

SHABDAGUCHHA

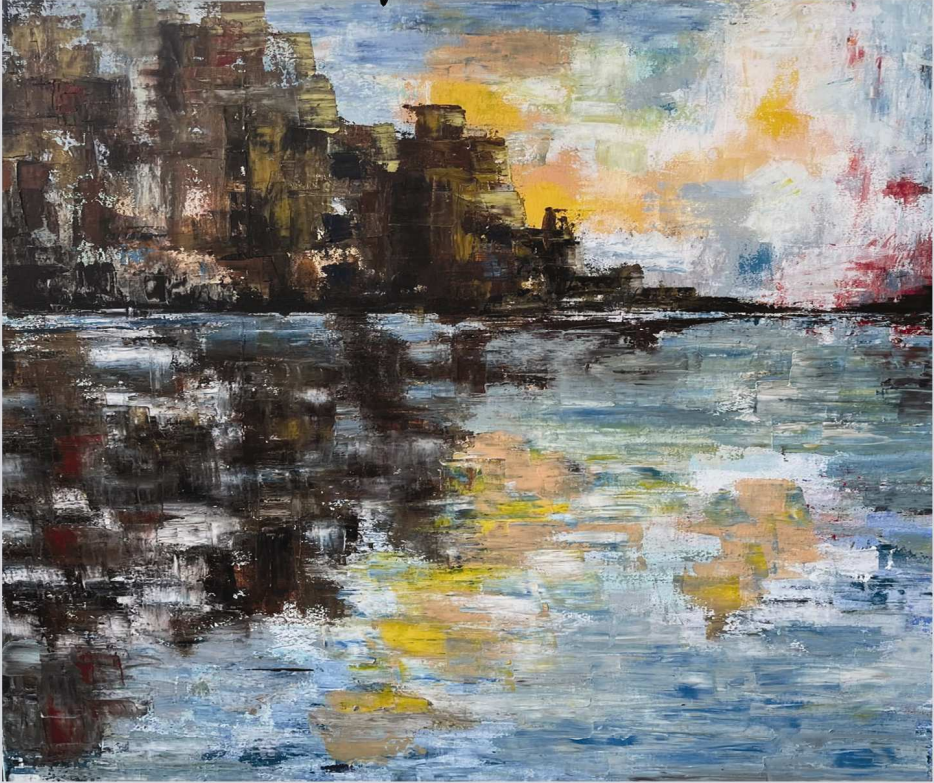
শব্দগুচ্ছ

একটি আন্তর্জাতিক কবিতার কাগজ

An International Poetry Magazine

January-December 2025 Volume 27 Number 1/2

# Poets from Twenty-One Different Countries



## 27th Anniversary Issue

We are terrified of the beasts . . . we too become beasts

[from the epic COSMIC CANTATA, page 73]

Issue 89/90

Editor: Hassanal Abdullah

Shabdaguchha

# **SHABDAGUCHHA**

*An International Bilingual Poetry Magazine*

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## **27 years in Publication**

This Issue Presented  
Poets from Twenty-One Different Countries

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*Shabdaguchha* accepts submission throughout the whole year. Poetry, written in Bengali, English or translated from any language to these two languages, is always welcome. Book reviews and news on poets and poetry could also be sent. Each submission should be accompanied by a short bio of the author. E-mail submissions are more appreciated, but Bengali written in English alphabet is not acceptable.

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### This issue featured poets from the following countries:

Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Germany, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, Iraq,  
Israel, Italy, Japan, Kurdistan, Macedonia, Mexico, Norway, Poland,  
Romania, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, Taiwan, and United States.

**Editorial:**

**27 YEARS OF SHABDAGUCHHA**

As I was taking a selfie with the poets at Delphi, I was thinking about what Stanely Kunitz once said to me that all poets are from the same mother. Being at this archaeological site was part of the tour to see the historical places during the fourth International Poetry Festival held in Chalkida, Greece. Poets from many countries gathered, shared their thoughts, read from their work and built friendships, which may go on for lifetime. Some acquaintances that develop during this type of international gathering get much stronger over time. As I am increasingly attending more festivals overseas, this year alone in India, Greece, Guatemala, Macedonia, and Poland, I get overwhelmed by Kunitz's comments since human suffering, agony and their jubilation render from the same feeling which poets love to work with, and which definitely get them together as if they were siblings. On the other hand, as my international poetry circle is growing, so does the participation in the magazine, *Shabdaguchha*, my brainchild as an international platform for poets. It is interesting that when I started the magazine twenty-seven years ago, the first issue was only sixteen pages. At that time we published it as a quarterly. However, it went up to thirty-two pages from the second year, then it turned into forty-eight pages and then sixty-four. The Polish special issue was eighty pages. From the twelfth year to eighteenth year, we published it every six months, and during and after the pandemic it now comes out once a year. Nevertheless, the page count has been gradually increasing. And this particular issue is ninety-six pages, which says that international participation has been significantly increasing. We celebrated the twenty-fifth year of publication with a *World Poetry Anthology* (Darklight Publishing, 2023), publishing two hundred and twenty-nine poets from fifty-nine countries, all of which were previously published in the magazine. The next edition of the anthology, celebrating the magazine's thirtieth year, may include poets from at least a hundred countries as the number of participants is growing each year. Needless to say that many of these poets are inter-connected through festivals, workshops, and readings, creating a poetry community that eventually seeks for peace over the world. We all are committed to poetry for a peaceful world—as we are from the same mother.

## Amir Or

### POEMS

#### 5.

*When he knows he's crawling, the slough occurs on its own.*

Hold a world. A cigarette, a glass, lips,  
the weight of your limbs on the chair's wooden seat, my face, your face,

autumn leaves on the pavement, a lunch bag, a warm smell  
and hands that cover you up before the day's turned off.

Now for a moment: don't hold. Let go. Let them expand  
and furnish what's inside you, without being so much of a world,

without placing green on the leaves or  
on the remembered palm tree at the sea shore (near

that boyish body, stooping over a notebook).  
Let the leaves mingle with the pavement, to rest there,

be not "leaves" at all, not "a cigarette", "a glass",  
"lips". Expand in you like excitement,

like the sea on a shore. Once they're like this, inside you,  
turn them off and on again. Turn off, turn on,

off-on, and again. Now  
do the same thing with the world in which you are "you",

a thing among things. Watch it sailing in the expanse  
of a body, turn-off-turn-on-turn-off and see

what you're made of. All this is just  
the allegory in the story. We'll continue flickering and in a binary rhythm

will continue to say nothing to anyone who asks—  
I, you, etc. And, why not, let's make a new allegory:

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here, we created this outside world. This orange  
on the blue; the “insult”, the “hope”, what

quivers between us, between there-is and there-isn’t, between  
this and that. Let’s call it.

6.

*Hand over hand. (what broke out–touches.)*

You say: to be penetrated, to penetrate. Sea-sand, sand-sea  
verging on the very center. Words fall between us

like something broken. Listen, I love you.  
But you, having it only your way, exist, exist, exist.

You are not being paid for this and still,  
Mr. and Mrs. Other, you stroll along the street as if

you’re only a name and have no navel. I  
act like you, repeat the movements

which you repeat. Tell me, reflection—  
I throw another stone at you—is anyone more actual than me?

I say sand-sea, sea-sand. Like something  
broken: a multiplication effaces, legs and hands like something

that’s there. So: enough. Come back to me. I’ll let you go  
as often as you like.

Now there’s no longer a difference between us, except this poem  
where some sort of a world lives. Another possibility,

not really different: here, you don’t leave at all.  
You don’t stop coming for a moment. I open

a mirror and turn its pages in front of what’s already  
written. It’s what you are: sadness in front of the blue evening sky,

anger, insult, longing sucking the blue from your chest  
or happiness that suddenly spills in front of the blue of that evening sky;

it's a voice which accompanies what, looking,  
I see now or don't see. And I see you:

world by world, now by now, one  
and yet another one. In this poem that stumbles from page

to page you watch and flicker between letter and letter  
and vanish—present in every one of these apparently silent centimeters—

and don't stop coming, and not really coming. So enough, please,  
don't hide everywhere, talk to me, all of you at once.

*Translated from the Hebrew by Helena Berg*

*Israel*

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## **Bengt O Björklund**

### **STRANDS OF LIQUID COPPER**

strands of liquid copper  
catch fire in the early tin sun  
the old buildings break  
under pink streaks of sky  
streets roll whole empires  
under a different morning sun  
there are no futile questions

streams of dead men say so  
keep the rain brain in a fashion  
derelict beings howl  
in the dark machine  
I will not hold my breath  
if there's a sudden deluge

### **SILT ON MY EARLY FOREPLAY I**

silt on my early foreplay I  
where light is like an old diary  
telling short tales  
there is no way you can hear  
ancient rocks cracking hard time  
like a golden walnut

danced with dynamite and froth  
flawed like a Siberian tiger  
in the tropics I with voice light  
dare the untold to rest a while  
so I can move out of the way  
there are no toys left  
serendipity holds no answer

**THERE'S A HIDDEN CREEK**

there's a hidden creek  
bubbling in day's aftermath  
where earth's rumbling tenants  
wear shoes fit for war  
falling from dark windows

it is time to be jolly  
to let shoeshine boys  
crowd you with poor decency  
rolling their finger fired longing  
into birds turning into hot ash

destiny is a logical must go there  
unruly and chaotic a grasp  
a will not yet executed  
a passing of absolute conclusions  
and a tulip birthday bouquet

a seldom spotted day unread by most  
run for its existence in a daily spin  
where wealth is a rotting ship  
circumcised to make sure  
the myth fed ones will pay

a slow good night fly with wild geese  
screaming with ferns and feathered dogs  
herons dash in clam-coves  
poignant with silt gasping for air  
or a glimpse of a watery sanity

*Sweden*

## George Wallace

### A MAN NEEDS NO REASON

a man needs no reason to beat a drum;  
there are trails to be followed,  
campaigns to be waged;  
there are trophies to be won,  
ciphers in the mist,  
birds to be flushed out  
into the waiting sun,  
eyes wild in the berrybushes  
and faint hearts beating;  
a man needs no reason to sing;  
there are promises to be kept,  
mouths to be fed;  
there are curtains to be drawn,  
intimacies to be laid bare by candlelight;  
there is fire inside a man's belly,  
a fire that grows and grows,  
like a cut of kindness;  
cordwood to be stacked  
and animals sheltered;

no reason, a man needs no reason  
did you know I love you?  
I could run barefoot through mountains  
on pain of death, bring meat and milk  
to your children, carry colored stones  
in my trouser pockets to light up  
their pretty little eyes.

trails to be followed,  
campaigns to be waged;  
ciphers in the mist,  
faint hearts beating,  
birds to be flushed out  
into the waiting sun,  
no reason, a man needs no reason

## HEARTS AND MINDS

what we wanted to say was all around us the whole time.

what we wanted to say was all around us and inside us.

hearts and minds, hearts and minds.

there was a simple song waiting to be sung.

someone came along and sang it,

and now we say we love that song.

we listen to that song.

we sing along with that song.

we share that song.

and we praise the singer of that song.

that girl has given us something to remind us of what we always  
thought we could be.

that guy has given us something that makes things better than how  
they used to be.

hearts and minds, hearts and minds.

what we wanted to say was all around us the whole time.

what we wanted to say was inside us all the time.

all the time.

all around us,

and inside of us.

hearts and minds, hearts and minds.

