She felt as if thousands of hair lice were crawling in her hair. She managed to jump over the fence wall, not knowing how she had such strength. She fled nimbly, like an elf, away from Lane 58.

It was a summer afternoon. Only gusts of dry wind blew.

Translated by Shuhwa Shirley Wu

[1] In the old days when resources were limited, people sent their old cotton quilts which had become flat and not comfortable enough to be cared by quilt craftsmen. With a bow-like tool, a quilt master then made the cotton soft, and consequently the quilt regained its function of keeping people warm.

Miao-Yi Tu

TAIWAN

野孩子 涂妙沂(台灣)

遊戲是夏日最狂野而美妙的事。

鄰居的孩子在巷子裡玩「**马**咕雞」，他們一夥七、八個，隸屬「五十八」幫，他們這附近的孩子也奇特，劃分勢力範圍是以圍牆為基準，很符合土匪據寨稱霸的綠林法則吶！她也住在五十八弄，但不屬於這一幫，她是新搬來的，從僻遠的鄉下搬來，父母是放棄農耕移居城市的都市勞工，臉上永遠掛著城市人缺乏的卑微，她也彷彿有那種神情，總是露出飢渴友誼的眼睛看人，讓人在認識十分鐘後很快看輕她，鄰居的孩子始終不習慣她。

今天，他們可真是玩瘋了，充分展現五十八弄幫的活潑與實力，男孩女孩都跑出了一身汗，偶爾有媽媽們從陽台上他們小聲點，也只是暫時壓低他們的聲量，很快地，他們的聲音又像彈棉被般**蹦**出來，天！他們可真像剛從漫長的雨季裡釋放到池塘的小青蛙，再沒有認何權威可以阻止歡樂的探尋。

她一直在旁邊看著，帶著欣羨的笑容倚靠牆角，有時候他們

因為推擠而靠近她，她的內心就飄過一絲期待，那給她極大的鼓勵，「也許今天她們就會讓我加入了？」她心臟跳動加速，臉都漲紅了。但是還未等她有什麼進一步的行動，他們早已一哄而散，遊戲似乎永不止息。

他們慢慢注意到她的存在，偶而轉頭看看她，臉上還掛著遊戲進行中的笑容，但是並沒有在她身上停格太久，就又繼續沉浸在狂野的遊戲中。

有一些風吹過五十八弄，楊桃花飄落地面，飄落水溝，飄落她塌扁的鼻樑，旋又像坐溜滑梯般彈落牆角。

牆角的陰影中，她開始有些煩躁，雖然一直裝作等待哥哥放學的樣子，還駛2從眼睛被看穿。是事實上，她的眼睛停留在他們身上比巡巷子口的時間多，這一點小地方是瞞不過機靈的都市小孩。

但是她無法移開身體了，她被另一種盼望黏在那兒，似乎得靠別人去解開她的難題了。

遠遠的巷子口，她的哥哥背著書包放學回來，他把帽子斜斜戴著，他年長她四歲，剛剛轉學成功進入五年級就讀，她的轉學手續慢了些，待在家裡閒盪，似乎快被悶壞了。

「喂，妳——過來一下！」一個綁辮子的女人孩向她叫道。遊戲嘎然而止，五十八弄恢復午后的死寂，所有的男孩女孩都看著她，她努力微笑著，「啊，他們終於要找我玩了。」心中湧起一陣狂潮，這是一個重要的時刻，鄉下孩子接受城市的第一個考驗，她持續微笑著——

她站到他們中間了，準備接受友誼。

五十八弄保持沉默有好一會功夫，然後綁辮子的女孩爆出鞭炮般的聲音：「我們不要跟她玩！」

「鄉下來的野孩子！」另一個剪馬桶蓋髮型的女孩翹著嘴。

她不由自主的倒退一步，微笑僵在臉上。

「我跟你們說，她頭髮很臭，一定有長頭蝨。」綁辮子女孩大聲宣佈。

所有的孩子都睜大眼睛看她。

「走開！」女孩們喊著，表情恐怖。

「走開！」男孩則加入更惡毒的噓聲。

「走開！走開！走開！」

男孩女孩圍著她，發出喔喔吼聲還配上揮動手臂的姿勢，猶如某些原始民族驅趕惡靈般。

那時，她的哥哥背著書包，站在圍困她的小圈圈後面，她看見哥哥，無助地向他求援，在童稚的世界裡，那是她最後的希望。

她的眼睛和哥哥僵持了很久。

「走開！走開！野孩子。」她不懂為何都市小孩要把鄉下孩子冠上一個「野」字，他們玩起遊戲來才是野蠻沒有教養哩！

「走開！」他們的排斥聲浪愈推愈高。

「妳回家去啦！」哥哥懾嚅著，然後便像一隻做錯事的狗夾著尾巴走了。

她想逃走，感覺整個頭上像有幾千隻頭蝨爬著，也不知道怎麼能生出那麼多的力氣，她一躍而上圍牆，像精靈一樣逃走，逃出五十八弄。

夏日午后，只有乾燥的風吹著。

--收錄於短篇小說集《烏鬼記》(2019,Taiwan)



Miao-Yi Tu is a poet, writer, editor, and translator from Tainan, Taiwan. She is the CEO of Taiwan International Literature Institute. She has been awarded with many literary awards for her poems and also for stories. Her works are: *The Land is Always a Garden* (prose); *Yearn*; Mandarin/English bilingual poetry collection book *The Epiphany of Feet* (poetry), *The Story of Black Ghost* (short story). Her poems have been translated into English, Spanish, Bengali, Polish, Arabic, Odia, Albanian and Macedonian. One book of short stories has been also translated into English and Spanish.

POETRY

Marian Dziwisz

POLAND

NASZA POWINNOŚĆ

*Związek bytu z niebytem wysiłkiem rozumu
Znaleźli wieszczowie, w swym sercu szukając
RYGWEDY*

My – którzy pochodnię słowa
niesiemy w sztafecie pokoleń
tworząc wiersze i pieśni
winniśmy pamiętać
o tych co z ciała, krwi własnej
i z ducha – złożyli ofiarę
bogom i władcom – na ołtarzu ziemi
rozświeclając mrok myśli
głębią swych uczuć
– wysiłkiem rozumu
Zabici, oślepieni, z kraju wyrzuceni
zawsze gotowi stanąć pośrodku gawiedzi
aby lud krzepić słowem i budzić nadzieję
że kiedyś przyjdzie wolność
zwycięży miłość i troska
będą szanowane prawa przyrody
i prawa człowieka
To tobie Wiśwakarmanie – Pradžapati,
Tobie Gilgameszu, Homerze, Dawidzie

Tobie Switynie okrutnie zabity
i wam wieszczowie, którzy na wygnaniu
nieśliście wiarę, troskę, pocieszenie
należna jest pamięć poetek, poetów
którzy ojczystym słowem wiążą pokolenia.
Nasza powinność niezmienną zostaje.

Our Duty

*The link between being and non-being through the effort of reason
The bards found it in their hearts.*

RIGVEDA

We—who carry the torch of the word
in the relay of generations
creating poems and songs
we should remember
those who offered their flesh, their blood
and spirit—as a sacrifice
to gods and rulers—on the altar of the earth
lighting up the darkness of thoughts
with the depth of their feelings
—with the effort of reason
Killed, blinded, expelled from the country
always ready to stand in the middle of the crowd
to comfort the people with words and awaken hope
that one day freedom will come
love and care will prevail
the laws of nature will be respected
and human rights
It is to you Vishvakarman—Prajapati,
To you Gilgamesh, Homer, David.
To you Swithin, cruelly slain
and to you bards, who in exile

brought faith, care, consolation –
the memory is owed of female poetesses, poets
who bound the generations with their native words.
Our duty remains unchanged.



Marian Dziwisz is a Polish philosopher, teacher, poet, editor and writer. He holds a PhD degree in the field of philosophy (1980). He has published three books of poetry: *Ergo sum* (2007), *Madonna* (2011) and *Imperatyw kategoryczny* (2014) and three volumes of stories *Semper in altum – Zawsze wzwyż*. He is a regular contributor of the scientific and socio-cultural journals.



سید علی
۱۳۹۲

Mihaela Anca Farcaș

ROMANIA

Nucleus accumbens

(procesând aversiunea)

îmi spun că poezia mea
și-a pierdut forța
că împlinesc 27 de ani
& începe criza

nu știu în ce măsură înțelegem durerea
dacă arsura unei femei mutilate în leagănul Africii
este egala unei posibile endometrioze
sau teama unor copii prinși într-un atentat
se poate compara cu alienarea resimțită
când treci pragul
& nu te vede/ aude nimeni
(nu ești îndeajuns)

cred că frica e omnipotentă
depășindu-și scopul evolutiv
între valve se întinde un spațiu
în care sunt încleștate
toate traumele ce ne definesc
pentru că un mic detonator
va genera incendii sălbatice
& ne va modela
ca pe niște păpuși de lut
ascunse într-un colț
care cred că forța gravitațională

va rămâne mereu constant

Nucleus accumbens

(processing the aversion)

I tell myself that my poetry
has lost its strength
that I am 27 years old
& the crisis begins

I don't know to what extent we understand the pain
if a mutilated woman's burn from Africa's cradle
is equal to a possible endometriosis
or the fear of children caught in a terrorist attack
can be compared to the alienation felt
when you cross the threshold
& no one sees/ hears you
 (you are not enough)

I think fear is omnipotent
exceeding its evolutionary purpose
there is a space between the valves
in which all the traumas that define us
are trapped
because a small detonator will generate wildfires
and it will model us like clay dolls
hidden in a corner
who believe that the gravitational force
always remains constant



Mihaela Anca Farcaș is a Romanian poet. She got her Bachelor's degree in General Psychology and Master's degree in Clinical Psychology and Psychological Counseling, Training in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. She has published poetry in prestigious magazines like *O mie de semne*, *Orizont*, *New York Magazine*, *Levure litteraire*, *Literadura*, *Discobolul*, *Poemame*, *Teerandaz*. She has won several prizes. She is a member of Pavel Dan, a literary circle based in Timișoara.

Myriam Ghezail

TUNISIA

FLEURS D'AUBE

Comme au printemps de l'autre année,
Au mois des fleurs, après le froid,
par un beau matin,
Nous irons à nouveau sous les bois.

Nous y verrons les mêmes choses,
Le même réveil glorieux,
et les mêmes métamorphoses
De tout ce qui vit au soleil.

Nous y verrons les grands squelettes
Des arbres gris, ressusciter,
Et les yeux fermés des violettes
Dans la lumière pulsée.

Sous le feuillage clair, d'un vert tendre,
Les tourterelles des buissons,
Ce jour-là, nous ferons entendre
Leurs chants lents et doux.

Ensemble, nous repartirons
Cueillir dans les prés au matin,
De ces bouquets aux couleurs de l'aube

Qui fleurissent la rose et le thym.
Nous boirons le parfum subtil,
Des arômes blonds et capiteux
Qui, dans l'air chaud et pur, distillent
La chaude flore des vallées.

Rayonnante, secouant le givre
Et le froid de l'année dernière,
Nos chers espoirs peuvent revivre
Au bon vieux soleil du printemps.

En attendant que tout renaisse,
Que tout aime et vive à nouveau un jour,
Laisse nos rêves, ô jeunesse,
Envole-toi vers tes bois d'amour !