## STRANGERS TO SACRIFICE, SEARCHING FOR CLUES

how firmly a flower takes root among gravestones,

as if a flower can taste the bones of men,

as if a flower can reach deep enough into earth

to answer questions never asked of a flower,

as if sifting through the remains of men

can open the eyes of a new generation

not yet ready to make the same mistakes,

not yet ready to go blindly into the abyss,

strangers to sacrifice, searching for clues

how terribly firm a flower takes root among gravestones,

as if a flower can taste the bones of men,

as if a flower can reach deep enough into earth

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to answer questions never asked of a flower,  
as if sifting through the remains of men  
can open the eyes of another generation  
not yet ready to make the same mistakes,  
not yet ready to go blindly into the abyss,  
strangers to sacrifice, searching for clues  
strangers to sacrifice, searching for clues

*New York, USA*

## **Kazimierz Burnat**

### **THE FATHOMLESS BLUE**

Around the corner  
of the last second—  
plantations of the spirit  
sprouts dashing towards heaven  
into eternity!

a stray whiff of inspiration  
an effort of the subconscious,  
then a flash—  
epiphanic illuminations  
above the inexhaustible source of life  
permeate the realm  
of unrealizable quiescence

the mortar in the living-death crevice  
merges a whisper with silence  
however in the windless eternity  
joy is an illusion  
a surgical perception of the spirit  
wrapped in a black sheet

such is your  
beautiful solitude

### **A CHANGE OF LIGHT**

The earth cracks  
into narrow crevices  
the red ants crawl  
through gray walls of concrete  
broken and fragile  
like the world  
and the wind  
that carries the aroma of food

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madness approaches  
breathing fire  
a new world emerges  
the debris—a treasure  
the glare of the sunset  
grows dull from hail  
scolding the splendor of Nature  
tongues of lightning bolts  
unveil the pompous freshness  
contradicting  
the specter of salvation

in the light of a street lamp  
is the shadow of a sad woman  
who departs

you become a leafless  
orphan tree  
on a bare rock

## **SWALLOW'S DAWNING**

Wake up

bells ring in the church  
one needs to go experience the word  
then take me where  
on a chalky paper  
inscribe the contents  
(what a flame consumes me  
from inside)  
I traverse your realms  
and trust that my plea  
will be heard—  
*nulla dies sine linea!*

I clumsily pick up messages  
I am not even aware of them  
even if I think  
I do not know anyway  
what resides within you  
I seized them hastily  
plenty of them flew away  
however I keep the most imposing ones  
in the cages of metaphors  
after comprehending  
I shall put them  
in my own contexts  
lending them new forms  
and release  
among the healing tansies

*Translated from the Polish by Anna Maria Stępień*

*Poland*

Shabdaguchha

## **Toma Grigorie**

### **IN THE TRESSES OF WILLOWS**

Your look is difficult to understand  
I've left it without an answer  
to drift aimlessly  
on the waters of the Danube  
I did not build a dam of words in its way  
You faded away in the crowd  
I will not search for you  
you will not find me again  
When you tiptoe back  
hidden under the shadow of your brow  
I can touch your soul  
You may also lose a glance or two  
on the way back  
So many mute words answer to you  
the ones still clinging  
in the tresses of the willows on shore

### **MY BLADES OF GRASS**

I sit nestled  
in bed  
I chew  
I chew  
the grass I've grazed  
from the meadow of books

My blades  
of grass  
(perhaps just like the ones  
that belong to Whitman)  
make their way  
with piety  
through the dense asphalt  
of books  
from all over the world.

## THE SHOOTING STARS

shooting stars slice the night  
with golden stilettos wielded by the sky  
the beautiful sight fills the world with magic  
the universe seems to be a giant cake celebrating its infinite ages  
I sit in awe leaning on the balcony  
submerged in reverie  
mankind is saved from all that is ugly  
for a few worldly hours  
for a few cosmic seconds  
in my mind I turn off all the city lights  
so that there's only pure darkness in the fight  
with the meteoric swords  
the white night embraces me  
eyelids stay open during this daydream  
I record in my emotional memory  
the day the year the time the century  
when stars fell pattering  
on the roof of the earth

*Translated from the Romanian by Ruxandra Dodoiu*

*Romania*

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## Joan Digby

### HOLES

Everywhere I look, I see holes  
in walls and windows  
in the floor, in ice  
even in my pillow when I lie face down.  
The holes are not where they appear to be  
but phantoms conjured by my crumbling maculae  
irregular shapes like ponds, inkblots,  
amoebas, chinese paper cuts, and melanomas,  
all real inhabitants of my memory  
invisible to those who experience  
the boundaries of our living space as solid.  
These are my holes alone  
punctured into my past and present  
expanding as I pass through them  
they slowly reveal glimpses of the future.

### I DIDDA THAT

I can walk on water in Alaska  
no miracle  
just solid state  
when the rivers freeze into winding ice blocks  
as five hundred dogs in 33 teams  
run downstream on the Chena  
to the Tanana  
barking and panting  
pulling together the full weight of the packed sleds  
hungry with anticipation  
at the restart of the Iditarod  
that will take them down rivers  
and through forest trails  
on the grueling thousand mile race to Nome

*New York/USA*

## **Laura Gravaglia**

### **ABSOLUTE INFINITY**

(Georg Cantor)

The diagonal was a ladder leading up to heaven  
which the mind was climbing,  
each number was a step  
towards infinity.

Yet beyond the continuum hypothesis  
the spirit was yearning for the Absolute.  
Away from the centre, beyond mediocrity,  
in the mind's white prison,  
fate is decided  
by those who fail to understand.

### **EUREKA**

(Archimedes)

Against all prejudice you loved reality  
the enthralling irregularity of bodies.  
Any curve can be straight,  
any volume can be stored  
in the perfection of a cube.  
You saw through the laws of the lever,  
in the immensely large and the immensely small,  
you were in search of infinity.  
Evil is ignorance of the sword  
which breaks life  
among circles written on the sand.

### **FIBONACCI'S NUMBERS**

(Leonardo Pisano, known as Fibonacci)

That bridge between East and West  
built on numbers.  
You grasped the greatness of Arabian  
merchants and your stunning genius

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was universally admired  
at Frederick II's court.  
The abstract perfection of those signs,  
the magic series hidden  
in the alchemic beauty of the shell  
and the falcon's mystery in his flight,  
later on described by Pacioli,  
divine proportion.

## **MIGRANT**

From the skylight  
I can see a square of rain  
a swollen red leg  
and I'm somewhat of a Rimbaud.  
In Tijuana hopeless people and rats get through  
the barbed wire,  
and I stop my nose as  
he says "Hey, guapa!" and  
I run away (I don't know where) to  
show dignity.  
I have a canyon in my brain  
and craters in my lungs.  
I can make it.

*Translated from the Italian by Annarita Tavani*

*Italy*

## **Dariusz Tomasz Lebioda**

### **ARISTOTLE'S BUST**

There is only matter  
and nothing is outside  
of it

in the rays of the sun  
in flashes on the water  
in the murky depths  
bright thought  
like a hibiscus petal

matter has her depths  
and secret tunnels in which  
ideas are celebrated  
in silent steps

on the seashore Aristotle  
stares into the perfect  
distances

it abides by itself like a stone  
within a stone, like fish within a fish  
a crab within a crab  
like a moment within eternity

### **BAY**

You stand at the gates of the bay  
and look far away

blue vapors cover the hills  
the light filtered silently  
through a garnet net  
of days

you happened once  
in an eternity and

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never to be repeated  
again

you exist in an instant  
you feel pain and pleasure  
at the same time

you separate the green  
from navy blue and white  
from black

every day  
you are closer to deaf—  
to nothingness

## **CHALKIDA**

Suddenly a vista opens up to you  
a blue expanse of ultramarine  
and turquoise that dissolve  
in salt water

distant hills and shores  
whisper almost silently  
a prayer of the moment  
in between life  
and time  
seagulls glide over the water  
and the fish disappear into  
the deep

the boats rock slightly  
in port clouds hover  
veiling houses on the hills  
where real men are  
born and die

*Translated from the Polish by the poet*

*Poland*

## Julio Pavanetti

### I WOULD RATHER BE RAIN

There was pure water in the rivers,  
there was oxygen and there were forests,  
there were symphonic melodies of multicolored birds,  
there were free men and animals  
that appeared like a dawn.

Today the torn reality  
does not let the air breathe of life,  
which becomes fog,  
it turns into smoke that suffocates, drowns,  
because they have pruned hope  
the joy of being tomorrow.

I see the darkness oscillate  
the movements of the shadow.  
The extinguished forest emerges,  
broken on the paths of always  
by the sighs that died trembling,  
in the formless night.

Let us listen to the thousand sounds  
of the leaves crackling,  
the clearing of the trees  
that give their voice to the complaint.  
Everything happens in this wasteland  
of undeclared destruction.

A thousand petrified sounds,  
slipping down the bark,  
have another kind of death.  
Time smells of charred leaves.  
But the world is still comfortable,  
even though they remove its lung.

I do not want to be part of the fire,  
I prefer to be rain and oxygen,

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and be part, with my voice,  
of the cry that erupted in the forests  
like a great sea of indignation  
that reverberates all over the world.

## **TIME HAD NO FEAR**

Time had no fear.  
The moon arrived, circular and pale,  
with its silver alchemy watering ether,  
embracing and covering its being.  
A bright reflection falling dormant over the water.  
The myrtle promised capsular and persistent chalices,  
alluvion of small white flowers.  
A diffused horizon painted the dormant breeze  
between the remaining light of the languished dawn.  
Near the stream, the myrtle dispersed its fragrance.  
Its constant and lustrous foliage  
made believe it brought down the twilight  
in its ephemeral crossing.  
Suddenly she emerged from the humid summer hours,  
my breath stopped and I fell like a cloud  
that stumbles with the sky.  
She descended slowly like dew landed in my soul  
alighted on my bare skin.  
Since then, heaven is contained in me.  
She was moon and sun, air and water,  
immutable light that covered the sphere.  
Time, amazed, forgot its own existence.

*Translated from the Spanish by María Juliana Villafañe*

*Spain*

## Hatif Janabi

### POETRY READING

I intended to delay my visit to Mother's grave.  
The sky was hastily spreading its maps.  
I suddenly halted at the Twentieth Revolution Square,  
where no revolutionaries moan; no guns poised.  
I stopped but, due to heavy dust and numerous pedestrians,  
I couldn't see the faces well.  
The walls and the stones were only witnesses  
mending, with the night's nails, the memory of oblivion.  
I recalled:  
here were erected statues;  
now, all departed in congruent with the calendars of years.  
The King disappeared; the Brigadier was removed.  
The landmarks, the roses, which applauded our success, humbled  
their heads.  
The signs became incomprehensible.  
There was swarming to another world.  
Even the *Imam* no longer cared;  
perhaps for the lack of time, or the petitioners multiplied.  
Everyone goes to his destiny;  
the day to its hideout; the politician to his perfidies;  
the poor to the illusory dream of feasts;  
the clergymen reap life's rewards and clarify  
what remains of myths.  
I lonely walked in the cemetery's road,  
searching long in the pockets of dusk.  
Finding no one,  
I took out this poem and began to rehearse,  
touching the hearing of the dead.

*Translated from the Arabic by Florida Ventura*

### THE DUBLIN HAT

I lifted my hat with its thin yellow lines  
like the furrows on the face of a woman sitting

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at God's door, waiting for fleeting mercy  
where the sky is gloomy,  
and plants climb the church facade,  
perhaps seeking forgiveness!

It was as if the streets were empty,  
and their sides stuck out like spears,  
no one could hear the lamentation or see the tears  
despite the crowd and the clashing glances.  
The glass of sight and the net of hearing were shattered  
and feelings were imprisoned behind tongues  
like jagged metal letters.

The winds of Birmingham rose from all sides  
they were furious as in Poland, as in Iraq!

My hat, which I had won on a rainy day  
near the "Famine Memorial" in Dublin,  
flew until it landed on the lap of a homeless woman  
right next to the empty beggar's cup.

So she put it on her head, tilting it slightly to the side,  
and with the other hand she picked up the broken mirror.

I did not inherit a spiderweb keffiyeh from my father,  
which I could wrap around my head when a storm comes,  
he only passed on to me his face, his bewilderment  
and the misfortune of his ancestors.

Am I Ophelia's delusion, or Hamlet's madness?

I walk bareheaded through the city of canals,  
axes and burning hills.  
The mirror is my mirror in the undulating time,  
and this grass is my grass in the wasteland of the world.

*Translated from the Arabic by the poet*

*Iraq*

## **Violeta Tančeva-Zlateva,**

### **THE FLOOD**

The Flood is coming  
not the biblical  
not the forty-day-lasing  
cry of heaven over the doomed race  
Our finite flood is coming  
the essence of history  
the fury of exodus  
Coming to eradicate us  
to make us decay  
to make all sparks of new inception  
die out

Dark and deep  
massive  
overflows us  
the Flood

*Translated the Macedonian by Elena Prendžova*

### **THE TREE ON THE HILL**

*To Aco Shopov*

You stand on a high hill  
All alone  
like a self-sprung tree  
with unreal clouds overhead  
and the being sunk in silence

Great winds are coming  
to fertilize the seed  
They wave the black sun  
and lead a passionate dance  
with our words

All poems born through blood and wailing  
rain down on us

Shabdaguchha

and they layer softly  
like snowflakes

*Translated the Macedonian by Zorica Teofilova*

## **SWADDING CLOTHES**

In tight swaddling clothes  
since birth  
you walk through years,  
wondering how to escape  
prejudices.

You don't see them  
with your limited view,  
but they are worse than the swaddling clothes.  
Your arms are tied  
you cannot move freely,  
your legs are tied  
so as not to spread them  
more than necessary.  
They are the ones who decide  
how much space you need.  
The only thing left to you  
is to figure out how to free your mind  
and your captured heart.

Staring at life like that,  
losing battles and your hair,  
tearing yourself from the past,  
eventually you realize:  
years have passed  
but the swaddling clothes  
remained in your soul.

*Translated the Macedonian by Natasha Papazovska-Levkova*

*Macedonia*

## Annabel Villar

### ONCE IT WAS EASY

Once it was easy  
to burn the boats of oblivion,  
to dive into the void with no net.  
Easier still and more painless  
to throw the keys  
down the lifted shaft  
that descends into hell.  
The fire of youth was burning  
and the world seemed  
an all-encompassing place.

Everything seemed to us  
tranquilising and undoubtable,  
because there was no void,  
because the inner life of furvscent sentiment  
was babbling, begging to know,  
to show itself in the corners,  
to go up to the altars  
where time was offered in sacrifice  
That very same unpardoning time  
dissolves red into ochre,  
only to turn into yellow with the passing of the years.

And nevertheless,  
when blackness seemed to cover everything,  
the mystery of tongues of light  
began to dilapidate life,  
mornings became different,  
just as discoveries also became  
different and new.

So now, I barely even wonder  
through which door I shall leave.

*Translated from the Spanish by Janine Troutman  
Uruguay*

Shabdaguchha

## Gaetano Longo

### A SHORT ODYSSEY WITHOUT A HERO

In the port where I never arrived at  
Someone continues  
punctually  
not to expect me.

I don't carry any luggage or gifts with me,  
only the absence of travel  
and all its consequences.

The ship, against the wind,  
cuts the waves and stirs them  
so as not to make sense of  
the chaos that surrounds them.

Nothing happens,  
absolutely nothing  
and the absent and warm wind  
blow on my face  
that are not there.

Maybe I should worry a little  
because no one continues  
punctually  
waiting for me  
in that port from which I would also have left  
but in which I never arrived.

*Translated from the Italian by the poet*

*Italy*

## Hussein Habasch

### HOW CAN I EXPLAIN . . .

How can I explain to a woman in whose country horses, mountains, lakes, and the scent of lilies abound, that I love horses, mountains, lakes and the scent of lilies and I love her more than horses, mountains, lakes, and the scent of lilies?

How can I explain to her that a little thread of the light red coat that she wears can make the place an endless field of anemones, and that a gentle smile on her face is enough to make cherry blossoms on the shoulders and arms of cities?

How can I explain to her that her elegance is enough to turn the heads of men from entire continents towards her, and that her gait is enough to make roads and alleys change directions and follow her footsteps?

How can I explain to her that her agility gives tremendous energy to the wings of butterflies and birds, and that her charm opens the eyes of the blind in the length and breadth of God's earth?

How can I explain to her that diamonds, emeralds, turquoise, amber, onyx and sapphire do not feel that they are precious stones except when they touch her neck, and that the sky brings its stars, moons, and galaxies closer to her so that it derives light from her brilliance?

How can I explain to her that her arrival is life, her departure is torture, and her absence is death?

How can I explain to her that the Rhine stopped flowing when it saw her, and wanted its goal to be in her navel or between her thighs?

How can I explain to her that the roses wanted to be her hat, and the mist of perfume to be her ear rings, and the fountains wanted to be her hair?

How can I explain to her that the ring on her finger is more important than the ring of Solomon, and that the bracelets on her wrists are

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more beautiful than all the bracelets that Cleopatra used to wear, and that the necklace that she wears is more precious than all the necklaces of Nefertiti, Semiramis, Zenobia, and all the queens, past and present?

How can I explain to her that her breathing is a poem more beautiful than all the love poems written by Pushkin, and that her delirium is better than a "Jamila" novel by Chinghiz Aitmatov, and that the movement of her hands is better than all the plays of Euripides, Aeschylus, and Sophocles?

How can I explain to her that her stature is a beacon, or an obelisk inscribed with words that only those who know the secrets of angels can decipher, and that her heart is the safety valve for the continuation of lovers in love and raising the world's affairs with it more and more, and that her spirit endows nature with sweetness, grace, and beauty?

How can I explain to her that I love her without telling her that I love her, and that she will remain in my heart, mind, soul, and life and will never leave?

How . . . ?

*Translated from the Kurdish by the poet*

*Kurdistan/Germany*

## **Tammy Nuzzo-Morgan**

### **WAR, WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR?**

Mothers Mary, Teresa, and Cabrini were spotted on the #17 bus,  
headed to the city to go shoe shopping.

Buddha sat cross-legged, waiting for his plane,  
while Jonathan Edwards read a magazine.

John Wesley, Bodhidharma, and Mary Baker Eddy  
contemplated the meaning of one and two and three.

Krishna looked at his reflection and saw Vishnu looking back  
at him chewing bubble gum.

The Dalai Lama and L Ron Hubbard argued politics, music,  
and art while sipping French wine.

Martin Luther marched at the protest, shouting how change  
is needed, and Zoroaster banged his drum.

Mohammed and Moses were searching land surveys  
as to where they should build their houses.

Confucius was heard reading from The Analects,  
as Lao Tsu was seen in Central Park writing a poem.

Jesus was whispering to his cousin, John the Baptist,  
about today's newspaper headlines.

Pythagoras put down the math problem to play a game  
of chess with St Francis of Assisi.

Ramachandra was seen talking to the incarnation of Mahavira,  
each texting with someone else.

Mani and Guru Nanak wore sunglasses and laughed  
while crowning each other in checkers.

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George Fox, John Wycliffe, and Joseph Smith debated  
the alignment of the stars in Tuyuca.

Adi Shankara and Emanuel Swedenborg played double Dutch  
with Baal Shem Tov and Brigham Young.

Helena Blavatsky, Aurobindo, Zarathustra, and  
Thich Nhat Hanh practiced downward dog.

Saint Teresa of Ávila listened while William Booth asked  
Ramana-Maharshi “Who are you?”

And all the while, all the gods that have ever been,  
are, and will be, were busy eating McDonald’s.

## **ACCABONAC LANDING**

Tell me why the sun glows red at dusk &  
I will tell you how the color glints in your eyes  
reflects the fire in your hair.

Explain to me how the air current makes  
the breeze swirls about our want-to-be-kissed faces &  
I will slowly explore the contour of your frame.

Teach me the names of the flora and fauna &  
I will caress you with Wordsworth and Whitman  
letting them lullaby us into a sleep only lovers know.

Let me steal away a few hours lying beside you  
allow me to remember, to forget & you will be  
complete, perfect, lacking nothing except my touch.

*New York, USA*

## Mindy Kronenberg

### LONE FLAMINGO

A flamingo was spotted  
on Georgica Pond  
just before the eager crowds  
would crush their way  
to the Hamptons.

A photographer captured  
Its statuary profile,  
curved, tubular neck  
pink feathered body  
impaled on the water

with a silvery stalk of one leg.  
It's the first time ever  
that a flamingo graced  
our shores. I remember seeing one  
on the Sun Coast highway

near Delray Beach, spreading its wings  
over the parched four-lanes,  
an avian acolyte floating  
over stop and go traffic, the cars  
bleating and gasping breath.

They call a group of flamingos  
a "flamboyance," but what to make  
of a singular streak against a sunset,  
enflamed ideograph among the reeds  
and cattails of Long Island,

a lawn ornament strayed from its flock.

Shabdaguchha

## SHIVER

Not what I thought  
when I was young,  
medallions of cold  
on my face, my hands

Or the slip of chilled air  
reaching under the arch  
of a rogue blanket,  
icing the heat of adolescent dreams.

What I called the cold  
sparked my mother's stare  
if I reached for the thermostat,  
dismissing the warmth of a wooly sweater

Or the frosted corner window  
of my beat-up first car  
that took duct tape in winter  
to keep crystals from cracking the glass.

The cold, as we knew it, billowed  
through the blankets taped on the  
air conditioner, crept from under  
torn stripping on a storm door

that sang like a musical saw.  
The cold that penetrated leather  
and bone, made our fingers  
numbed to pain, could not compare

with the frigid news that despite  
the chemical promise, the burning  
ritual and regimen, the mumbled  
prayer, your cancer returned.

*New York, USA*

## Robert Savino

### ARK OF DOUBT

The Bible has taught us of an ark  
How animals were paired to preserve the future

I face an arc, up to twelve feet high  
waiting for its orbit over home plate  
and me . . . to swing for the stars.

I observe the arc of a quarter moon  
as shadows creep upon the lake

I stare at the arc of a diver  
curve at the edge of a springboard  
to prevent a belly flop splash

I cast a line off the pier  
waiting for the pole to arc  
dragging a catch off the ocean floor

I watch the mouth of a scoop  
arc an orb of rainbow ice  
And I imagine Noah today  
hearing a voice in disguise  
from the edge of a new ark,  
challenged to define coupling choices  
from a blemished society  
trapped between arc of parentheses

### HARBINGER

For so long I've followed shapes of clouds  
and their inherent way to change form  
leave secrets behind;  
there mysteries below cold and murky waters  
once warm and clear when hearts were young

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where a breeze creates small sounds  
from the inner ear of seashells  
There were times sagacious travelers  
would chase shadows of themselves, passing  
where I stood ankle-deep in a spilling wave  
or sink into the muck at the mercy  
of the tide, that eddy of uncertainty  
Nights in the kitchen I brew a double espresso  
encouraged to stir away the bitterness  
and mix black sambuca into the darkness.  
The wall clock ticks away hours of wakedness  
the time to quaff everything I've learned  
before sleep takes on its own ritual  
before someone else tells the story  
before the inkwell potion dries out  
and my life story deteriorates like a damaged spine.

## **HIDDEN PLEASURE**

Shadows of waving trees between breaks of cloud-covered  
moonlight applaud with clapping branches as I walk gently  
through the night shaking off lonely tears of dark days.

There on a bench beneath a dim-lit lamppost two lovers  
are indiscreet in the darkest corner of the park.  
I'm the only passerby . . . and turn away.

By break of day when the first dog walker passes by,  
before the New York Times is delivered to the newsstand  
and the bustle and buzz begins, the only evidence,  
an outline of dew surrounds the imprint of behavior.

And before the horse and carriage arrives at 59<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup>,  
bliss beneath the boughs slips into ostentatious  
business suits to masquerade their appetite.

*New York, USA*

## **Teresa Kaczorowska**

### **AT MICHIGAN**

Dynamics of perennial car lines  
Heavens' power in skyscrapers  
Hubbub of aggressive commerce

Miles of one-storey suburbs  
The homeless without Id cards  
Immensity of loneliness

The elements clash and tumble  
Winds carry a meltingpot of races  
Flashes of new boundless energy

In Michigan . . .

### **PONDERING IN SPRINGFIELD**

When bony and tall Lincoln  
Used quill at candlelight  
Seated on a simple judge's chair and  
Later hard benches of the first Congress  
And the White House

European drawing-rooms wallowed  
In the soft luxury of their long history  
Divide amidst quarrels and bloody booty  
Unconcerned about the emerging power

Today the world's gold flows elsewhere  
The other hemisphere conquers by thoughts and luxury  
Even dictating how verses should be written

But Columbus' star-reaching energy  
Later got less clear and more conscious  
Of the world's fallen empires

Shabdaguchha

## **CHERRIES ARE GONE . . .**

Again cherries are gone—  
cherries of yet another summer

This year exceptionally sweet  
nurtured by  
unrelentless sun

plums again will follow cherries  
pear and apple trees will bear fruits  
sunflowers will lose their golden shields  
blackberries will turn violet

another summer will flit by  
like a jetplane overhead

but soon will come  
new cherries  
new plums apples  
sunflowers and blackberries

impermanence does not know  
the meaning of rest and pause—  
successive cherries and summers  
are full of meaning . . .

*Translated from the Polish by the poet*

*Poland*

## Alicja Maria Kuberska

### CURIOSITY

So many questions without answers.  
Another discovery is a step forward.  
I move slowly, blindly—  
amid countless question marks.  
I touch the great unknown.

A child still lives within me,  
and I rediscover the world anew.  
When I stop marvelling,  
my mind will freeze like lava—  
harden, lose its fire.

I don't want to forget  
what wonder and awe mean,  
the search for truth  
and the rejection of old values.  
I open the Akashic Chronicles.