Chère idylle, tes primevères
éclosent en toutes saisons ;
Elles narguent les grands froids
Et transpercent la neige en abondance.

Éternel renouvellement, ta sève
S'élève même jusqu'aux cœurs refroidis,
Et tes fleurs courtes et capiteuses
Nous exaltent comme au bon vieux temps.

Oh oui, nous cueillerons encore,
Aussi frais que l'autre matin,
Ces beaux bouquets aux couleurs de l'aube
Qui fleurissent la rose et le thym.

Dawn Flowers

As in the spring of the other year,
In the month of the flowers, after the cold,
On some beautiful morning,
We will go under woods again.

We will see the same things there,
The same glorious awakening,
And the same metamorphoses
Of everything that lives in the sun.

We will see there the great skeletons
Grey trees, resurrect,
And the closed eyes of violets
In the pulsating light.

Under the clear, soft green foliage,
The turtledoves of the bushes,
On that day, we will make us hear
Their slow and soft songs.

Together we will go again
Pick in the meadows in the morning,
Of these dawn color bouquets
Which flower the rose and the thyme.

We will drink the subtle scent,
The heady blond aromas
That, in the warm and pure air, distills

The warm flora of the valleys.

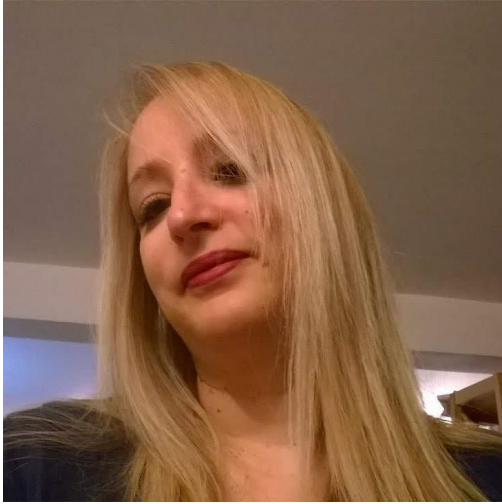
Radiant, shaking the frost
And last year's cold weather,
Our dear hopes can live again
To the good old spring sunshine.

Waiting for everything to be reborn,
May everything love and live again one day,
Leave our dreams, O youth,
Fly away to your love woods!

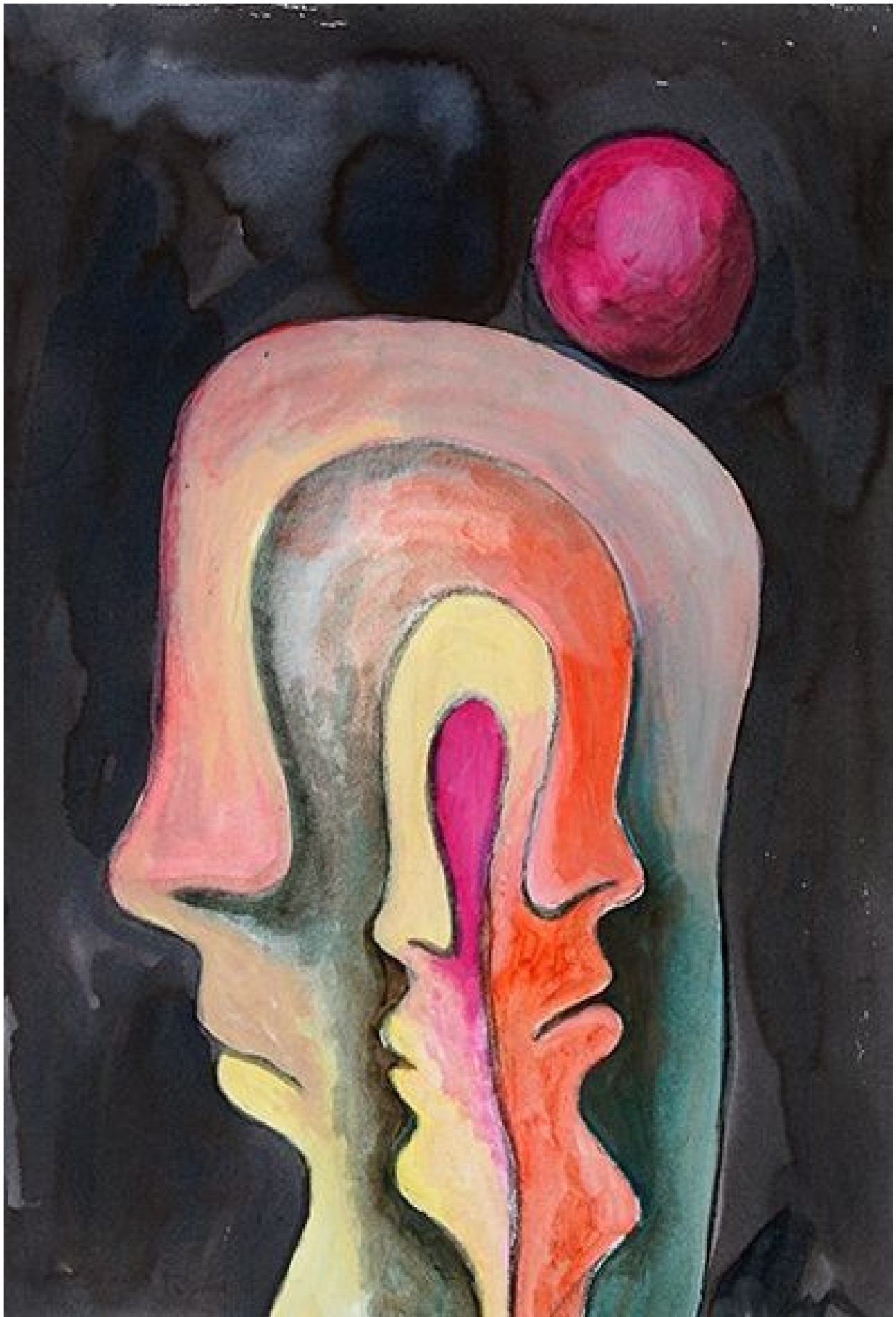
Dear idyll, your primroses
Hatch in all seasons ;
They taunt the severe cold
And pierce the snow in abundance.

Eternal renewal, your sap
Even rise to cooled hearts,
And your heady short flowers
We are as exhilarating as in the old days.

Oh yes, we will pick again,
As fresh as the other morning,
These beautiful dawn color bouquets
Which flower the rose and the rhythm.



Myriam Ghezail is poet from Tunisia. By profession she is a doctor. She writes poems in French and English. Her poems have been published on various websites, anthologies and coffee table books. Painting is also her passion after writing.



Nadica Ilić

SERBIA

ЖЕНА У ПОЖУДИ

Женин поглед жудњу ствара,
очи јој сјајно блистају у ноћи,
медним уснама жељу буди,
са осмехом пролећне моћи.

Нека полудим уз недра твоја,
загрљен твојим грудима,
у откуцајима твога срца,
усне краси медовина.

Твојим бићем сам усхићен,
винеш ме у небеске висине,
са крилима анђеоског сокола,
од среће што те имам.

A Woman in Lust

A woman's gaze creates desire,
her eyes glow brightly in the night,
awaken desire with honey lips,
with a smile of spring power.

Let me go mad at your bosom,

hugged by your chest,
in your heartbeat,
lips adorned with mead.

I'm thrilled with your being,
you take me to the heights of heaven,
with the wings of an angel falcon,
lucky to have you.



Nadica Ilić is a Serbian poet. She is a member of the Culture of Dreams of Poetry Zagreb, Association of Writers Zenit Podgorica CG, DKB Belgrade and associate of literary clubs of the former republics of SFRY and abroad. She has been awarded for her literary works. She has published several books of poetry.

Lesya Bakun

UKRAINE

Хвороба
вчепилася в мене пазурами
забралася глибоко десь в легені
і заснула.

А я
боюся зітхнути голосно
щоб не розбудитиї.
Я не хочу лікуватись,
бо набридло хворіти.

TRANSLATION

The disease
grabbed me by the claws,
cradled deep inside
somewhere in the lungs
and fell asleep.
And I
am afraid
to sigh loudly.
So as not to wake it up.
I don't want to be treated,
because I'm tired of being sick.



Lesya (Oleksandra) Bakun is a poet, translator, and NGO activist who lives in Ukraine. She has been writing since childhood in Ukrainian, Russian, and English. Her poems have been published in several anthologies: *Levada* (Ukraine), *OpenDoor Magazine*, *Rockport Poetry Festival*, *Nightmare with a Twist!* (USA). Since June 2020, she has been working as a writing, publishing, and digital marketing consultant.

Isilda Nunes

PORTUGAL

As rosas murcharam

As rosas murcharam na secura do teu olhar!
Já não as sonho, amor! Já não as choro!
Nossos corpos que outrora foram um só,
Hoje naufragam na solidão das palavras por dizer.
Envolvo-me num sentir, entremeado de saudade e letargia,
Fixando o velho relógio parado, num tempo que já foi nosso...
Num tempo em que nos amávamos como mar e céu.
E petrifico-me nesse horizonte,
onde meu corpo feito barco fez ancoradouro.
A realidade enlouquece-me!
Enlouquece-me o eco dos teus passos nas paredes nuas,
esse adeus implícito no nervosismo das tuas mãos
e na flacidez do teu querer!
Perturba-me a lenta chegada do inverno!
As rosas que me deste já murcharam!
Os beijos molhados de outrora, hoje pecam de aridez!
Esgotaram-se os afagos!
E os sulcos do meu rosto transpiram gastas memórias,
retalhos soltos de uma história que nossa, já não é.
A boca secou na recusa da despedida,
nessa morte adiada, suspensa na solidão das palavras por dizer!
Já não sonho amor! Já não choro!
As rosas murcharam na secura do teu olhar!

The roses withered

The roses withered in the dryness of your gaze!
I no longer dream of them, my dear! I no longer cry for them!
Our bodies, which were once just one,
Today are wrecked in the solitude of the words unsaid.
I get involved in a feeling of longing and lethargy,
Fixing the old clock still, at a time that was once ours...
At a time when we loved each other like the sea and the sky.
And I petrify myself on that horizon,
Where my body made anchorage as a boat.
Reality deranges me!
Maddened by the echo of your tread on bare walls,
That implicit farewell in the disquiet of your hands
And in the sagging of your will!
The slow arrival of winter disturbs me!
The roses you gave me have already withered!
The wet kisses of the older days, are now sinfully dried!
All embrace has expired!
And the grooves on my face exude tired memories,
Loose pieces of a plot that is no longer ours.
The mouth dried up in the refusal of the farewell,
In this delayed death, suspended in the solitude of unsaid words!
I no longer dream of them, dear! I no longer cry!
The roses withered in the dryness of your gaze!



Isilda Nunes is a Portuguese award-winning writer. Her poems have been translated into many languages. She is a co-author of about forty national and international anthologies and solo books of poetry and prose, such as novels, short stories and manuals have been published.