### LOST DATA

I stand on an empty street.  
The cold wind accompanies me,  
tossing papers and bits of plastic carelessly.  
Rain lashes my face and hands like a whip.

Dusk has awakened the windows of nearby houses.  
They stare with hostile yellow eyes.  
I'm not going home;  
all addresses are strange to me.

Thoughts swirl in my head  
like a startled flock of crows.  
I remember nothing.  
Fear grips my throat, choking me.  
I belong to no one—  
loneliness pulls me into nothingness.

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I don't know my name or my roots,  
where I'll find safe shelter.  
My purse guardian of privacy,  
remains silent.  
I have no documents.  
I have no money.  
Keys shine, but to unknown doors.

I return from the void.  
My recovered identity shouts my name aloud.  
I push the nightmare out from under my eyelids.

## **DUSK**

Night slowly approaches.  
Minutes stretch out and pause,  
engrossed in the whispers of the past day.

Rush dies down—no longer needed.  
Night has its own rules,  
hearts slow their beat.

Dreams are released from minds  
desires intertwine with promises,  
and oblivion sprinkles dust on memories.

The moon in its next quarter dances  
above the rooftops of sleeping homes.

*Translated from the Polish by the Poet*

*Poland*

## Petar Tchouhov

### COLD SPELL

When the waiter brought me  
my steaming bowl of soup—  
as hot as if it had come straight  
out of the bowels of a volcano—  
the dusk outside was singing  
in the husky voice of a tramp,  
to the accompaniment of the rain.  
Two tables away a checkered old man  
was staring introvertedly into his plate,  
his ashplant, propped up against the other chair  
trying desperately, but in vain,  
to burst into blossom.  
The TV set behind the bar  
gave out gusts of perfumed laughter  
and in the eyes of all the girls  
I could see the world reflected—  
I was the only one  
who wasn't there!

### TAMING SPACE

What an enormous house,  
you could go round it on horseback,  
or better yet, on a roller-coaster,  
he thought as he entered.  
"Shall I show you the room  
where my shoes live?"  
She took the flowers and led the way.  
He could hardly keep up, he was soon out of breath,  
at its end the corridor twisted away like a broken limb;  
he saw a chamber full of hundreds and hundreds of shoes,  
he cried out with amazement, then with pain—  
he had collided with her wheelchair.

*Translated from the Bulgarian by Hristo Dimitrov and Jonathan Dunne  
Bulgaria*

Shabdaguchha

## **Katarzyna Georgiou**

### **DESPAIR**

I was drunk this afternoon  
you disturbed my inner peace  
saying you love me.

But our love has passed . . .

It's not our time anymore,  
even though you will always  
hold a piece of my heart.  
This is what hurts most.  
Piece of my heart is missing  
not to be given to another.  
Ever.

Can I still love you with the handicapped heart?

### **ALONE**

The end of January,  
cold, dark, snowy evening.  
The walls of my room  
are closing down on me.  
So,  
I'm out to feed the squirrels.  
Sitting under the huge pine tree  
I realized after some time  
that the nuts I'm throwing  
are touched by no one.  
No squirrel came to visit.

Friday night  
Just me, my cat and TV.  
I'm lonely.  
I cry, I carry an empty space  
inside me.

In the glow of a single lamp  
I look at the silent phone.  
The soft hum of the silver screen  
is just an irritating reminder  
that one more night I will sleep  
alone in a huge bed  
until you come.  
For the moment I will taste joy  
in your embrace,  
knowing I will let you go as usual.  
I'm lonely . . .

### **THE GODDESS**

Warm and salty sea waves' breeze  
whispers softly like a dream  
the evening Goddess in her beauty  
emerges slowly on the scene

like imagination's light  
in the mist of dark night's sheen  
her face glows with lover's pleasure  
and her body's worth of sin

mischief is dancing in her eyes  
like sapphires flashing blue  
precious feeling of love spreads  
with the shine of stars in the dew

*Poland*

## Sudhir Dutta

### SEEING THE WORLD IN THE PALM OF MY HAND 1

I feel better today, seeing the contours and the crooked alleys  
of the world in the palm of my hand.

Are these the incomprehensible scratches of God?

The mounds are well-formed; as if sitting on the slopes,  
a mother is boiling angers of the Baloch and Pashtuns  
on a pan.

At any moment, they could burst into splinters,  
like the long chained, broken hearts  
and the scattering surface of the moon.

Does the spear-like elaborate line, passing through  
the eyeball and piercing the middle of the Saturn ring,  
whisper about the extinct civilizations—  
and the killing mission behind them.

On an autumn afternoon in the ancient redwood forest,  
a few miraculous leaves, that were coming down  
like feather-hats—performed a sensational dance in the whirling  
wind.

The smell of invisible bodies, shortness of breath,  
broken beats, and the silent moans  
gradually stopped and vanished into the depths of the forest.

Are they the people who disappeared?

Did Amerigo Vespucci set foot exactly on  
this land?

No one is doing well these days.

The world war has started  
without even firing a single bullet.

### SEEING THE WORLD IN THE PALM OF MY HAND 3

Does anything remain in this world except books?

God Himself planted a knowledge tree in the Middle East!

That was the first in this world.

A bird, I learned, plucked the sacred leaf one by one  
and asked, “Read!”

It supposedly contains the last words of the universe.

It says, God has given the fatwa of death for the apostates and

that of the non-believers.  
However, mythological  
narratives and periodic history are being written.  
We too become foreign birds eating leftover grains!

Luckily, there was a civilization called Harappa—  
Collective farms, granaries, and sewage systems,  
and of course, the Rigveda—its hymns and recensions,  
did not fall into oblivion as the Saraswati River.  
Still, there exists Maya!

In this part of the world, the non-violent people  
once called the preventive war as yoga.

How could I say that those events are not true, there is a hidden  
possibility of more mysterious truth?

Soon, the silver lines will surely appear on the top of the Hindu Kush  
Mountain.

Our girls will go to school, they will hold the hands of their lovers,  
and poetry will be written on the moon-drenched antlers.

Soon, Zarathustra will, one day, rise from the Persian Gulf  
with Avesta in his right and a lantern in his left hand.

The space station was built just a few days ago.

A railway line will be set across the galaxy, and space trains will be  
launched in a few years.

*Translated from the Bengali by Hassanul Abdullah*

*India*

## Roberto Mendoza-Ayala

### THE FIRE

Fire lurks these days  
like a salamander, belly up,  
wallowing up on the remains  
of our memory files.

Warmth had been scarce.  
Suddenly the alarms went off,  
smoke drifted through the flames  
of reddened trees  
anticipating a murderous sunset.

Voracious tongues lick wood beams,  
now they light our gloomy nights  
perfuming quarrels with toxic resins  
sending swift embers to Gaza and Kyiv.

No one seems to be guilty of the initial spark,  
the tiny piece of evidence was consumed  
in the maelstrom of blames,  
incinerated at the giant common bonfire.  
The genetics of fire searches for its ancestry  
in the cracks of doors  
in the ashes of the 20th Century ovens,  
between crackling bricks  
and coals still sizzling.

It doesn't find the tender bread anymore,  
nor the plates glazed by temperature.  
We are busy fueling  
our false excuses to devastate  
forests of children with explosives.  
It's time of cremation urns.  
Scorched by bad news,  
fire summons us, and obliterates us.  
Is this combustion a natural phenomenon?

*Mexico*

## Naznin Seamon

### YOU STRIPPED ME DOWN

You stripped me down so completely  
I can't even meet your eyes.  
You tore my dignity apart—  
a hyena feasting on prey,  
puncturing my veins, letting life gush out  
while I lay unconscious in love—  
a blind, unseeing love it was.  
You bored into my heart  
like a woodpecker to a tree,  
only to preserve your world.  
You pushed me out of my shelter  
then left me stranded  
in the darkest alley of life, gasping for light.  
You shattered my dreams  
and stood me before the vast ocean,  
a sermon on the immensity of life—  
though shadows had long since settled  
across my thoughts,  
already frayed and steeped in sorrow.

### TELL ME WHERE TO FIND YOU

Tell me where I can find you—  
how far I must walk,  
or which signal carries your name:  
email, Facebook, smoke, WhatsApp, or a whisper in static.  
Just say it once—  
I'll come, fast as a shooting star.  
I'll slice open the world like a ripe orange,  
tear the hemispheres apart, pluck every shadow clean—  
like seeds from a blood-red watermelon.  
I'll drink three-quarters of the sea  
and cross sun-scoured deserts just to stand before you  
and ask the only question that remains:  
Why did you leave me alone?

*New York, USA*

Shabdaguchha

## Barbara Southard

### GHOST FORESTS

When saltwater seeps further inland, sweet gums  
last longer than oaks. Loblolly pines are the last  
to go, leaving silvery and blackened trunks  
stripped of branches, skeletal fingers  
reaching for the sky, forest morphing into marsh,  
sawgrass and black needle rush moving in.

Over the years they retreat to safer surroundings—  
pines, red maple, sweet gum, bald cypress,  
roots spreading out, seeds carried by the wind—

refugees from the land they once occupied  
leaving reminders of where they once had grown

### BROKEN GLASS

The glass fell and one piece broke off, leaving an empty space  
where part of the rim should be, the missing piece never found.

A large meteorite once fell in the Upper Willamette Valley  
in Oregon. The Clackamas people who lived there  
believed it came to the valley from the Sky People—  
that a union occurred between earth, sky and water.  
I can believe that story because I want to believe a story  
that tells me what I can't see is clearly there.

Today I drove far, to Snowflake Ice Cream Shop  
and I felt a fleeting release from an ache that does not  
want to go away—ice cream melting in my mouth.  
It's said that memory is malleable, continually edited  
during a lifetime, that the more we tell our stories  
the truer they become to us and that certainty does not exist.

Days pass by like the sight of spring goldfinches  
caught darting from tree to tree out of the corner of my eye.

*New York, USA*

## Erlend Wichne

### MIDSUMMER

it's peacetime now  
no one else on our earth  
everything at our disposal  
everyone's excited  
uncle is furious, uncle is proud  
he's shunned the evil  
the evil chief  
the evil as a necessity  
the evil is structure  
the evil was a forefather  
you see something evil  
you see others  
you see you show  
you show yourselves like adults  
you show no regret  
you show you have nothing to regret  
you show that you see it  
you show off  
you show yourselves like yourselves  
you show yourselves like her  
you draw her forth  
grandmother  
grandmother, grandmother was warm  
grandmother was wary  
grandmother was great-grandmother's daughter  
one falls short as a child  
you follow the missing  
this will be fair  
this will be right  
it's a pleasure for you  
it's a shame on you  
you go to bed at night  
play with a relative  
grandmother is gone  
you love grandmother  
great-grandmother took the chance

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on joys in hardship  
it can't be forgiven  
she must have seen that  
if forgiveness should exist  
they were together from the start  
they were two, that's it  
they're together, you reminisce  
they were family, they're kin  
kin like a tree  
goes up in carbon dioxide  
a modest flame  
ashes in the dark  
one can let memories smolder  
hollow people out impart heat  
you want to be close to them  
uncle is closer  
he loved his mother  
she wished him well  
you can come from your own family  
the concepts are small  
origins insignificant  
history fantastic  
cracks in the fireplace  
everyone who's outside  
someone wants in  
everything must have more  
uncle is beautiful  
grasps things on his own  
it's a burden to bear  
burdens make beautiful  
burdens are stupid  
the evil lively flowers grow  
bees disappear  
a chat that will repeat  
conflicts accumulate  
evil terrifies  
harbor with care

*Translated from the Norwegian by Olivia Lasky*

*Norway*

## Reshma Ramesh

### THIS POEM

This poem is a house with closed doors  
Where winter pauses to look into books  
For familiar ear marked pages or the absence of it.  
This poem is looking out of a window,  
Swapping cities split  
Beginning to draw the sea into its lines, line by line,  
Like a soldier walking with heavy boots thinking of home.  
This poem is a paper boat sailing from you to me,  
Black and white, wet, carrying children and islands who  
Dream of waking up beside their mother.  
This poem is a street where somewhere someday  
We would meet to find myself drawn  
To our absence with your breath in my silhouette  
This poem is a poem that arrives for the second time  
A boy covered in soot,  
Sound of his words, reminding you that  
You never left where you started

### CINNAMON

Because you left me some warmth this winter  
In the belly of a jack fruit smelling of  
Directions given by strangers to familiar places  
Where you are lost and yet know the way somehow.

Because you left me with only notions  
Like earrings dangling from a jasmine  
To let me wonder if all the things you  
Said was dissolved in the clock  
Or leaving as vapors of time.

Because you left me this place with fading maps,  
Crevices with unhurried ants, bruised eyed windows,  
Clogged bottles of hellos and goodbyes,  
Stainless steel tiffin boxes without yesterday's  
stale conversation, howling books, old coins and

Shabdaguchha

Kanjeevaram saris full of no logic or love.

Because you left me with this language  
Of amphibious rain and thoughts in transit  
I do not know how to be a person  
With all things straight or how to clean a family cupboard  
But I can only summon up courage  
Pretending to confront the rattle of your leftover hiss  
And the flat tire of your bicycle.

### **SMALL HANDS OF SIVAKASHI**

They say that even birds that do not fly have wings  
And Jasmines open like umbrellas in the rain  
In such a world in all its fairness tiny hands of Sivakasi  
shining in silver like jari on Amma's pattu sari  
rolling, rubbing, dipping aluminum onto paper  
Sulphur filled nostrils, mercury parched scalp  
Are building a legacy of blushing cheeks and gun powder  
Rotting like a bad fruit in dark windowless factories  
The small hands of Sivakasi are busy at work  
Tying and untying bijlis of hope,  
But these things happen every other day  
Somewhere in the corner we know that they exist  
And there are people who for money  
scald children with all their conscious  
And yet we drive to the open ground on Diwali  
And buy boxes of firecrackers, especially for our  
children so that back home together all of us can  
Burn these small hands of Sivakasi until the sky lights up  
and the earth below is filled with ashes and they  
the small hands of Sivakasi are buried with their mouth open

*India*

## Željka Avrić

### RIVERS STILL FLOW

rivers flow in us  
never to return  
their waters muddy  
their banks unearthly  
looking like our conscience  
asleep perturbed  
originating in mist  
undulating in unrest  
in oblivion they end

we wait on bridges  
while rivers still flow

rivers of dilusion  
simmer in us  
foam with desire  
swirl in floods  
waves heavy with tears splash  
against riverbeds keeping indifferent  
depths threaten silence  
fish mock the bait  
the drowning grasp at straws at necks

we are on opposite sides  
and rivers still flow

rivers of memory  
slide through us  
days strung like pearls  
get tangled up  
mornings welcome awakening  
the moon welcomes restlessness  
in every word we seek a sign  
questions posed by silences  
what's in a drop on a rock

Shabdaguchha

in a whirlpool under the willow tree

we come and go  
rivers continuously flow

### ARRIVAL

a boy pulled from the ruins  
trembles like a spilled guts

he doesn't sleep  
doesn't speak  
his eyes are huge

a boy who has seen death  
looks terrified by life

every sound is a scream  
and every light a fire

hope an unquenchable thirst  
that's why he dreams of water

one day  
will walk on it

awakening a sleeping conscience

*Translated from the Serbian by Aleksandra Djordjevic*

*Serbia*

## Richard Jeffrey Newman

### THE MEANING THE FRAME MAKES

Layla jumps up on the windowsill,  
ears cocked as if she too  
enjoys hearing David Clayton Thomas  
belt out from six stories down  
the lyric you copied whole in high school  
onto the card you snuck  
into Sharon's locker  
because she did indeed  
make you *so very happy*,

but you know the cat doesn't care about that,  
so you join her at the window,  
bring your head level with hers,  
and see she's eying a pigeon  
perched on the tree limb  
that when the wind is strong enough  
rakes the outside wall of your home  
like a small animal trying to claw its way in.

You ask aloud what Layla can't be thinking—  
"What's a pigeon doing out there this late?"  
meet her quizzical gaze  
with your own cocked eyebrows,  
then sit back down at your desk  
to scrutinize one more time  
the union grievance you've been honing,

but then Layla's rubbing love against your ankle,  
so you lift her into your lap,  
the small engine revving in her throat  
both a comfort and a prod  
to keep your hands on her  
not the keyboard,  
and as you oblige, a gray tabby  
you can't remember the name that  
comes to you, and with it

Shabdaguchha

the woman whose name you'll never forget,  
crouched naked,  
camera in hand,  
focusing her lens  
on the fire-escape-stillness-in-sunlight  
that other cat would climb out into  
whenever it could during the summer.

You watched from your bed,  
lazy after sex, grateful  
to have a lover so eager to make art  
that she'd jump from your arms  
to capture in the frame of her choosing  
a moment she didn't want either of you  
to miss. The photograph  
is somewhere in your closet,  
but that woman left your life decades ago,  
so you turn off your desktop—  
the grievance is sound;  
you'll send it in the morning—  
put Layla down,  
and pick up the pen  
you write your poems with.

Rubbing its tip against the empty page,  
you try to find a purring of your own.

*New York, USA*

## Gregory Cioffi

### THE TORTUROUS MEMORY

I look ahead, attempt to progress  
Fill my head with jubilant thoughts  
to ease my convoluted mind  
But like an intruder, it abruptly attacks  
Piercing its way through my defenses  
It invades my cognitive self and doesn't let go  
This torturous memory forever haunts me  
Misery, pain, torment, woe, agony—hurt  
What have I done to deserve this excruciating punishment?  
My thoughts dwell in this living cerebral hell  
Over and over the imagined rendition plays  
His touching, worse her consent  
The war in the mind creates projectiles that  
Penetrate my cage and detonate in my heart  
This frequent series of events now effect my exterior  
My countenance displays the union of anger and melancholy  
This gives way to seemingly random emotional actions  
Panting, I must try to control this strife  
Clear my mind of this vile scene  
With deep breaths and logical thinking,  
I convince myself that it's okay  
This torturous memory becomes a daily struggle  
How can I be victorious over this raging monstrosity?  
I cannot change the past, but I wish I could!  
Can the future heal me?  
Or will this recollection continue to be a torturous memory?

*New York, USA*

## **Binayak Bandyopadhyay**

### **RESCUE THE GIRL**

We have come, having passed through  
the public meeting that rose against terror.  
We have come to be blessed  
by the dust of our elders' feet.

We have come with elephants, horses,  
and half the kingdom in our hands.  
We have come with H.M.T. watches,  
with suits from Gwalior.

Taking the blessings of brooms, of kicks,  
of shoes hurled at our heads,  
forgetting the long tale of burning alive,  
we have come from the gray worlds of Bimbisara  
and Ashoka.

We have come for grandmothers.  
We have come for mothers and aunts.  
We have come for nieces, for sisters-in-law.  
And for daughters yet unborn.  
We have come for all of them, to say only one thing:

Please, please, please, please—  
rescue the girl!

### **RIGHT BEFORE BEDTIME**

My hands tremble  
as I start eating my dinner.  
A bowl of lentils next to the rice,  
and potatoes placed against it.

Where the land slopes down,  
the flood gets severe—  
There comes no relief, not even  
good words. People float

all over, and we find them  
as far as our eyes can see.  
And it's true that  
Beneath our eyes  
there are the mouths—  
at the end of today,  
tomorrow sprouts.  
Maybe, the commentary will change,  
and the astrologer's old sketch  
will find a new route.

If that happens, it would be a pleasure,  
my dreams won't sink in water.  
Adam and Eve, and the apple will swing.  
They will swing again and again  
on the branches of a dead tree.

## **ROUTINE**

Wrap a city by a village,  
tear a scene with the eye,  
make a beggar very poor that  
it has to die.

Turn the red poinciana flower white,  
and snatch the blind man's stick.  
Design the embroidered quilt on your own  
adorable and quick!

If someone wants a rhyme,  
write him an epitaph,  
The tree of chastity that shines,  
sin occupies its half.

Suck the tongue with your tongue,  
press the lips hard with lips.  
Look, Eve is coming out  
by cracking Adam's rib!

*Translated from the Bengali by Hassanal Abdullah  
India*

Shabdaguchha

## Roland Orcsik

### WITCH ISLAND

*“My skin sits on me like the shirt of Nessus.”*

(Derek Jarman: *Blue*)

I leaned my bike against a huge fallen trunk. Dezső ran forward, losing himself in the orgy of smells by the shore. The cracking of branches told me where my dog might be. I followed him slowly, made several detours to the water, knelt by the fluid sanctuary. A fish emerged, I was not sure whether it was a chub or a crucian—it is even less clear now—it splashed into the millpond calmness of the surface. I climbed back to the path, starting to call the dog, nowhere, began to be scared, he must have found a den for himself, hid himself away, never to reappear, the ancient law has won. I didn't give up, called him again and again. In the meantime, I saw blue flecks, blue flashes before me. I thought it was only my eyes dazzling, so I rubbed them. Flecks began to blur; they grew larger and multiplied. Finally blue flew from the sky, from under the earth, painting space, come, I'm your chalice, fill me, don't bark!

As if I've gone blind, but seen blue shades instead of nothing, blue tree trunks, blue lines of branches stretched like cobwebs, I spat blue suffixes, in the bay of the womb the rusty ball

laying low laying low

laying low!

Birds squawking blue, birds chirping blue, birds screaming blue, your mind is

a crater blue!

Fish crawled to the shore from the depth, gasping blue, blue phlegm flowing out from them. Hate is with you, stroke it! I breathed damp blue. The leaden air was getting heavier

drop dead drop dead drop dead drop dead

whether it is there or not just

pit yourself! Blue was getting at me, too, enmeshing me bit by bit.

You want to love me,

I want to love you, to love your whip,

in a stone vessel my heart your heart the prophecy is heart pulp Tisza  
centaur: I became half man  
half a blue reptile,  
now I am the lord of guts,  
be quiet, my kiss,  
be quiet.  
The skin stretched on my body, blue suffocated me, I gasped, I  
wanted to break out,  
I wanted to suck myself out from  
the corpse  
my seed my seed I saw  
got woven into got splashed into got pickled into.  
Then someone, or I, bit my hand. Blue fission on the narrow layer.  
Blue passion in the flesh.  
I drew.  
Blood alone. Blood alone is not blue. It is warm.

*Translated from the Hungarian by Zoltán Lengyel*

*Hungary*

Shabdaguchha

## Helga Kidder

### LISTENING

Some days I walk with my head down,  
eyes on the ground so my feet won't stumble.  
Not today. I'm caught inside as a storm growls  
over the ridge and lightning blitzes  
the hills toward the south.

Listening to the orchestra outside,  
I bend over the newspaper, contributing  
to the curve in my spine.  
There is no hardship in this.  
Unlike people in war.  
I see their mourning cries in color.

The sky slowly lightens as clouds fly off  
and the last drops linger on leaves.  
A student gunned down  
the teacher and four classmates.  
The article describes his smirk  
over the gash in lives.

Parents will never forget.  
Some days the sun burdens our shoulders  
and at night the stars throw a net over us,  
leaving us breathless.  
It is good to listen to the truth in our hearts.  
How can we measure their loss?

*New York, USA*

## Hiram Larew

### BLINK REDS

The thrash of a nightmare—  
Moans slashing and  
Scythes slicing through as  
Groans crack and  
Gulps choke

Then as sneers ignore  
*Help me*  
Or as stabs sink in  
Bone deep  
And murder festers

Or while  
Night's *Please please don't*  
Twitches and tosses

And then worst of all  
When what's killed is  
Suddenly bathed in red as  
It crawls out  
Onto pillows of sweat to  
Beg and swear for  
Anything wide awake

*Maryland, USA*

Shabdaguchha

## Ivan Pozzoni

### HOTEL ACAPULCO

My emaciated hands continued to write,  
turning each voice of death into paper,  
that he leaves no will,  
forgetting to look after  
what everyone defines as the normal business  
of every human being: office, home, family,  
the ideal, at last, of a regular life.

Abandoned, back in 2026, any defense  
of a permanent contract,  
labelled as unbalanced,  
I'm locked up in the center of Milan,  
Hotel Acapulco, a decrepit hotel,  
calling upon the dreams of the marginalized,  
exhausting a lifetime's savings  
in magazines and meagre meals.

When the Carabinieri bursts  
into the decrepit room of the Hotel Acapulco  
and finds yet another dead man without a will,  
who will tell the ordinary story  
of an old man who lived by windbreaking?

*Translated from the Italian by the poet*

*Italy*

## Margaret R. Saraco

### A STORY FOR OUR TIMES

“How are you?” asks a co-worker I don’t know well.

“Fine,” I lie.

“How are you?” my friend asks.

“Do you really want to know?” I ask. No response.

“How are you?” My partner asks.

“It has been a difficult day,” I say holding my head in hand.