P.D. Jonakii

INDIA

ও মোর নাইয়ারে নাও খানি লইয়া
পাড় করো এই নদী ।
শত সহস্র তারাদের মাঝে আমার বাপের বাড়ি ।
অন্ধকার ঘরে চাঁদ উকি দিয়ে যায় ।
নদীর বুকে বর্ণা পায় আশ্রয়,
যেখানে গাছের শরীর ছুঁয়ে দেয় আকাশ চুম্বন ।
সূর্য নেমে আসে রঙিন আলো নিয়ে ।
শোধ করবো উনিশ হাজার রজনীর অশ্রুভেজা কথা ।
নাও খানি লইয়া পাড় করো এ নদী ।

Plea of a Distressed Daughter

Ferry me across the river,
O Boatman!
Thousand and twenty million stars away
lies the hut of my father,
dimly lit by the moon
peeping through the door!

Ferry me across the river,
kind of a Boatman!
Where the river narrows
to hold in its loving bosom
the sprightly dance of the silvery spring.
Where the trees stand tall
to kiss the sky
and the sun bends low
to dress it bright.

The dull, jaded eyes of my old man
remain fixed on the door
awaiting to catch a glimpse
of my floating shadow.

Ferry me across the river,
dear, dear Boatman!
Twice the penny shall pay you, friend,
with nineteen hundred nights
of pillow soaked
yearning to be by the ailing dad!



P.D. Jonakii was born and brought up in the lush green gardens of Assam and trained as social anthropologist. In 2018, she published her first collection of poetry *Rhythm –A Collection of Verses*. She has

been awarded certificate of excellence under Best Debut Poetry Book category by Asian Literary Society in 2021. Her poetry has been published in different international magazines.



Richard Spisak

USA

Non-Disposable World

Picture IT - a world without THERMONUCLEAR OVERKILL

Bomb lost its thrill, It Will It Will

Picture It - a world after all the BOMBS are GONE

TOO FAR MON

Bomb lost its thrill, It Will It Will

PICTURE IT a world not holding its breath

at the edge of death

the toxic waste the chemical taste of food in MONEY ONLY
GOOD.

Bomb lost its thrill, It Will... It Will

PICTURE IT!

no mad generals with pointing digit poised

EARS PINNED filled with NOISE of SHOUTS OF DOUBTS

Bomb lost its thrill, It Will It Will

PICTURE IT! a world after the end of Biological Weapons

which fools will send threaten.

Bomb lost its thrill, It Will It Will

PICTURE IT!- no fanatic dramatic climactic climate war

no inversions or floods or earthquakes conned crunch

too much heat then or dry no clouds in the sky no rain with lunch.

Bomb lost its thrill, It Will It Will

PICTURE IT no rayguns in space

no thistley whistley missiles, to bless the stratosphere torn

or HOT HEADS WIND DOWN, BURN after space war
rafter thought it'd meant quite a lot.
Bomb lost its thrill, It Will It Will

PICTURE IT the bombs gone
the missiles dismissed
the sub de-commissioned no reactors out fission
PICTURE IT the control board turned off
did I hear a scoff?
Bomb lost its thrill, It Will It Will



Richard Spisak is an American poet and writes in English. Social reality and injustice are his main concern. He has written for radio, television and webcasts for over thirty years. He has published two short stories and his Collected Poems was released in February, 2021.

Stanislav Klín

THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Otevřeným oknem je bilbord jasnej,
Je jinej, strhli ho na maso,
na drát, na cívku,
a u jeho úpatí roste jitrocel,
rozkládá se několik filtrů Marlboro,
ztratil svý jména kampeny.

Víš bylo to moc rychlý,
moc v mžiku,
a budova dílerství Opelu tomu taky nepřidá,
anirozechvívající se koleje tramvaje,
ani pípající šílenec,
ani smrad týtlustý ženský přede mnou.

Víš,
vzpomněl jsem si na tebe,
umělas být taky koketka,
a pak taky otevřená,
mýmu návrhu ukázat se:
projít se jen tak po místnosti ve svém kočičím oblečku s ocáskem...

Já vím, nejseš bilbord, tramvaj, ani ta ženská,
Ale, i tak je docela romantický,
že na tebe myslím,
že si trochu na ten penis, přes vnitřní šef kapsy sáhnu,
a možná ti napíšu při blbý: Ahoj, jak se máš?

ENGLISH TRANSLATION

The open window is a clear billboard,
it's different, they pulled it into the flesh,
on wire, on spool,
and on its base grows plantain,
there are several Marlboro filters around,
lost *campaign* names.

You know it was too fast,
fast in the moment
and the Opel dealership building won't add to that more,
shaking tram lines,
not even a beeping madman,
not even the smell of the fat lady in front of me.

You know,
I remember you,
You can also be a flirt girl,
and then you are open,
after my asking you to show yourself:
just walk around the room in cat clothes with a tail...

I know you're not a billboard, a tram or a fat lady,
but it's still quite romantic,
that I'm thinking about you,
that I can touch my cock, through the inner pocket,
and maybe I'll write to you like a fool: *Hi, how are you?*



Stanislav Klín Born in Hodonín, the Czech Republic. He did his graduation in graphic design. After graduation, he moved to Brno. Later he studied Philosophy. Currently he is doing a job of hotel maintenance.

Roberto Marzano

ITALY

E adesso?

... e adesso vieni a dirmi che per te
nulla è cambiato nel niente dei “vorrei”
e ci si lascia vivere in disparte
nella corrente di porte semichiusse
a dolci valli, desiderati altrove
dove inciampiamo lasciandoci la mano
su lunghi viali di foglie troppo secche
che basta un niente
- un soffio di sragione -
per incendiarle
e farne solo fumo.

E adesso ci direm che fiori e rose
discendono dal cielo fino al collo
proteso come di giraffe stanche
a ciondolar negli oscillanti “dove?”.

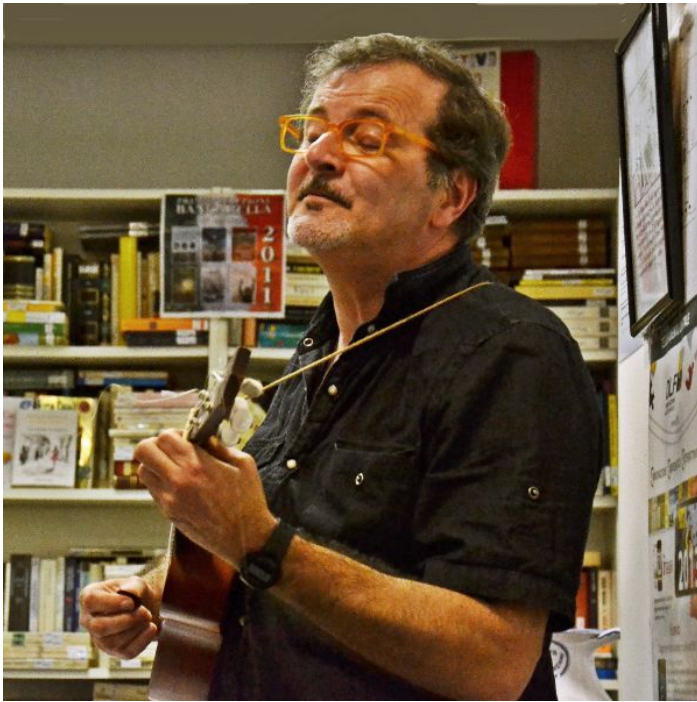
Allora giro intorno alle pozzanghere
sul mondo capovolto sopra-sotto
non riuscirò a baciarti a testa in giù
non sei più tu, e nemmeno io lo sono.

And now?

... and now you come to tell me that for you
nothing has changed in the nothing of “I’d wish”
and we let ourselves live on the sidelines
in the draught of half-closed doors
to sweet valleys, desidered elsewhere
where we stumble, leaving our hand
on long avenues of too dry leaves
it just takes nothing
- a breath of unreasonableness -
to set them to fire
and just make smoke.

And now we’ll say that flowers and roses
descend from the sky up to the neck
stretched out like weary giraffes
to dangle in the swinging “where?”.

Then, I spin around the puddles
on the upside down world
I won’t be able to kiss you down as if up
you’re no longer you, and neither am I.



Roberto Marzano is an Italian poet and storyteller, guitarist and naive songwriter. Staggering between sentiment and visions, he pours out the ultra-popular neighborhoods where he lives. Poetry full of originality and pungent irony that is expressed in his acclaimed musical-poetic performances, made of crackling songs and hendecasyllables that deliberately arouse surprise and fun.



POETRY

Sofia Skleida

GREECE

«Κυκλοθυμική έξαρση»

Μπαλάντες, βιολιά, κεριά
Και αυτή η αέρινη δική σου οπτασία
Που διανύει τα στενά σύνορα του κόσμου
Τις διώρυγες του νου
Αυτές που ενώνουν νοσταλγικό παρελθόν
Πολύβουο Παρόν και αβέβαιο μέλλον
Αυτά θέλω...
Και μια μικρή γωνιά αναπόλησης
Αυτοβύθισης
Να σε ξαναερωτευθώ
Να σε γευτώ
Να σε πλανέψω
Και μέσα στην αγωνία της στιγμής να ξαναφωτογραφίσω εικόνες
ερωτικού πάθους
Αγνής αγάπης και πόθου
Μιας γυμνής αλήθειας που έτερψε τις ψυχές
Ρηχή η μνήμη
Αιώνια η προσδοκία
Αβυσσική πεδιάδα η συγκινησιακή φόρτιση...

Sentimental Exaltation

Ballads, violins, candles
And this glimpse of your own imagination
that crosses the narrow borders of the world
The canals of the mind

Those who unite the nostalgic past,
the intense present and the uncertain future
I want those...
And a little reminiscence
Self-immolation
To see you again
To taste you
Let me flatter you
And in the anguish of the moment to re-portray images of erotic
passion
Pure love and desire
A naked truth that touched the souls
Shallow the memory
Eternal the expectation
Abyssinian Plain the emotional intensity...



Sofia Skleida, PhD, born in Athens. She studied Philology at the National and Kapodistrian University and did her PhD in Comparative Pedagogy. She has been awarded for her participation in the poetry and literary contests around Greece and abroad. Her poems have been translated into Italian, English, Spanish, Albanian and Romanian.

Eliza Segiet

POLAND

Królestwo

Przez człowieka
skazane na śmierć drzewa
nie mają głosu.

Milczą.

Przestają być
Zielonymi Płucami Świata.

Stają się tylko drewnem,
które nie pomaga Ziemi,
wygasłym
królestwem oddechu

- pustką niszczycieli!

Translated by Artur Komoter

Kingdom

Man-doomed
trees
have no voice.

They are silent.

They stop being

the Green Lungs of the World.

They become just wood
that does not help Earth,
an extinguished
kingdom of breath

- a void of destroyers!



Eliza Segiet is an acclaimed Polish writr. She has published ten books of poetry and prose. She got nomination and received many awards in literature. Her works also can be found in anthologies and literary magazines worldwide.

Marija Najthefer Popov

SERBIA

Ružičnjak

Kad zakoračiš u moj ružičnjak
hodaj polako, bos
u košulji od duše
ništa više ne obuci
osim šifru kojom si ga otključao
i ne zabadaj nos u ružino srce, duboko
divi joj se i miriši dobronamerno
Ona će uvući trnje
i zagrliti te omamljujuće
opiće te mirisima
kao slatkim varljivim likerima
od ruža
Ne nasrći
neće te shvatiti
strah će ih uznemiriti
trnje će pustiti
ispred mene, kao štit se uplesti
i tvoju nameru omesti
Nećeš pobeći
ne zaboravi
ušao si verujući, predan
u košulji od duše
i bos po trnju, rizikujući
ostaneš li trezven i odan

u kočijama od latica
i vrancima od mirisa
bićeš mi baštovan, vredan
svakog mog pupoljka
koji nastaje tebi u čast i slast!