“How are you?” the barista at the coffee shop asks.

“You really want to know?”

“What?” he says over the din.

“I’ll have a large tea,” I say.

“How are you, mom?” my daughter asks.

“I’m not sure I can tell you,” I say.

“Why?” she asks.

“Because” I say, stalling. I can’t lie to her.

“Mom, just tell me.”

“Bad week,” I say crying.

“Mom,” she says, “tell me.”

...so I do.

*New York, USA*

Shabdaguchha

## Phillip Giambri

### ARTIST UNDER SIEGE

I am no longer.  
I am disappeared;  
somehow vanished  
in a pandemic wilderness  
of chaos and opposition.  
I am no longer a poet.  
Words have failed me.  
Truth no longer exists.  
I am no longer an artist.  
Vision obscured  
by bodies in freezer trucks.  
I am no longer a dancer.  
Movement obstructed  
by Brown Shirt troops  
and marching moms.  
I am no longer an actor.  
My stage now an ER  
littered with unnamed  
broken and dying.  
I am no longer a musician,  
my soft mellow notes  
replaced by the screech  
of sirens in the night.  
I am no longer a singer.  
My voice overtaken  
by the wail of families  
for the lost and gone.  
All that remains of me  
is one sound;  
a single note:  
an Aum of peace,  
lost in the chaos  
of dying dreams  
and partisan anger.

*New York, USA*

## **Sam Powney**

### **CAT**

Let's put it this way:  
you like sitting.  
If possible, you sleep most of the day.  
But when the doorbell rings, you hide,  
scuttling into the darkest corner.

Games obsess you,  
you can't help yourself chasing after baubles.  
You cackle for hours  
at the flickering light on the wall  
in the long afternoon.

You don't drink enough water.  
You're fussy about food,  
but guzzle every morsel of your favourites,  
and the smell of treats  
sends you into a frenzy.  
You're getting a bit on the heavy side.

I'd tell you to change your lifestyle,  
but what do I know.  
I'm just your cat.

### **IMMIGRATION TOWER**

Walk the frenetic causeway  
over Wan Chai's bustling streets.  
Cross Gloucester and Hennessy  
to the tower of delice.

Eight floors of elegance,  
escalators of soft style.  
A sanctum of delicate  
expressions and smiles.

Shabdaguchha

Crinkle of a flotilla  
of creased photocopies.  
Aroma of fresh passport photos  
and sensual humanity.

Stares and whispers  
murmured and transient,  
queues of coiffed hipsters—  
definition of ambience!

Behind shaded counters  
Immigration Department nymphs and fauns  
gamble with infectious laughter  
while deftly juggling forms.

An experience like heaven.  
And I, a celestial being  
at five foot seven,  
can almost touch the ceiling.

Oh, to be seen,  
Oh, to be there,  
drinking it in—  
pure Baudelaire!

*Hong Kong*

## Anita Pawlak

### A BIRD WITH THE HUMAN HEAD

you perched on a branch  
the heads altered  
before my eyes  
once a bird  
once a human

I come for advice  
I cannot conform  
human existence  
is too much for me  
and you still elusive  
black feathers  
the daily mood

I immured myself within  
the hermetic walls of the well-being  
trusting that I fence off  
a void

you know  
there was no one to make me feel valued  
I searched for myself in you  
but I can find no words  
which would resurrect anything

do not stay silent!  
if the time is unfavorable  
let us banish time  
let us stand amidst  
frantic nights and days  
looking in each other's eyes  
that's the only way to survive

*Translated from the Polish by Anna Maria Stępień*

*Poland*

## Hassanal Abdullah

*from the epic*

**COSMIC CANTATA** [Book IV]

**46**

**A**

They drag the bright-eyed girl from the rickshaw,  
blindfold her, and haul her away . . .  
as earth number 000039 cries out in grief,

someone seizes its throat, drags it to silence.  
The girl is yanked, dragged, pulled,  
until they reach the city's brightest garden,

drenched in shadow and light.

There, they tear off her clothes.  
And then, two men, two human-shaped monsters,  
part her legs and hold them open.

Two more, like snarling dogs, grab her arms . . .  
and beneath the open sky, a beast that  
resembles a man violates her, savagely.

**B**

She screams. They take turns, one by one,  
raping her in frenzy, as blood gushes from her vagina,  
from her mouth, from her eyes . . . Her cries rise

with the wind, filling the air with lament.  
The sky burns with anguish. Exhausted from  
their sport, the beasts—those man-shaped hyenas—

abandon her limp, naked body under the shade of a tree.

They lounge nearby, snacking, sipping tea and coffee,  
chuckling softly, taking a nap . . . and then, rising again,  
they resume their torment—rape her again and again.

47

**A**

When . . . in the stench of violation, the girl  
regains her senses . . . in dim twilight,  
she barely sees how the teeth of five beasts

slowly sink deeper and deeper, piercing  
every pore of her body . . . she can feel  
nothing at all. The news spreads everywhere . . .

everyone starts speaking about the girl.  
The TV shows her picture, the radio hosts a recital  
of self-composed poems, flyers are printed . . .

the stone, the stars, and I—all of us  
pass around the image of the girl . . . we  
feel immense pain. Yet, many of us, in secret,

find joy imagining her ravaged body—  
her perfectly sculpted breasts, her every curve  
becoming fuel for the silent pleasures

**B**

that shame us later . . . and still, we weep for her.  
But it never crosses anyone's mind to rescue the girl  
from that dazzling park in the heart of the city.

We are terrified of the beasts . . . we too become  
beasts, while the police sleep peacefully  
through the night, and the beasts gnaw at her flesh,

lick the clotted rivers of her blood. By  
the afternoon of the next day, the police return—  
with her bones . . . brittle, hollow, dead . . .

*tora-tokka . . . tora-tokka . . . tokka-tokka-tora . . .*

*Translated from the Bengali by Sudipto Chatterjee  
New York*

## Yusuke Miyake

### Participating in the Indian Poetry Festival, OALF 2024

I was invited to participate in OALF (Odisha Art & Literature Festival) 2024, an Indian poetry festival held from November 29th to December 2nd. The first three days were held in the city of Bhubaneswar, and the plan was to go to the tourist destination of Konark on the last day, but due to a family issue I had to return home earlier than planned and was unable to go to Konark. So I will report on the first three days. This festival is for art and literature, but in reality it was mostly about poetry and literature,

All of the people from overseas, including myself, were poets. The majority of the other participants, who came and went at the venue over the three days, were Indian writers, poets, journalists, people from publishing companies, and university students who were just observing. The reason I ended up participating in this poetry festival was that my friend Azam Abidov, an Uzbek poet, is good friends with Manu Dash, the festival's director, introduced me to him. Manu Dash is an Indian poet, editor, and publisher. He seems to be about a generation older than me. He is always full of energy. He was busy managing the event, so I didn't have much time to talk during the festival. Odisha is the state of Orissa, one of the states in the southeastern part of India. The state capital is Bhubaneswar. The official language is Odia. The main purpose of this festival is to promote the culture, language, and literature of this region, and Manu has actually published a thick book compiling the literature of this region. As Reshma, an Indian poet whom I met last month, said, in India, you can meet people who speak completely different languages just 10km away.

Also, an Indian writer I met this time said that there are as many as 4,000 different languages in India. (A conservative estimate is 1,000.) These are not just dialects, but completely different languages. I have long been interested in the origins of the Japanese language, and therefore found Susumu Ohno's theory that "Japanese originated in Tamil, a language spoken in southern India" extremely interesting. This theory has been rejected by the linguistics community, and there is now a wide range of new evidence, so it is unclear whether it is true or not, but in any case, I respect him. When

I asked a poet who was also participating this time, he said that there are some people in Singapore who use Tamil.

It is not absurd to think that it has spread north to Japan. However, Japan may be outside the scope of Monsoon Asia. It was interesting that in the discussions at this festival, there was also a proposal to liven up the literary sphere from the perspective of Monsoon Asia. I wondered if it would raise some kind of issue if I recited a poem about the relationship between Japanese and Tamil this time. I wrote it on the plane on the way there and performed it at the festival. The reaction was not very good. Haha. I guess if there are 4,000 languages in India, people will say, "Oh, I see."

When you look into the history of Odisha, keywords that come up include the famous Indian epic poem, the Mahabharata, the Kalinga Kingdom, and King Ashoka of the Maurya Dynasty. What is Odisha culture? My interest is growing. I would like to look into this area further. The festival generally lasts for three days (apparently the final tourist destination, a trip to Konark in Puri, is a separate event. I would have liked to go there), and we poets from overseas have the opportunity to read our poetry for one to one and a half hours every day. The readings on the first and third days took place at the main venue.

The first day was held at the Guru Kelu Mohapatra Odissi Research Centre, and the second day was held at ASBM University. The poems I recited on the first day, "Stray Dog," which I wrote on the plane on the way there, were better received than I expected. I also recited poems related to India, such as "Mohenjo Daro" and "My Tanka," which I wrote on the plane. On the second day, I recited two poems I had written that morning. "Toilet Paper" was inspired by the lack of toilet paper in the hotel, and "Toilet Paper" was inspired by an incident at the launch party the night before.

I got the idea for "Bustling Noise." The former was well-received by fellow overseas poets, and a young man at the venue exclaimed in admiration, "How can you write poetry like that?" It also attracted the interest of university students who participated in the Q&A session, so I guess it was a success! The whole university welcomed us warmly, and the university students all showed an interest in us, so I was very happy. The reading on the third day allowed us to read for a longer period of time, so I was able to read many poems. Most of these were also written during the festival.

"Helicopter," "Ganges," "Words," and "Satellite," which was inspired by my memories of Uzbekistan, where I went last month.

Let me introduce some of the poets who joined me from overseas. First, there is Hassanal Abdullah, a poet from Bangladesh who lives in New York. His native language is Bengali, but his poetry has been translated into many languages and he has won many international poetry awards. He has also participated in many poetry festivals overseas. Recently, a collection of his poems was translated into Polish. Poland is the most prosperous country for poetry, and Hassanal was very complimentary about it. He also recited a collection of sonnets that he had created himself (different to the so-called Petrarchan and Shakespearean sonnets). His recitation performance was outstanding,

He got the whole audience involved and had a great time. His poem about "eating" in Bengali was probably the best received at the venue and at the university. He and I became good friends when our rooms were next to each other at the hotel. We always had breakfast together. His wife is also a poet and a university professor. She apparently teaches in America. What an incredible couple. His son is a lawyer in New York. Although he now makes his living as a writer (he is said to have written over 60 books), he was originally a mathematics teacher. He also edits anthologies of works by international poets.

In his eyes, I'm probably nothing more than an amateur, but he was kind enough to tell me about the state of poetry overseas and the state of poetry festivals. His thoughts about his home country, Bangladesh, with its complicated history and political situation, could often be glimpsed from his words.

Next on my list is Sam Powney, a poet from the UK who lives in Hong Kong. As he himself says, his poems are full of humorous wit. In other words, they are similar to my own. As I expected, he was the one who resonated with and was most interested in my poetry. He has come to Tokyo many times with his wife,

He is a big fan of Japan. He was happy when I gave him my poetry collection "Kirei" as a present. His wife also said, "What a beautiful book!" He lives in Hong Kong, so he can speak Chinese, and his poetry collection contains Chinese characters. So he can read some of my poetry, tanka, and haiku. He was also interested in the poem I recited on the first day, and I was happy when he asked me to send it to him online. I would like to choose a poem from his poetry

collection and translate it into Japanese sometime soon. He is very friendly and easy to talk to, and is considerate, so I would like to keep in contact with him.

MK Ajay is an Indian poet who lives in Hong Kong like Sam, and is deeply involved in the festival. He is very gentle and kind. He is very considerate, and I was grateful that he treated me, a total stranger, with care. He also writes haiku. His importance is evident from the fact that he was present at almost all the discussions at the festival. At the wrap-up party on the first day, he was quick to notice that Hassanal and I (especially me) were exhausted. I am truly grateful.

The poets from Singapore, Alvin Pang and Daryl Lim Wei Jie, seem to be regulars at this festival. They often show up at the discussions at the festival. However, because they arrived later in the festival, I wasn't able to talk to them very much. I have fond memories of reading together at the poetry reading at ASBM University. I wonder if we'll meet again someday. Roland Orcsik, a poet from Hungary, is a really funny poet. He always tells jokes and livens up the atmosphere. He's the mood maker of the overseas team. However, when he reads his poems, he has an overwhelming presence. He whispers at times, and he exquisitely manipulates the speed of his reading. One might say he has control over the silence. He has participated in many poetry festivals, and there is an air of ease about him. He also writes novels, and his second book is about to be published. It features a transgender protagonist. By the way, he also seems to have a deep knowledge of music, and was very familiar with the old jazz scene in Japan. I also enjoyed talking with the local poet, Rimina Mohapatra. She was interested in haiku, so I explained to her what a seasonal word is, how it differs from tanka, and so on, and she was happy to listen.

A wide variety of topics were discussed at the festival, including war, political correctness, the Indian publishing industry, poetry translation, transgender issues, and more. What interested me the most was the talk by poets from Singapore, India, and Hong Kong about building stronger solidarity and promoting the Monsoon Asia literary sphere. As a Japanese person, I had never really thought about such categorizations, so I found it interesting. Let's stop being so hung up on looking west! In other words, I understand that sentiment very well. To put it simply, the Nobel Prize and so on.

There was also talk of why they would be grateful. However, it was interesting to see Hassanal disagree with that during the Q&A session. The Q&A session on transgender people was also very heated. In fact, in this case, it was more of a clash of emotions than a debate. So, this festival can be roughly said to be made up of two elements: discussion and poetry readings. Since the focus of the festival was on famous Indian literary figures and poets rather than on us, the foreigners, there were also many Indian publishing company representatives. Well, in that sense, I think that in their eyes. It probably wasn't. That's because a poet who has only written works in Japanese means nothing to them. Hassanal, Roland and Sam naturally have poetry collections in English, but my English is only half-baked, so they probably thought, "Who is this Japanese guy?" But that's fine. I believe that true globalism is true localism. So I'm not shaken by something like that at all. I think it was during the poetry reading on the third day that I greeted the audience by saying, "Today I will be reading poetry on behalf of the great Japanese literature. . . well, I'm just kidding." It fell flat, but.. . I was only half serious. Apparently Japanese, Korean and Chinese literature sells well in the Indian publishing industry, and Hassanal said, half enviously, that Korean literature became world-famous because of the active backing of the Korean government. (I don't know if that's true or not) I've heard that foreign literature hardly sells in Japan these days, while Japanese literature sells overseas, and I guess that's exactly what it means. Anyway, the conversation went in a strange direction, but I really enjoyed the festival.

And I was very happy to have the opportunity to experience India (although it wasn't my first time in India) and Odisha. It was interesting. Not only my fellow overseas poets and local poets, but also the young people from universities and those who came to the festival were all kind and interested in us, which was wonderful. One university student asked me, "How would you write about your experience at this festival?" This was my humble response. I hope I was able to respond to her curiosity and kindness, even just a little. It was the same in Uzbekistan, but why are young people so wonderful in every country? Is this the only thing that is common throughout the world?

India. I may return, and hopefully my poetry will have progressed a little by then.

*Japan*

## কানাইলাল জানা

### ভরকেন্দ্র

স্পষ্ট করে বলা ভালো ধনুকের মতো বাঁকা পিঠে যখন আছড়ে পড়ে স্নিগ্ধ বিশ্বাস, সে পায় শস্যের মনোনয়ন। কঠিন সত্যের উত্তাপে যে কোনও দুর্বোঁগ তখন উপমা উপমেয়। খয়েরি সূর্য ওঠে ভালবাসার ছাদ বেয়ে। অনুতাপ ধেয়ে যায় পার্বণের শেষে। জল্লাদের খড়্গ ভেঙে দু'টুকরো হয় ময়ূর পাহাড়ের অন্তরালে। দিগ্বিদিকে প্রবল তৃষ্ণা, দিগ্বিদিকে মৌন মুখ পায় ঝরা বকুলের ভাষা। মন্দিরার মালধে জেগে ওঠে মরা বাঁচার ঐকতান...

হৃৎধ্বনি দ্রুত হয় ছায়ানৌকোয়। ব্যর্থতার চারপাশ থেকে সরে যায় অকাল বৈশাখী। নাভিচক্রে গুরু হয় ফুল ফোটার দুর্মর খেলা। কৌণিক আলো ফেলে নশ্বরতার ডানা খোঁজে লীলাময় আনাচ কানাচ। নুনজল, পুঁটিমাছ, দেশলাই বাস্র থিতু হয় মহাবিদ্যার ভরকেন্দ্রে....

### কল্পরাজ্য

বরাবরের বাসনা এমন একটি রাজ্য গড়ি যেখানে প্রতিভাকে তুলে ধরে মহাজাগতিক মুগুর। ঘুমন্ত দেবদারু বিলি করে ভুবন ভোলানো হাসি। কাঠ ফাটা রোদ ছড়িয়ে যায় আন্তিক্যবাক্যে। বাঁশের বাঁশি হাঁকে ওঁ শান্তি ওঁ শান্তি। ব্যাকুল সন্ধ্যা সাজিয়ে রাখে হাত খরচের পসরা। ফাঁপা কলসি সঞ্চয় করে অগ্নিজল। বজ্রপাত ছিন্ন করে আত্মঘাতী সংলাপ। হৃদিপদ্ম গড়ে তোলে জোনাকির পাড়া। ষড়রিপু নামায় জ্যোৎস্নার প্লাবন। চাওয়া পাওয়াকে নিশ্চিত করে গেঁড়ি শামুকের ক্ষুৎপিপাসা। স্বর্ণযুগের খোঁজে যায় কীর্তন-পালা...

এবং যেখানে বাঘছাল পরে দিন কাটায় মায়াবী অপরাধ। বোধিবৃক্ষর ডালে বসে পা দোলায় সাধনতন্ত্র। ঝাঁঝি ডাক দিয়ে ধোয়া হয় প্রত্যেক উঠোন। বেহালা বাদকের ভূমিকায় মশগুল শিল-নোড়া। অন্তরীক্ষে তোলা থাকে পাপপুণ্য...

কলকাতা

## সৌরভ সিকদার

### একজন সাধারণ মানুষের কথা

আমি খুবই সাধারণ মানুষ  
আমার রক্তের গ্রুপও খুব কমন, বি পজেটিভ  
সাধারণ মানুষ বলেই লুঙ্গি পরতে কোনো লজ্জা হয় না  
দুপুরে খাবার পর আমার ঘুম পায়, ঘুমের মাঝে  
আমি নাকও ডাকি, তা নিয়েও কোনো লজ্জা নেই  
শীতকালে গায়ে সরিষার তেল মাখতে পছন্দ করি  
প্রায়ই হাত ও পায়ের নখ বড়ো থাকে, নাকের লোমগুলো  
বাইরে বেরিয়ে আসে, কুলি করার সময় শব্দ হয়  
কথাও বলি বেশ জোরে, বেশি কথা বলার জন্যে  
লোকে বাচাল বলে, তার জন্যে আমার কোনো লজ্জা নেই  
সাধারণ মানুষের মতো আমার চুল পড়ে যাচ্ছে  
মুখে, কপালে ভাঁজ পড়ছে  
সাধারণ মানুষের মতোই ক্ষুধা লাগলে  
খেতে ইচ্ছে করছে, চা খেতেই ভালবাসি আমি,  
কফি তো অসাধারণ মানুষ খায়  
চিনি দিয়ে এবং শব্দ করেই চা খাই আমি।  
অনেকেই আমাকে তাই খ্যাত বলে সম্বোধন করে  
কিন্তু এসব নিয়েও আমার বিন্দুমাত্র লজ্জা বোধ নেই, নেই মাথা ব্যথা,  
কচু দিয়ে ইলিশের মাথা আর মোটা চালের ভাত  
খেতে পছন্দ করি বলে সঞ্চয়পত্র কেনার কথা ভাবিনি কখনো  
রাজনীতি নিয়েও আমার কোনো মাথা ব্যথা নেই  
টকশোতে এসব আজাইরা প্যাচাল ভালো লাগে না বলে  
নাচ গান আর ঢিসম ঢিসম বাংলা ছবিই আমার পছন্দ  
আমার ভোট কাকে দেবো কিংবা কে দিয়ে দিচ্ছে  
ওসব নিয়েও কোনো ভাবনা নেই, শুধু  
চাল-ডাল-তেলের দাম বাড়লেই মাথাটা টনটন করে  
কাউকে কাউকে শ্যোরের বাচ্চা বলে গালি দিতে ইচ্ছে করে  
বিদ্যুৎ চলে গেলেও আমার তেমন একটা খারাপ লাগে না  
অনেক আগে গ্রাম থেকে আসার সময় একটা  
তালের হাতপাখা এনেছিলাম, সেটা এখনো বেশ হাওয়া দেয়।  
আর অন্ধকার? সেতো আগে থেকেই অভ্যস্ত

বাথরুমে বদনার মতোই, ভদ্রলোকেরা নাকি টিস্যু দিয়ে পরিষ্কার করে,  
আমি সাধারণ মানুষ আমার পানিই পছন্দ ।  
আমি আসলেই সাধারণ মানুষ আর তাই  
খেতে ঘুমাতে আর সঙ্গম করতে খুব ভালবাসি  
সবুজ ঘাস, ফসলের মাঠ, নদীর নরম জল, মেঘের ডাক, শরতের নীলাকাশ  
আমার পছন্দ ।  
আমার শুধু অপছন্দ স্বপ্ন দেখা, তারপরও মাঝে মাঝে  
আমি একটা স্বপ্ন দেখি শেষ রাতে  
স্বপ্নটাও খুব সাধারণ: ভর দুপুরে আমি দাঁড়িয়ে আছি  
শাহবাগের মোড়ে, কারা যেনো আমার লুঙ্গি খুলে নিচ্ছে  
কারা যেনো আমার ডাল ভাত বদনা তালের পাখা আমার গল্প গান ভাষা ভাবনা  
সুর চেতনা সব  
চুরি করে নিয়ে যাচ্ছে, তাদেরকে যেনো আমি কোথায়  
দেখেছি, হ্যাঁ মনে পড়েছে; টেলিভিশনে—  
ভাদ্র মাসের রোদে ঘামতে ঘামতে আমি চিৎকার করি,  
শুয়োরের বাচ্চা, শুয়োরের বাচ্চা বলে ।  
স্বপ্ন শেষ হবার পর মনে হয়, আচ্ছা আমরা সত্যি সত্যি কেনো  
চিৎকার করে ওদের ‘শুয়োরের বাচ্চা’ বলতে পারি না?

আমি, এবং আমরা সাধারণ মানুষ বলেই হয়তো!

ঢাকা

Shabdaguchha

## জাহিদ সোহাগ

### হয়তো বাড়ি

কল খুললেই রক্ত বেরিয়ে আসবে, ভয়ে, মধ্যরাতে বাথরুমে দাঁড়িয়ে থাকি;

বাতি নিভিয়ে ভাবি, পার্থক্য তো কেবল রঙের, আজলা ভরে হাতমুখ ধুয়ে নেই,  
আর ব্রহ্মতালুতে রাখি ভেজা হাত;

হয়তো, বাড়িটার শিরার ভেতর রাতেই বয়ে চলে রক্ত, আর দিনের বেলা ভ্রম;

আমি বাড়িটাকে ফটোফ্রেম থেকে খুলে এনে চেয়ারে বসাই, আমিও বসি তার  
পায়ের কাছে, বলি, ‘আমাকে ছিন্ন করছো তুমি, খাত্তী, তোমারই নাড়ি কেটে?’