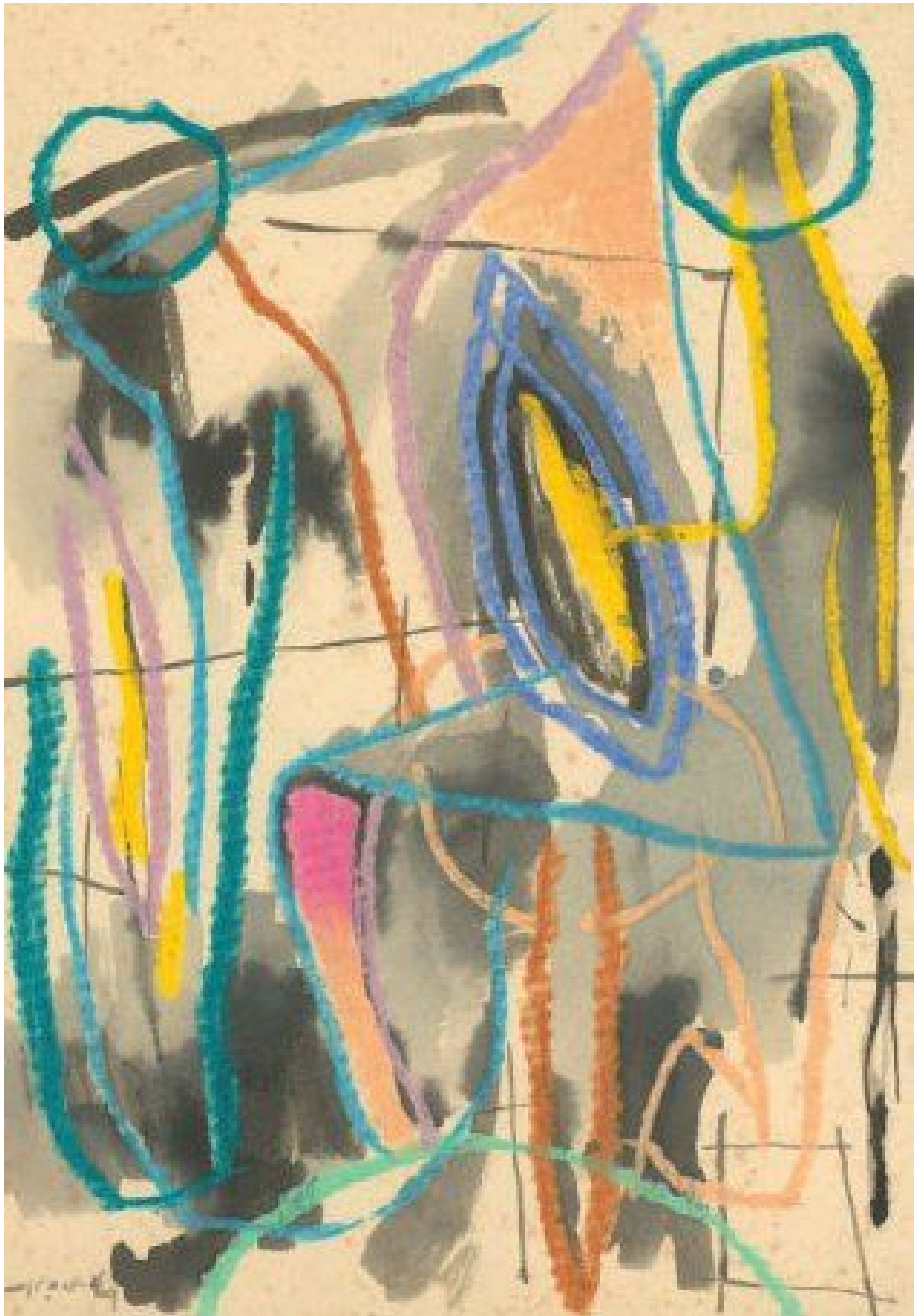
Rose Garden

When you step into my rose garden
walk slowly, barefoot
in a soul shirt
don't train anything else
except for the code you used to unlock it
and do not stick your nose into the rose heart, deep down
admire it and smell good
She will pull in the thorns
and hug you stunningly
it will intoxicate you with its scents
as sweet delusive liqueurs
of roses
Don't get angry
they won't understand you
fear will upset them
the thorns will let go
in front of me, like a shield tangled
and hinder your intention
You won't run away
do not forget
you came in believing, committed
in a shirt of the soul

and barefoot on thorns, risking
if you stay sober and loyal
in petal carriages
and smelling crows
you will be my gardener, worthy
every bud of mine
which is created to thee in honor and delight!



Marija Najthefer Popov was born in Serbia. So far, she has been published in more than two hundred joint, domestic and international poetry collections; published in an extremely large number of domestic and foreign magazines and literary sites. The author has received numerous high international ratings and awards; her works have been translated into many foreign languages.



Marilyne Bertoncini

FRANCE

Ce poème inspiré du « Cantique des Cantiques », tableaux de Marc Chagall exposés au musée Chagall de Nice, est publié dans la collection des livrets-accordéons des Editions Imprévues, fondées et dirigées par Elisabeth Chabuel, sous le titre « Le silence tinte comme l'angélus d'un village englouti ».

Cantique des Cantiques

(sur un tableau de Marc Chagall)

Dans les nuages
rose pourpre du matin
couleur membrane
humide et tendre comme
l'intimr d'une bouche
s'étirent des corps-sirènes

Leur sommeil alanguit rêve
de mille fleurs
Une colombe apporte
l'anneau nuptial

tout irisé
d'un naïf arc-en-ciel

Tout lévite dans l'espace
où des lapins pourchassent
des musiciens-oiseaux
Des acrobates bleus
jouent du silence d'or

dans les cyprès
un merle
trille des bulles de rosée
qui pendent
aux cils de l'herbe
matin d'après la pluie
Le silence est sonore
il tinte
comme l'angélus
d'un village englouti
dont la mémoire flotte
parmi les nuées floues

et des branches d'un arbre
tel un fantôme blême
des feuilles
lentement se dissolvent
sur les pages du Livre.

Song of songs

In the purplish
morning clouds
the pink colour of
a bare membrane
wet and tender as
the secret inner of a mouth
two sirens stretch themselves

Their languid sleep dreams of
thousands flowers
A tame dove brings
the nuptial ring
gleaming
like a naive rainbow

On the cypress
a blackbird trills
dew bubbles
sparkling
on the grass eyelashes
in that morning of after rain

The silence is sonorous
it chimes like
the Angelus bell
of a drowned village
which memory raises
amidst the shines

and the blurred nebula

and from the ghostly branches
of a tree
pale leaves
slowly dissolve
on the pages of the Book.



Marilyne Bertoncini is a French poet and translator. She has written numerous articles and translated the work of poets from English and Italian. She often collaborates with artists and her own writings and photos are also published in various international magazines. She organizes and presents poetical encounters, which can be followed on the Facebook page, « les Jeudis des mots ».

Ewith Bahar

INDONESIA

Bumi yang tua

Aku bisa mendengar sedu sedan itu
Tangis keputusan sang ibu bumi
Aku bisa mendengar denyut lukanya yang menyiksa
Tercekik rasa marah dan kehampaan

Pepat dadanya, airmata getirnya
Protes terhadap manusia-manusia penimbul bencana
Hutan-hutan lebat serta dedaun sewarna zamrud
Telah digantikan gedung-gedung dan menara beton

Bumi tua yang sakit
Tetap menopang kehidupan ini serta manusia-manusianya yang lalai
Dari luar ia nampak tenang tapi di dalam bergejolak duka
Terhadap penebangan pohon-pohon dan tindakan merusak yang fatal
Kini tak ada lagi airmata, hanya tinggal dadanya yang gigil.

Old Earth

I can hear the sobs
The mother Earth's weep of hopelessness
I can hear the pain of her torturing throbs
Choked by anger and emptiness

Her dyspnea, her bitter tears
Protesting human's catastrophic acts
The lush forests and their emerald leaves
Expelled by the concrete buildings and towers

The unsound old Earth
Keeps sustaining this life and the negligent people
She's quiet and still but suffering within
Hypoxia, the tearing out trees and a lethal of a ruinous act
No more tears now, only her bosom trembles



Ewith Bahar is a poetess, novelist, translator and essayist from Indonesia. She has published nine books, almost in all genres: poetry, short stories, novel and essay. One of her poetry books, *Sonata Borobudur*, got a prestigious prize from Indonesian National Library as 'The Best Five Indonesian Poetry Books published in 2019. Many of her poems have been translated into several foreign languages.

Mircea Dan Duta

ROMANIA

Nelíbáňky

Líbáme se bez chuti,
líbáme se bez lásky,
líbáme se bez chťíce,
líbáme se bez vzrušení,
líbáme se bez jazyků,
líbáme se bez rtů,
líbáme se bez úst,
líbáme se bez očí,
líbáme se bez tváří,
líbáme se bez tvarů,
líbáme se bez forem,
líbáme se bez podoby,
líbáme se bez představy,
líbáme se bez imaginace,
líbáme se bez obrazů,
líbáme se beze snů,
líbáme se bez skutečnosti,
líbáme se bez *Dichtung*,
líbáme se bez *Wahrheit*,
líbáme se bez polibků,
líbáme se bez pusy,
líbáme se bez líbání,
a tak si našeho líbání
nikdo nikdy nikde nevšímá,
naše líbání
nikdo nikde nikdy nevidí,
neslyší,

necítí,
dokonce ani my sami,
a tak o našem líbání
nikdo nikde nikdy
psát nebude,
až na toho zapomenutého básníka,
který sám
nikdy nikde nikoho
nelíbal,
a tak si alespoň vymyslí
nás, dvojici,
která se snaží o polibek
jako on o poezii.

The No-Kissing Moon

We kiss without taste,
we kiss without love,
we kiss without lust,
we kiss without excitement,
we kiss without languages,
we kiss without lips,
we kiss without mouths,
we kiss without eyes,
we kiss without faces,
we kiss without shapes,
we kiss without forms,
we kiss without images,
we kiss without imagination,
we kiss without visions,
we kiss without pictures,
we kiss without dreams,

we kiss without reality,
we kiss without *Dichtung*,
we kiss without *Wahrheit*,
we kiss without kisses,
we kiss without pecks,
we kiss without kissing,
and so there's nowhere no-one to ever take note
of our kissing
there's nowhere no-one to ever pay attention,
to our kissing
there's nowhere no-one to ever see it,
hear it
or feel it,
not even ourselves,
and so there's nowhere no-one to ever write
about our kissing,
but that forgotten poet,
which himself
has never nowhere
kissed anyone,
and so at least he is thinking up
us, a couple
striving for a kiss
as himself for poetry.

Translated into English by Judit Andal



Mircea Dan Duta is Romanian poet, film scientist, translator and editor. He writes in Czech. His works were translated and published into many languages in many countries. He has published three poetry books and translates from Czech, Slovak into Romanian and other languages.

Anna Canić

UKRAINE

Lockdown

Ciemność przenika ściany
zakłóca plany
narzuca edykty
zabiera zbolących
rozdziela złączonych
i łamie gorliwych...

A ja
nadal pędzę
jak Mądrość
ku własnej
Radości.

Lockdown

Dark runs through the walls
disrupts all plans
imposes canons
takes away the weak
tears apart the united
and breaks the devout...

And I
I go on
Wisdom
seeking
for
Joy



Anna Canić is a poet, writer, translator. Author of 4 comedy-dramas. Her lyrics, poems, poetry translations, short stories and journalistic texts appeared in the pages of almanacs and anthologies from Poland, Spain, Greece and Romania. She also published a novel *“Sophia and Cassius”*. It was translated into five foreign languages.

Anna Tlałka

POLAND

schronienie

w szczelinach drzew zamieszkują strzyżyki
ich śpiew budzi cały las

wsluchujemy się w opowieści sekwoi
a każdy dźwięk uspokaja nasze zmysły

zbieramy leśne jagody i odpoczywamy
wśród paproci i mchów nie straszny nam
nawet nagły krzyk zięby

próbujemy zrozumieć języki przyrody
i przełożyć je na codzienność
a może niecodzienność?

shelter

wrens inhabit the crevices of trees
their singing wakes up the whole forest

we listen intently to the stories of a sequoia
and each sound soothes our senses

we pick wild blueberries and rest
among ferns and mosses we are not frightened by
even the sudden cry of a finch

we try to understand the languages of nature
and translate them into an ordinary life
or maybe unordinary one?



Anna Tlalka is a poet of three volumes of poetry and the laureate of national poetry competitions. She published on the Internet, in anthologies, almanacs and in the literary press. She is a member of the Silesian Branch of the Polish Writers' Association.

Danica Hrnčiarová Šišláková

SLOVAKIA-THE CZECH REPUBLIC

odmäk

nebo je ako vyštrbený mažiar
v odkvapoch sneh už vodu vytuší
keď plačú strechy vždy ma slová ťažia
asi mi chýba škridla na duši

sľúbil mi odmäk špinavý a starý
že si vraj na jar všetko povieme...
s poslednou vločkou stekám po konári
keď plačú stromy
vsiakam do zeme

snow thaw

the sky looks like a ripped out broken mortar
in gutters snow feels it will boil
when roofs weep
my words always haunt me
I guess I'm missing tiles on my soul

promised me the thaw—was dirty and old—
that we will say all in the late spring sound
with the last flake I'm flowing down the branch
when trees weep
I am soaking in the ground



Danica Hrnčiarová Šišláková born in Slovakia and living in the Czech Republic. She composed her own poems for many years and they have been published in several collections. She is currently preparing a book of her poetry.

Teodozja Świdarska

POLAND

Powiedz

Co śni się drzewom
kiedy zapadną w sen zimowy
albo gdy któreś latem zaśnie
zmęczone fotosyntezą?
O czym szumią — kiedy nie śpią?

Powiedz — czy dąb prastary
skrzypi ze szczęścia
gdy obok młody wy/rośnie —
przed czymś go przestrzega
czy może się niepokoi?
Jeśli tak — to o co?

Pomyśl jak człowiek który ma dzieci.
Czy drzewny rodzic —
odwraca się od swej latorośli
użycza światła w koronie
czy nią właśnie osłania?
Wiesz czym—co grozi?

Tell Me

What do trees dream about
when they fall in a winter slumber
or when one of them falls asleep in the summer
tired with photosynthesis?
What do they hum about—when they don't sleep?

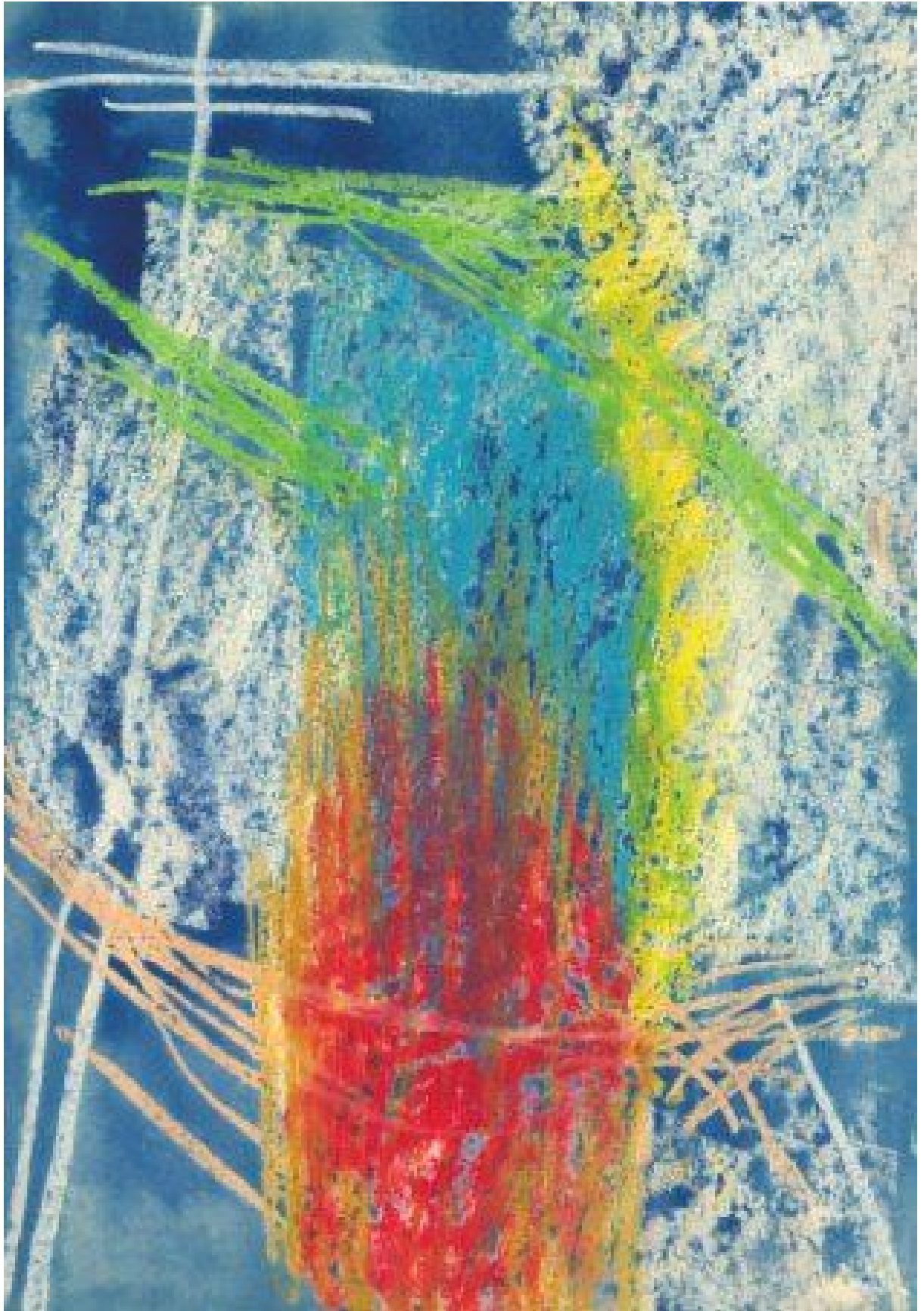
Tell me—if a primeval oak

creaks happy
when a young one grows (up)—
warns it about something
or perhaps is worried?
If yes—then what about?

Think like a human who has children.
Whether a tree parent—
turns away from its offspring
lends light in the tree crown
or just shields with it?
Do you know—what threats brings each?
Translated by Anna Maria Stepień



Teodozja Świdorska belongs to the Teachers Literary Club in Opole and the Polish Authors Association in Warsaw. In 2018, her first poetry book was published. Usually she publishes poems in the periodicals and on the internet. Her poems have appeared in several Polish and international anthologies. Last year, her next collection of poems was published. She has been awarded with the KEN Medal.



Masduzzaman

BANGLADESH

মানববেদ

রাত্রি খসে পড়বার আগে এই যে পাললিক সমুদ্রস্নান, রৌদ্রকথন,
তার ভেতরে তোমার স্মৃতি-বিস্মৃতির লাবণ্যগুলি ঝলমল করে উঠছে।
পরিব্রাজকের মতো হালকা পোশাকে
হেঁটে যেতে যেতে তিমিরগহনে যে ক্রন্দনধ্বনি তুলেছিলে, তার মিহি সুর আমার
হৃৎপিণ্ড চিরে চিরে ঝরিয়ে দিচ্ছে সুপ্রভা, স্রোত, বৃষ্টিদাহ্য স্নিগ্ধ জাহাজের ডানায়
চড়ে উড়ে চলেছি নিজেরি সমাধিপ্রান্তরে।

সময়ের কাছে কিছু কথা মুঠো মুঠো রেখে গেছি। কাফকার হৃদয়লিখন নিয়ে
কতবার যে আমি তোমার জ্বলন্ত পিঠে চুমু খেয়েছি, কিন্তু সেই যে শীতাত শীর্ণ
পাজরের খাঁচা, হিমবাহ, প্রতুলিপিগুলি শুধু তুষারের মতো সমাধির 'পরে ঝরে
পড়ে। সারি সারি নিখর সমাধি, আমাকে শতখণ্ড করে তুমি প্রতিটি কবরের ভেতর
গুইয়ে রাখ।

বহুবর্ণ প্রজাপতির উড়ন্ত পালক বাতাসের ঢেউয়ে কাঁপছে
হিজাবের কালো কিংখাবের ভেতরে ভস্মীভূত শাড়ির আঁচল, রক্তবর্ণ টিপ,
তুর পাহাড়ের কাছেই দোজখের চুল্লি
তাতে রান্না হচ্ছে গরিব মানুষের অশ্রু, খিদে, শরীর,
তেল-মশলার ঘ্রাণে ভরে উঠছে বহুজাতিক রান্নাঘর

সূর্যভস্ম পাণ্ডুর প্রেতলোক

শাদা রান্ধস

কালো রাক্ষস

বাদামী রাক্ষস

সূর্যের জন্যে আকাশটা খুলে রাখলেই সমস্ত ভূমণ্ডল জুড়ে আগুনবৃষ্টি
অস্ত্রের বনবনানিতে গির্জার শাদা ঘড়িটা থমকে যায়
মসজিদের ভেতরে যে বোমাটা বিস্ফোরিত হলো তার গায়ে লেখা ছিল ‘ধর্মযুদ্ধ’
মন্দিরের ত্রিশূলে লেগে ছিল মানবের রক্তঅশ্রু
রক্তচুমুকেই ‘পবিত্র ধর্মগ্রন্থ’ থেকে রাক্ষসের মুখে শুষে নেয় সেমেটিক বর্ণলিখন
ব্রাহ্মিলিপি থেকে তরবারির আঘাতে ছিন্ন মানুষের মাথা মাটিতে লুটিয়ে
গড়াগড়ি খায়
সম্পূর্ণ মানবিক একটা ছক কালো আগুনের মধ্যেই কাঁপতে থাকে
শুভের পাশে এই যে বনের শ্বাপদ সামবেদ

Manavaveda

The sedimentary sea falls, sunbathes before the night falls
Are memories that shine with your oblivion beauty
In light clothes like that of a traveler
The soft melody of the cry that you made deep into the night while
walking
Is tearing my heart and showering me with daylight, waves
I am flying towards my tomb on the wings of the smooth ship.

I have left a handful of words with time. I have kissed your burning
back countless times with Kafka’s love writings. But that cold,
freezing ribcage, glacier, antiquities only fall on graves like snow.
Rows of frozen tombs, make me into a hundred pieces and lay me
down inside all of the graves.

Flying feathers of multicolor rainbows are shaking in the waves of wind

An incinerated hem of the sari / inside the black hijab, blood red tinsel

The reactors of hell are near the mountain of *Tur*¹

The tears, hunger, bodies of the underprivileged are being cooked in it

The scent of oil and spices have filled the air of the multinational kitchen

The land of ghosts were its mundane, colorless

A white demon

Black demon

Brown demon

It rains fire on the horizon when the sky is opened for the sun

The white clock in the church comes to a halt amidst the rumbling of weapons

‘Holy war’ was written on the bomb that exploded in the mosque

Blood and tears of men were on the trident in the temple

In a sip of blood ‘holy book’ are sucked by the demons’ sematic alphabets

The heads of men roll in the mud from the *Brahmilipi*² after being attacked by the swords

A completely humane endeavor trembles in the black fires

Chants of a horrific creature beside goodness

NOTE

¹ *Tur*: the mountain where the Prophet got the messages from God.

² *Brahmilipi*: the writing system, or script, appeared in South Asia in the third century BCE.

Translation by Anonno Sayed Haq



Masuduzzaman, PhD, is an award winning (Panorama, India 2020) poet, professor, translator, essayist, and editor from Bangladesh. He has published a wide range of publications, including seven books of poetry and six books of literary criticism, three books of translation, and sixteen edited books on poetry, comparative literature and culture. His poems have been published in numerous anthologies and magazines in 30 languages. He is the founder and Editor-in-Chief of the multilingual international literary magazine *Teernadaz* (www.teerandaz.com) published from Bangladesh. He is the Editor-in-Chief of the multilingual international literary magazine THE ARCHER.



ESSAY

Shakespeare's Representation of India

By Sikandar Ali

BANGLADESH

The paucity of Shakespeare's interest in India is demonstrated by the absence of any Indian character in his plays though he has created immortal characters like Othello the Moor and Cleopatra of African origin. His plays are also replete with references to the Near East. But there is ample testimony to show that a number of travelers had returned to England having made their voyages to India by the time Shakespeare emerged as a writer. Accounts of their voyages were published in Hakluyt and in all probability were orally transmitted among the Londoners in Elizabethan England. In his plays spread over a period of around two decades Shakespeare has made a good many references to both East and West Indies over a dozen of which are explicit references to the Indian peninsula, more specifically Indo-Pakistan sub-continent in which sense the term 'India' has been used in this paper. It is therefore worth enquiring as to what Shakespeare knew about India, its geography, people and culture; what fed his imagination or whether his knowledge came from any authentic source that defies challenge. This paper seeks to find answers to all these questions.

Before undertaking an enquiry into the nature of Shakespeare's impression of India, it is necessary to trace its sources. There is no evidence to suggest that Shakespeare ever travelled outside England;

not even to the neighbouring European countries. Yet the range of references one comes across in his plays about Europe, Africa, Near East, America and India is impressive. These places do not directly contribute to the themes of the plays. But they often surface by way of casual references. Elizabethan age being an age of discovery, the voyagers, explorers and adventurers like Newberry, Hawkins, Sir Thomas Roe etc. undertook adventures and had interesting tales to tell. Such accounts created in Elizabethan audience a great yearning for far-away and, what they believed, mysterious places and fanned their romantic imagination. Shakespeare as well as other Renaissance writers like Marlowe, Massinger, Beaumont, and Fletcher successfully used Eastern elements in their writings to capture the imagination of their readers.

Shakespeare's plays refer to *Ind*, *India*, *Indies*, and *Indian* some twenty four times far more often than they mention Persia, Barbary, Tripoli etc. which are geographically closer to Europe. Some critics are of the view that Shakespeare also used these terms to refer to the spice islands of Indonesia and the American aborigines. But there are over a dozen passages that unambiguously refer to the Indian peninsula. These references occur chiefly in his comedies in the form of similes and metaphors. Some are direct allusions. They are scattered throughout all the periods of Shakespeare's work from *Love's Labours Lost* and *Midsummer Night's Dream* to *The Tempest* and *Henry VIII*. But surprisingly, Shakespeare mentions neither Socotra nor Ceylon, two islands at which mariners sometimes stopped. He fails to mention Ormuz or Goa, two strategically important seaports from which the Portuguese controlled the commerce of Indian Ocean. The omission of Agra, the capital city and the seat of government of the Mogul empire is particularly indefensible. Nor do we find any mention of the Malabar coast or Surat the famous seaport and gateway to India. The mention of the Kingdom of Cambaya (the denomination given to Gujrat by the Portuguese) in Queen Elizabeth's letter to Akbar testifies that these names were not unknown to the Queen's court. Hence the fact cannot be

suppressed that with regard to geographic knowledge Shakespeare's plays exhibit serious limitation. Compared to him John Milton some fifty years later offers a picturesque description of nearly a score of Asian cities covering a wide spectrum of geographic area. Few readers of *Paradise Lost* can have forgotten the beautiful comparison of the flying fiend to a fleet:

By equinoctial winds
Close sailing from Bengala or the isles
Of Ternate and Tidore, whence merchants bring
Their spicy drugs;
or the vision of Adam, where he sees

The destined walls
Of Cambalu, seat of Cathaian Can,
And Samarchand by Oxus, Temir's throne,
To paquin of Sinaean kings and thence
To Agra and Lahore of Great Mogul
Down to the Golden Chersonese...
Mombaza, and Quiloa, and Melind
And Sofala thought Ophir;
or the graphic picture of
The utmost Indian isle Taprobane
Dusk faces with white silken turbants wreathed;

or the banyan tree, which
In Malabar or Deccan spreads her boughs
High overarched, with echoing walks between.

And lastly, when we read how
High on a throne of royal state, which far
Outshone the wealth of Ormuz and of Ind

Or where the gorgeous East with richest hand
Showers on her kings barbaric pearl and gold,
Satan exalted sat. (Paradise Lost: Book 2)

Not just these geographic names do not figure in Shakespeare's plays, his plays even yield no direct references to the English travelers to India, nor is there any reference to the East India Company whose ships were traversing the seas when Shakespeare was dominating the Globe Theatre. Now the question that baffles us is why Shakespeare in the productive phase of his life chose to brush aside such discoveries and commercial conquests which could have been magnificent additions to the world in which his characters lived and moved. Part of the answer lies in the fact that the Europeans were more interested in the Near East because of its geographic proximity and the historic Crusade and their knowledge of the East did not extend much beyond the Mediterranean Sea until the last two decades of the Elizabethan era. Shakespeare used the existing knowledge about the Near East most liberally in his famous plays *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Othello*. The image of India that caught the fancy of the Elizabethan people was that of an obscure land, "most distant part" of the world as it appears in Queen Elizabeth's letter to Emperor Akbar and set their marks here and there upon his lines.

India is a distant land of gold and jewels and gorgeousness – a view that arose largely from age-old tradition but also from the

growing reports of travelers. The gold and jewel of India also fascinate Shakespeare as they did most Europeans. Shakespeare's plays like those of his contemporaries abound in references to oriental pearls. Troilus commenting on Cressida's beauty in terms of her sexuality as something to be owned says "Her bed in India; There she lies, a pearl" (*Troilus and Cressida* 1.1). Antony before sending a gift from Rome to Cleopatra "Kissed the last of many double kisses/ This orient pearl." (*Antony and Cleopatra* 1.5. 39-40). Pearl is identifiable with such values as virginity or chastity. Othello too credulous to understand the real worth of Desdemona "threw a pearl away/ Richer than all his tribe" (*Othello* 5.2. 356-357) and proved that he was no different from his African counterparts. Mortimer says that Glendower is 'bountiful as mines of India' (*Henry IV*. 3. 1). From the reports of the adventurers we get a wealth of information about precious Indian metals, an echo of which can be heard in Orlando's verses 'From the east to western Ind / No Jewel is like Rosalind.' (*As You Like It* 3. 2. 86-87). Sir Toby compliments Maria by calling her 'my metal of India' (*Twelfth Night* 2. 4.12) to mean Indian gold. Finally not only can the Duke of Norfolk claim that, the English had "made Britain India: every man that stood/ Showed like a mine" (*Henry VIII*. 1.1.21-22); there is also the observation that having married Anne "Our King has all the Indies in his arms" (*Henry VIII* 4.1.45) apparently a reference to her priceless qualities. In other Renaissance literature we also come across similar references.

The remarks of some of the voyagers show that though they marveled at the wealth and gorgeousness of the court, their Christian belief precluded them from appreciating a culture that seemed to them entirely idolatrous. Falling out of favour with Jahangir, Hawkins decided not to stay "among these worthless infidels" (Rawlinson 46). Several passages in Shakespeare associate India with the worship of the sun. In *All's Well That Ends Well* Helena is deeply in love with Bertram whose social status is far above her level. She uses this solar cult for a simile to give a vent to her unrequited love.

Thus, Indian like,
Religion is my error, I adore
The sun that looks upon its worshipper
But knows of him no more (2.1.200-203)

In *Love's Labour Lost* we come across similar references to sun worship.

Vouchsafe to show the sunshine of your face,
That we, like savages, may worship it (5.2.200-201).

And

That like a rude and savage man of Ind,
At the first opening of the gorgeous East,
Bows not his vassal head and stricken blind
Kisses the base ground with obedient breast (4.3.220-24).

These passages above reflect the Christian version of the story the travelers brought home to England. These two passages can be read together with sonnet VII with reference to the sun gazer who,

When the gracious light
Lifts up his burning head, each under his eye
Doth homage to his new-appearing sight.

As this phenomenon of sun worship has surfaced a number of times in his writings spanning over a period of nearly a decade it needs to be closely examined whether such an association has a valid ground.

It seems plausible that for Shakespeare's contemporaries who visited India it would not have been possible for them to get to know a much wider cross-section of Indians and their religious

practices. Whatever rituals they may have seen at Surat or at the Mogul Court at Agra must have had an imprint on their minds.

In the light of the discussion above one arrives at the conclusion that Shakespeare's impression of India was in most part fragmented and not based on any informed understanding of the central facts of Indian life. It appears regrettable that the views he formed about India in his early writings were never revised so that his opinion of India during the two decades when travelers were bringing in new information about India did not change much. Indian metals and jewels occupy most of his references; nevertheless his plays generally exhibit his lack of interest in Indians as normal human beings who are no better than savages. In several passages Shakespeare alluded to the spiritual aspects of Indian life but those only add more points to debase the Indians. It seems he did not lack access to information rather he would not use the sources available and, to all appearance, based his references on popular impression or fantasy. Thus the conclusion seems unavoidable that Shakespeare's portrayal of India, on the whole, represents an opportunity wasted.

REFERENCES

Draper, W. John. "Shakespeare and India". West Virginia University & University of Toulouse, 1951

Kincaid, Dennis. *British Social Life in India*. London: George Routledge & Sons Ltd., 1939.

Smith, Vincent. *Oxford Student's History of India*. Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1978.

Wells, Stanley and Gray Taylor, et.al. *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005. (Quotations from Shakespeare's plays are from this edition)



Sikandar Ali teaches English at Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (SUST), Sylhet. He regularly contributes to different English language dailies. He has taught Shakespeare for over a decade and has written a book titled *Shakespeare and the Orient*. As a translator he translated Bangabandhu's speeches and a selection of Bengali poems into English. He has also edited the Bengali translation of a volume of short stories by Anglo-Indian women writers under the title *Ouponibeshik Lekhikara*. He can be reached at: sikandar.eng@gmail.com



MEMOIR

Memory of My Beloved Father

La mancha negra

By Maria Angeles Lonardi

ARGENTINA-SPAIN

The Black Spot

Eduardo stretched out and tried to reach the books... but his feet seemed to be stuck to the ground. Those old books among which were Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* and which were the great treasure that his father had bequeathed to him.

He had to get them out of there. They were under a large tin tray that protected them from dust and rats. But the closer he got, the dirtier his hands became, the blacker the grease, that the mechanics used in the workshop. The closer he got, the greasier they became. It seemed that the grease was pouring out of his pores, from between his fingerprints and under his fingernails... and the rats meanwhile, dancing under the big punt... You could hear the disgusting gnawing and crunching of the hard covers of the books before the furious bites and teeth. He was able to check those bites later, when he was finally able to remove the punt and make a superhuman effort to retrieve the books. At last "*Les Misérables*" was safe.

Someone slammed the door of the old shed and the blinding light of the midday sun left our protagonist battered and disoriented.

Then he entered the house, washed his hands as usual, ate dinner and went to bed.

The next morning, when he looked in the mirror, he saw a blackish stain running across his face from his cheek to his forehead and saw his hands clean. He ran to look at the books to see with his own eyes what his head didn't understand and oh surprise, the books, a little gnawed in a corner, rested on the table and as he leafed through them he noticed several pages stained with grease...like the one on his face.

What is really important

I had been busy all morning with my household activities and had not been able to spend time with my child or help him. I had to take my homework to school and I was wandering around worried, looking for material, speeches, photos, illustrations, how to protect the earth, what we should do to take care of the planet and the environment and the extent of our commitment to it. At the school they are making them aware of how to take care of the earth and they are asking them to detail the activities, with which they believe, that one can contribute to taking care of the planet. They are asked what they do to improve or take care of it and what they do at home. And there we all get involved, even the "nono", the Italian grandfather, who is my father's father and who is my blood and lives with us. Who lately, is very grumpy and speaks alone and shakes his hands virulently, shaking them, as if wanting to impose his truth and giving voice, because as he is increasingly deaf, he hears almost nothing and gets lost in conversations. He thinks that we are leaving him aside and we do not take him into account and it is not like that, but he finds it difficult to understand, he is very sensitive. However, he is always willing to help when it comes to helping.

The grandfather was upset from the morning and whispered things that made no sense to me, until my son came back from school. His

grandson sat down at the table, after giving the grandfather the kiss he is used to, and as he left the conversation he asked him: how are you, grandfather? To which the nono responds: here we are fighting to stay on earth. These words, at times, are meaningless, but in such an old man they seem premonitory. My son gets along wonderfully with his grandfather, they adore each other. They understand each other, they tell each other things, they go for walks, they go fishing, they play cards, they chat, they tell each other stories and they do many things together. So much so that more than once, the grandfather does his homework for him and recites verses or whispers famous phrases or great proverbs that my son writes down and then shows off at school! And today was another one of those days when Benito, my son, was very happy in class, because when he started to tell what happened, his eyes got bigger and filled with a special glow. And when he finished reading the sentence from the work that my son had presented, which had earned him a B, in relation to the importance that we have to give to our planet, to how much we have to look after it because it is our home and it is the only one we have, I see that the grandfather repeats the words of the text together with his grandson and I already knew who had been behind those words. So, as we reach the end of the story, where a series of purposes are detailed to save the planet from destruction and to ensure a possible future, he also talks about love for the earth, passion for nature, respect and admiration for mother earth, all the wisdom she generously gives us every new day and how much we owe to the celestial planet and how little we care for it. He also elaborated, reviewing the history, with quotes from great characters that in one way or another referred to the earth and its closeness to us, its inhabitants. And to my great surprise, at the end, as a colophon, both of them looking at each other as accomplices who do not want to be discovered, my son read the words pronounced by Galileo Galilei when he was forced by the Inquisition to retract what he held, that the earth was round and revolved on its axis. Then he read, and I quote: "getting out of bed, still convalescent, he put his feet on the ground and hitting one of them he replied, in a

loud voice: "Eppur si muove" in English: "And yet the earth moves". My son and his grandfather merged in an emotional embrace and my eyes filled with tears, which I quickly wiped off with my apron. They were celebrating because they had succeeded, the message passing from generation to generation almost magically. I just served the lentils on their plates without saying a word, while I thought: The earth is still spinning and we are still its inhabitants, who knows until when? but, how wonderful to be able to see that despite everything, there are some reasons in this life, why it is worth continuing to fight.

La mancha negra

Eduardo se estiraba y trataba de llegar hasta los libros...pero parecía que tenía los pies pegados al suelo. Esos viejos libros entre los que estaban Los Miserables de Víctor Hugo y que eran el gran tesoro que su padre le había legado.

Tenía que quitarlos de allí. Estaban debajo de una gran batea de lata que los protegía del polvo y las ratas. Pero cuando más se acercaba, veía que sus manos cada vez estaban más sucias de grasa, grasa negra, de las que usan los mecánicos en el taller. Cuanto más se acercaba más grasientas estaban. Parecía que la grasa le brotaba por los poros, de entre las huellas dactilares y por debajo de las uñas...y las ratas mientras tanto, bailando debajo de la gran batea...Se oía el roer asqueroso y cómo crujían las tapas duras de los libros ante los mordiscos y dentelladas furibundas. Pudo comprobar esos mordiscos mas tarde, cuando al fin pudo quitar la batea y haciendo un esfuerzo sobre humano, recuperar los libros. Al fin "Los miserables" estaban a salvo.

Alguien abrió de golpe la puerta del viejo galpón y la luz cegadora del sol de mediodía dejó maltrecho y desorientado a nuestro protagonista.

Luego entró en la casa, se lavó las manos como de costumbre cenó y se acostó a dormir.

A la mañana siguiente, cuando se miró al espejo, vio una mancha negruzca que le atravesaba la cara desde la mejilla hacia la frente y vio sus manos limpias. Corrió a mirar los libros para ver con sus propios ojos lo que no entendía su cabeza y oh sorpresa, los libros, un poco roídos en una esquina, descansaban sobre la mesa y al hojearlos de soslayo, advirtió varias páginas manchadas de grasa...como la que tenía en su cara.

Lo verdaderamente importante

Llevaba toda la mañana ocupada con mis actividades hogareñas y no había podido dedicarle tiempo a mi niño ni ayudarlo. Tenía que llevar la tarea al colegio y estaba dando vueltas muy preocupado, buscando material, discursos, fotos, ilustraciones, de cómo proteger la tierra, de qué debemos hacer para cuidar el planeta y el medioambiente y del alcance de nuestro compromiso con ello. En la escuela los están concienciando para cuidar la tierra y les piden que detallen las actividades, con las cuales creen ellos, que se puede contribuir a cuidar el planeta. Les preguntan qué hacen para mejorarlo o cuidarlo ¿qué hacen en casa? Y ahí nos involucramos todos, hasta el “nono”, el abuelo italiano, que es el padre de mi padre y que es sangre de mi sangre y vive con nosotros. Que últimamente, está muy refunfuñón y habla solo y sacude las manos con virulencia, agitándolas, como queriendo imponer su verdad y dando voces, porque como está cada vez más sordo, no oyecasi nada y se pierde en las conversaciones. Se cree que lo dejamos de lado y no lo tenemos en cuenta y no es así, pero le cuesta entenderlo, está muy sensible. Sin embargo, siempre está dispuesto cuando de ayudar se trata.

El abuelo estaba molesto desde la mañana y murmuraba cosas que para mí no tenían sentido, hasta que volvió mi hijo de la escuela. Su nieto se sentó en la mesa, después de darle al abuelo el beso que acostumbra y como saliendo de la conversación le pregunta: ¿qué tal abuelo? A lo que el nono responde: *aquí estamos filio peleando para seguir*

en la tierra. Esas palabras, a veces carecen de sentido, pero en un hombre tan mayor parecen premonitorias. Mi hijo se lleva de maravillas con su abuelo, se adoran. Se entienden, se cuentan cosas, salen de paseo, van a pescar, juegan a las cartas, charlan, se cuentan historias y hacen muchas cosas juntos. Tanto es así que más de una vez, el abuelo le hace la tarea y le recita versos o le susurra frases célebres o grandes proverbios que mi hijo apunta y luego ¡se luce en la escuela! Y hoy, ha sido otro de esos días en los que Benito, mi hijo, venía muy contento de clase, porque cuando empezó a contar lo ocurrido, al nono se le agrandaron los ojos y se le llenaron de un brillo especial. Y al terminar de leer la frase del trabajo que había presentado mi niño, que le había valido un notable, en relación a la importancia que tenemos que darle a nuestro planeta, a lo mucho que tenemos que cuidarlo porque es nuestra casa y es la única que tenemos, veo que el abuelo repite junto a su nieto las palabras del texto y ya sabía yo quien había estado detrás de esas palabras. Así que, al llegar al final del relato, donde se detallan una serie de propósitos para salvar el planeta de la destrucción y para asegurarnos un futuro posible, también habla del amor a la tierra, de la pasión por la naturaleza, del respeto y la admiración a la madre tierra, de toda la sabiduría que generosa nos regala cada nuevo día y de lo mucho que le debemos al planeta celeste y lo poco que lo cuidamos. También se explayaba, haciendo un repaso por la historia, con citas de grandes personajes que de alguna u otra manera se referían a la tierra y la cercanía con nosotros, sus habitantes. Y mayúscula fue mi sorpresa, cuando al final, a modo de colofón, mirándose los dos como cómplices que no quieren ser descubiertos, leía mi hijo las palabras pronunciadas por Galileo Galilei cuando fue obligado por la Inquisición a retractarse acerca de aquello que él sostenía, de que la tierra era redonda, y giraba sobre su eje. Entonces leía, cito textual: “bajándose de la cama, aún convaleciente, puso los pies en el suelo y golpeando con uno de ellos replicó, a viva voz: “Eppur si muove” en castellano: “*Y sin embargo, la tierra se mueve*”.” Mi hijo y su abuelo se fundieron en un abrazo emocionado y a mí se me llenaron los ojos de lágrimas, que me sequé rápidamente con el delantal. Ellos

celebraban porque lo habían conseguido, el mensaje pasaba de generación a generación casi de forma mágica. Yo me limité a servir las lentejas en sus platos sin articular palabra, mientras pensaba: La tierra sigue girando y nosotros seguimos siendo sus moradores, quien sabe hasta cuándo...pero, qué maravilla poder comprobar que a pesar de todo, hay algunas razones en esta vida, por las que vale la pena seguir luchando.



Maria Angeles Lonardi is a poet and fiction writer. She born in Argentina and now lives in Spain. Her poems have been translated into many languages and appeared in many magazines with reputation.



ESSAY

On the Poetry of Bangladesh

By **Mohammad Nurul Huda**

BANGADESH

Bangladesh is blessed with a millennia-old civilization largely based on a socio-cultural evolution on its agro-based alluvial land, water and hilly territory rendering a majority of its people – having diverse origins – immensely imaginative, fanciful and lyrical. The mystic poets called Bauls bear a testimony to this assumption. This may also be considered as one obvious reason why a poetic fervor pervades its countryside and urban areas even in these highly technology-dominated days of the twenty-first century. ‘Grown out of a poetic dream’, Bangladesh is also endeared as ‘a land of poets and poetry’. Although no formal survey has been conducted, the number of seriously practicing poets these days may run to some thousands. This we can guess from the number of poets attending a recurrent annual event entitled ‘National Poetry Festival’ held in February, the month of language movement. However, a conservative estimate based on the representative anthologies of published poets limit the number to some hundreds only. When we refer to the term ‘Poetry of Bangladesh’ here, we identify the published poets in the main. This trend belongs to Bengali poetry in

general starting from its earliest specimen in 'Charyapada', first discovered in the royal court of Nepal nearly one thousand years back. The unbroken tradition of Bengali poetry continued till the partition of Bengal in 1947, when the entire subcontinent split into a number of independent countries. Today's Bangladesh was once called East Bengal and its nature and lifestyle somehow differ from West Bengal, now forming a province of India. Despite these dissimilarities, the tradition of Bengali poetry between these two neighboring regions is identical in many respects. Undeniably, language is the binding uniformity of the two. But new political consciousness, milieu, social changes, economic uncertainty and dialectical differences have generated significant variations in the content and diction of poetry in these two regions having a geographical continuity since antiquity. The first and foremost dissimilarity was generated by Language Movement (1952), after which cultural and political nationalism came into being for the people of Bangladesh. The land and its people dreamed of a sovereign state in the image of a mother. Thus 'Mother' emerged as a most striking image in the poetry of Bangladesh, immediately after the partition of the subcontinent. And the final deviation was triggered by the blood-smeared Liberation War of the country in 1971. The war liberated the country called Bangladesh and gave its poetry numerous new metaphors such as 'guerilla', 'freedom fighters', 'grenades', 'ambush', 'flaming flowers', 'flowered steel' and so on. However, these are the broad-based outlines of differences in the content of contemporary Bengali poetry of Bangladesh and West Bengal. On the contrary, the diction and style of the poetry on both the regions are almost homogeneous, since these are direct descendant of the kind of modernity shaped by the avant-garde poets of 1930s, mostly considered as the architect of post-Tagore modernity in Bengali poetry. At the same time it may carefully be noted that like every individual poet, every region has its own distinctive features that largely govern the emergence of a poetic metaphor of new kind. The individual talent and aptitude of the poets also shape a new language and idiom for them. Dependent on

these thematic, stylistic and aesthetic factors, poetry in Bangladesh has devised its extraordinary outfit over the last seven decades and more starting from 1952, which is thought to be the beginning of new poetry searching out roots of the nation called 'Bangali' and the sovereign nation-state called 'Bangladesh'.

There is a popular tendency of evaluation of poetry on decade-wise division following a similar practice in English and Western poetry. The history of Bangladesh poetry, too, may conveniently be divided into a number of interconnecting decades as of today. These are the decades of 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, 2000s, 2010s etc. Every decade has its outstanding poets, metaphors, messages and unique trends. The earliest one is 1940s – a decade of transition, so to say – that produced some significant poets like Ahsan Habib, Abul Hossain, Syed Ali Ahsan, Sikander Abu Zafor, Farrukh Ahmed, Ashraf Siddiqui and others. They are also important for the fact that they represented a period of conversion between the longstanding Bengali poetry and the emergence of a new brand of root-searching poetry in Bangladesh. They are also responsible for generating upcoming trends in the language and expression of poetry. Next came the poets of 1950s led by a poet no less than Shamsur Rahman, a versatile genius, now also known as 'poet of liberation'. His veteran contemporaries include Hasan Hafizur Rahman, Alauddin Al Azad, Abu Zafor Obaidulla, Al Mahmud, Syed Shamsul Huq, Azeezul Huq, Shahid Qadri and others. They identified themselves with the evolving history of Bangladesh. Let us quote a few lines from Shamsur Rahman:

Freedom, you are
Rabindranath's evergreen verses
and timeless lyrics
You are Kazi Nazrul shaking his shaggy mane,
a great-souled man in the grip
of creative exaltation.

Amazingly, Rahman has made an apt use of two of our most noted predecessors: Rabindranath, the writer of our national anthem and the rebel Kazi Nazrul Islam, our national poet. The history is reflected in Rahman's poems with an aesthetic mix of both the maestros. This is also true of our finest poets in this decade and beyond. Next there came the poets of 1960s, the most dominating decade in our poetry as of today. They heralded a number of aesthetic revolts against traditional poetic trends and tried to introduce postmodern tendencies as far as possible. To them poetry became symbolic, expressionistic, impressionistic and at times surrealistic. Most significant poets of this decade include Abdul Mannan Syed, Rafiq Azad, Asad Choudhury, Mohammad Rafiq, Nirmalendu Goon, Abul Hasan, Mahadev Saha, Mohammad Nurul Huda, Humayun Azad, Habeebullah Sirajee, Asim Saha, Sanaul Huq Khan, Jahidul Huq and others. These poets also tried to redefine the history of their nation-state in their unique poetic expressions. The decade of 1970s is largely an extension of experimentation in form and content in the wake of a fast disintegrating society and politics in the post-liberation Bangladesh. The poets of these decades are closely related with the poets of 1960s in their outlook towards revitalizing the contemporary poetry. Apart from political scenario, new artistic trends around the globe including magic realism were generated in their works. However, highly nationalistic outlooks also continued in the poets like Ruddro Muhammad Shahidullah who met with a premature death. Other significant names in this decade include Abid Azad, Shihab Sarkar, Kamal Chowdhury, Abu Hasan Shahriar, Asad Mannan, Tridib Dastidar, Nasima Sultana and others. Poets in the subsequent decades (1980s, 1990s, 2000s) till the end of 2015 are varied and numerous. They are the potential architects of new poetry in Bangladesh trying to discover a new idiom for them. In so doing the most visible experiment they are seemingly entangled with is the introduction of an open-ended prosaic utterance instead of a formal poetic structure in regular metrical or lyrical arrangement. Poets who are noteworthy in this experiment are many, but a few of them may be mentioned, such as Khondokar

Ashraf Hussain, Mohammad Sadik, Bimal Guha, Farook Mahmud, Masuduzzaman, Zahid Haider, Mohammad Samad, Tariq Sujat and others representing different decades. Of late a tendency of lyric poetry along with remixing indigenous words from different dialects and community-based folk-life is also visible. These are all good signs for a new take-off of the poetry in Bangladesh.

Let us now briefly sketch some remarkable features of the poetry of Bangladesh, since its renewed journey in 1952 has undergone some interlinked phases of contextual and stylistic transformations: (a)

The main focus is, undeniably, the reconstruction of our national history with its land, people and a sovereign nation-state stemming from the uniqueness of our mother language, culture and anthropological roots. (b) At the same time this poetry has

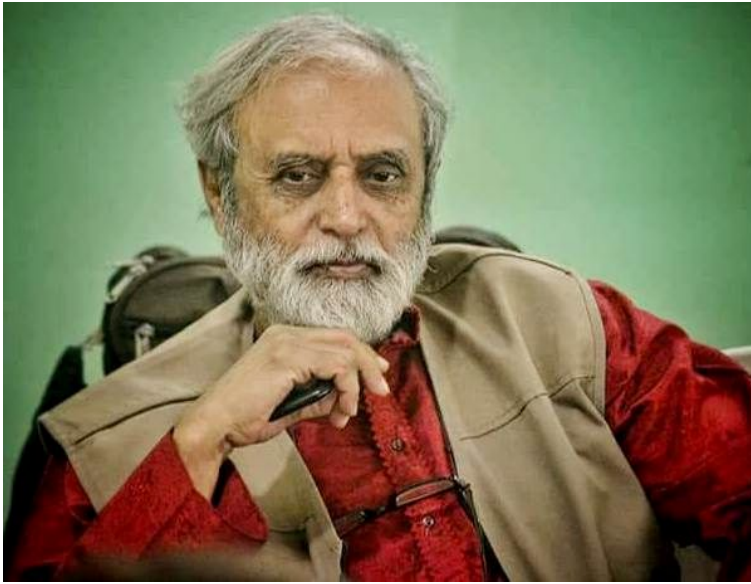
maintained a close relation, some way or other, with almost all the dominating poetic trends in the West, including modernism, postmodernism or continuous modernism or meta-modernism. (c)

The language it has used has picked up some new metaphors or images from time to time, say from the liberation war of 1971, but the major narrative/expressive style is still an extension of that of the 1930s. (d) At times poets seemed to have played the role of a prophet signaling the change in the society, but in most cases they

have expressed their reaction on a past occurrence. (d) The transition of rural, nostalgic and mystic form of poetry to refined urbanity is still visible in most of our poets. (e) Side by side, ethnic, national, global, transcultural and multicultural issues are constantly pouring in. (f) However, no traditional issue such as love, hatred, war, revenge, violence, or peace is out of circulation. (g) Cumulative efforts by the new generations heralding their revolt in Little

Magazines of different sizes and viewpoints are going on in all the major district towns and the capital city Dhaka. (h) Poetry festivals are being organized by big and small poetry associations around the country including National Poetry Council, in a bid to popularize poetry and poetic activities. (i) The message of 'poetry for human beauty' is largely accepted by a majority of poets as reconciliation between life and arts. (j) Poetry is being studied, practiced and

applied quite consciously and a movement of 'Conscious Poetry' has been launched by a group of new poets (KabitaBangla Movement) very recently. (k) A post-structural stylistic movement called 'Contra-Image poetry' has also been launched by them. (l) However, people mostly believe in Bangladesh that poetry can do something as an instrument of possibility and optimism, which is why it is almost an obsessive craze among the emerging generations. (l) In fact, creativity is largely poetry-dominated in Bangladesh. However, as a practicing poet of this time (since 1960s) I personally feel that poetry renews itself coming in contact with newer talents able to scan the message and temperament of a new time. The growth of new poetry is mostly determined by collective literary movements as well as individual efforts of making oneself wholly different. Contemporary poets of Bangladesh are well aware of this reality. That is why many poets of the first decade of the 21st century are also found revitalizing their poems even with a traditional form like sonnet pattern. It is not rejection of the known technique, rather reworking of its structure that the outfit of a creative work is re-invented. Poetry in Bangladesh also seems to advance towards this direction. This makes us optimistic about the emergence of new poetry in the land of Michael-Tagore-Nazrul-Jibanananda-Jasimuddin, the unending fount of all our poetic pursuits.



Mohammad Nurul Huda (born September 30, 1949) is an iconic poet of international repute from Bangladesh winning Bangla Academy Literary Prize (1988), President's Honour from Turkey (1997), Ekushe Padak (2015), SAARC Literature Prize (1999) and many more. He is bilingual in expression (Bangla and English) contributing to poetry, critical studies, fiction, translation, traditional cultural expressions, intellectual property rights and other areas of creativity. His number of published titles is above 150.