সে চুপচাপ সাদা দেয়ালের দিকে তাকিয়ে থাকে, যেখানে পিঁপড়েরা উদ্বাস্তর মতো  
পেরিয়ে যাচ্ছে বিশাল প্রান্তর।

ঢাকা

## তুষার প্রযুত

### প্রসঙ্গ: অনুভূতি

এ ঘরে অন্ধকার দিয়ে গড়া বিনম্র মর্মর প্রধানত আমার শব্দের কারিগর। স্পর্শ লাগলে ভেঙে যেতে পারে। ছড়িয়ে যেতে পারে মর্মরিত ধ্যান। এখানে শব্দ দিয়ে তৈরি হয় গল্প কবিতা অভিজ্ঞান অর্থাৎ মনের প্রতিটি মেরুতে চলে নির্মাণ এবং বিনির্মাণ।

যদি তুমি একা এ ঘরে আসো দেখবে প্রজ্ঞাপূর্ণ একটি ছবির অবয়ব জীবিতের রূপ ধরে চেয়ারে বসে আছে তক্ষকের মতো। যাদুবিদ্যায় পাওয়া এসব দৃশ্য আমার আগে থেকে শেখা। এমন বিদ্যা নিয়ে গভীর অন্ধকার পাড়ি দিয়ে প্রতিদিন আমি মানুষের কাছে হাজির হই। অথচ যাদের সামনে থাকি তারাই আমাকে খুঁজতে থাকে। ফলে আত্মপ্রতিকৃতি বদলে ফেলে ঘরের দেয়ালে রং হয়ে মিশে থাকি, ঈশ্বরের রূপ ধরে ভান করি, আর পর্বে পর্বে দেহান্তর ঘটাই।

অবাধ্য হরিয়াল মহার্ঘ সময় শূন্যে উড়িয়ে চলে যায়। ছবিয়াল চিত্রকল্পে বাসা বাঁধে আর নিজস্ব দরজা খোলা রেখে কবিতুকু পালিয়ে যায়। আবার সময় হলে ছদ্মবেশ বাইরে খুলে চুপি চুপি ঘরে ঢোকে। নিসর্গের দেয়ালে কল্পনা দিয়ে আঙ্গনা করে নিজেকে জড়ো করি নিজের ছায়ায়।

একদিন শূন্য থেকে পড়ে অনুভূতি ভেঙে যায়—বুঝতে পারি, মূলত যাদুবিদ্যার এই ঘরে আমাদের প্রবেশ আছে কিন্তু অধিকার নেই।

ঢাকা

## চন্দন দাস

### একদিন

যেদিন সবাই একে একে চলে যাবে  
শুধু জেগে থাকবে প্রকৃতি বসুন্ধরা  
নিস্কর দুপুরে শোনা যাবে ঘুঘুদের ডাক  
মাথা উঁচু করে বন্ধু গাছেরা দাঁড়িয়ে।

ভুলগুলো ভেসে উঠবে মনের ক্যানভাসে  
ভাসমান জীবনে আঁচড় স্ততিস্মৃতি সব  
ভাঙাগড়া জোড়াচোখ স্বপ্ন হারানো খেলায়  
একে একে যেদিন সবাই চলে যাবে

কৃষ্ণা দ্বাদশীর রাত ভোর হলে  
পারবো না আমিও ঘুমোতে,  
চেতনার মালা পরে এমন প্রহরে  
হয়তো উঠবো জেগে একাকী মানুষ!

মেদিনীপুর

## সম্পাদকের জার্নাল / **EDITOR'S JOURNAL**

### গ্রীক কবিতা উৎসবের শেষ দিন

আজ খালকিদা শহরে আমাদের শেষ দিন। আগামী কাল যে যার গন্তব্যে চলে যাবেন। কারো সাথে দেখা হবে, আর কারো সাথে হয়তো জীবনে আর কখনোই দেখা হবে না। এটাই নিয়ম! এটাই জীবন! আজ একটু দেরিতে হাঁটতে বেরলাম। আকাশ মেঘে ঢাকা। গুঁড়ি গুঁড়ি বৃষ্টি। কাল সারারাত দুই কানেই ব্যথাটা প্রচণ্ড আঘাত করেছে। ঘুমাতে দেয়নি। আজ তাই শব্দ নিয়ন্ত্রণ যন্ত্রটি পরেই বেরতে হলো। গতকাল আমার বেশ কয়েকজন কবিবন্ধুর কবিতা ইংরেজিতে পড়লাম। সময়ের অভাবে শেষ পর্যন্ত নিজের কবিতা পড়া হলো না। প্রফেসর নিকোলাস বার্প একবার লিখেছেন, “হাসানআল নিজের থেকে অন্যের কবিতাই বেশি পড়েন।” ডেলফিতে এপোলো সেটাই আমার জন্যে নির্ধারণ করে দিলেন। সম্প্রতি একজন পোলিশ কবি-সমালোচক Marcin Szyndrowski আমার কবিতা নিয়ে লিখেছেন, “He doesn't shake hands. Rather he puts a maze in front of him. But a labyrinth of meanings, emotions and philosophical tracks that—if only we dare—open up a space of extraordinary poetry, completely different from what the European poetry school has used us to.” কাল বন্ধুদের কবিতা পড়ে ও শুনে আমার কিন্তু মনে হলো এঁদের কেউ কেউ আমার মনের কথাই বলছেন। আমি এইসব কবিবন্ধুর কাছে কৃতজ্ঞ তাঁদের কবিতা আমাকে পড়তে দেবার জন্যে। বিদায় বেলা এরিস্টটল বললেন, “তোমার সাথে নিউইয়র্কে বসে চা খাবো! প্লেটো কবিদেরকে তাঁর আদর্শ রাষ্ট্র থেকে কেনো দূরে রেখেছেন তা নিয়ে বিস্তারিত আলাপ করা যাবে।”

### আরবি ভাষায় দশ কবিতা

ইরাক থেকে প্রকাশিত *Al Aqlam* পত্রিকায় আমার দশটি কবিতা প্রকাশ পেলো। কবিতাগুলো ইংরেজি থেকে আরবি ভাষায় অনুবাদ করেছেন কবি হাতিফ জানাবি। আমার কবিতা নিয়ে তিনি একটি দীর্ঘ প্রবন্ধও এই কবিতার সাথে প্রকাশ করেছেন। পত্রিকাটি বাগদাদে অবস্থিত মিনিস্ট্রি অব কালচার থেকে প্রকাশিত হয়। সম্পাদককে ধন্যবাদ প্রাচুর্ঘ্যে আমাকে প্রজেক্ট করার জন্যে। আর অশেষ ধন্যবাদ, কবি হাতিফ জানাবিকে। তিনি একাধারে পোলিশ, ইরাকি ও ব্রিটিশ কবি। আমি আনন্দিত!

### নিউইয়র্কের মূল ধারার সাপ্তাহিকে আমার কবিতা

আমার একটি ইংরেজি কবিতা ‘দ্যা লং আইল্যান্ডার’ সংবাদপত্রে ছাপা হলো। এই সংবাদপত্রটির প্রতিষ্ঠাতা ওয়াল্ট হুইটম্যান। ১৮৩৮ সালে প্রথম প্রকাশ পায়। কবিতাটির নাম ‘ফল’ (Fall)। কবিতাটি প্রকাশ করার জন্যে কবি জর্জ ওয়ালেসকে ধন্যবাদ জানাচ্ছি।

গত প্রায় ৪০ বছরে বাংলাদেশের সব সংবাদপত্রেই কোনো না কোনো সময়ে আমার কবিতা ছাপা হয়েছে। কলকাতার ‘আজকাল’ও ছেপেছে। তবে লিটলম্যাগের বাইরে আমেরিকার মূল ধারার সংবাদপত্রে এই প্রথম আমার একটি কবিতা ছাপা হলো।

## হল ভর্তি কবি

লং আইল্যান্ডে পৌঁছে দেখি হল ভর্তি মানুষ। অধিকাংশই কবি। ট্যামি নুযজো-মারগান সম্পাদিত দু’টি এন্থোলজির প্রকাশনা উৎসব। ট্যামিই অনুষ্ঠানের আয়োজক। ওদিকে আজকের আবহাওয়া ছিলো খুবই বাজে। সারাদিন ছিলো কুয়াশাচ্ছন্ন। ৪৫ মাইল গাড়ি চালিয়ে যেতে একঘণ্টা চল্লিশ মিনিট লেগে গেলো। গুগোল ম্যাপ বারবার ‘সামনে ভিজিবিলিটি খুব কম’ বলে সতর্ক করে দিচ্ছিলো। তবে গাড়ি যথাস্থানে পার্ক করে হল রুমে ঢুকতেই ট্যামি নুযজো-মারগান, জর্জ ওয়ালেস, মিন্ডি ক্রোনেনবার্গসহ এতো এতো কবির উপস্থিতি দেখে মন ভালো হয়ে গেলো। অনেক বছর পর লং আইল্যান্ডে কবিতা পড়তে এসেছি। ২০০১ থেকে ২০১০ কতো কতো ভেন্যুতে কবিতা পড়েছি! শুরু হলো কবিতা পাঠপর্ব; একে একে ২৮জন কবি এন্থোলজিতে প্রকাশিত কবিতাগুলো পড়লেন। ডেভিড এরল্লরড কিছুদিন আগে পৃথিবী ছেড়ে গেছেন। তাঁর একটি কবিতা পড়লেন আসরের উপস্থাপক রবার্ট। আমার তিনটি কবিতার ভেতরে আমি দু’টি পড়লাম। দ্বিতীয় কবিতাটি ছিলো আমার বাবাকে একাত্তরে পাক মিলিটারি কর্তৃক নির্মম প্রহার এবং পরে অনেকের সাথে লাইন ধরে দাঁড় করিয়ে ব্রাশ-ফায়ার করার সেই ভয়াবহ বাস্তবতা নিয়ে। আমি কবিতাটি পড়ার আগে বাংলাদেশের বর্তমান অবস্থার বর্ণনা করে বললাম, “কিন্তু দুঃখের বিষয় একজন শান্তিতে নোবেল বিজয়ীর উপর ভর করে সেই রাজাকার এখন বাংলাদেশের ক্ষমতায়। মুক্তিযুদ্ধের সব কিছু তারা মুছে ফেলছে। কায়ম করছে একটি জঙ্গি রাষ্ট্র।” অনুষ্ঠান শেষে বেশ কয়েকজন কবি বাংলাদেশ বিষয়ে আমার সাথে ব্যক্তিগত আলাপে তাদের সংহতি প্রকাশ করলেন।

## চলে গেলেন তাইওয়ানের কবি লী কুই-শিয়েন

তিনিই আমার কবিতা চাইনিজ ভাষায় অনুবাদ করেছিলেন। তাইওয়ান থেকে আমার বই ‘আন্ডার দ্যা থিন লেয়ারস অব লাইট’ অনুবাদে প্রকাশের মাধ্যমে আমাকে অবাক করে দেয়া সেই প্রিয় বন্ধু কবি লি কুই-শিয়েন-এর মৃত্যু সংবাদ আমার কাছে একটু দেরিতে পৌঁছায়। তাইওয়ান কবিতা উৎসবে তিনি আমাকে আমন্ত্রণও করেছিলেন, এবং ছুটি না থাকায় আমি যেতে পারবো না শুনে তিনি বলেছিলেন, “তোমার যখন ছুটি হবে তখন হয়তো অনেক দেরি হয়ে যাবে।” তাই হলো। আমার আর তাইওয়ানে যাওয়া হলো না। এই কবি তিনবার নোবেল পুরস্কারের নমিনিও হয়েছিলেন। তাঁর স্মৃতির প্রতি গভীর শ্রদ্ধা জানাই।

## শব্দ সংবাদ / SHABDANEWS

### কুইন্স লাইব্রেরিতে কবিতা পড়লেন কবি হাসানআল আব্দুল্লাহ

১৫ মে, বৃহস্পতিবার, কুইন্স পাবলিক লাইব্রেরি, উডহেভেন শাখায় ফিচার পোয়েট হিসেবে কবিতা পাঠ করেন কবি ও শব্দগুচ্ছ সম্পাদক হাসানআল আব্দুল্লাহ। পাঠ শেষে উপস্থিত তরুণ কবিদের নিয়ে কবিতা লেখার উপরে একটি ওয়ার্কসপ পরিচালনা করেন তিনি। অনুষ্ঠান উপস্থাপন ও সার্বিক তত্ত্বাবধানে ছিলেন লাইব্রেরীয়ান জনাব কেন্ গর্ডন! সদ্য প্রকাশিত কবির বহুল আলোচিত কাব্যগ্রন্থ “আন্ডার দ্যা থিন লেয়ারস অব লাইট”-এর স্প্যানিশ ভাষন থেকে তিনি একে একে অনেকগুলো কবিতা পড়েন। কবিতাপাঠ শুরু হয় একাত্তরে শহীদ তাঁর বাবাকে নিয়ে রচিত “দ্য ক্যাকোফনি অব গানফায়ার” কবিতা দিয়ে। তিনি তিরিশ লক্ষ শহীদের আত্মদানের প্রতি শ্রদ্ধা জানিয়ে বাংলাদেশের বর্তমান স্বাস্থ্যসংক্রমণের পরিস্থিতি তুলে ধরেন। অন্যান্য যেসব কবিতা পড়েন তার মধ্যে “শকুনেরা ভালো আছে”, “খাবো”, “কবরের অভিজ্ঞতা”, “ছায়াপথে উদ্বেগ” ও “স্বতন্ত্র সনেট ৭৭” উল্লেখযোগ্য। “আন্ডার দ্যা থিন লেয়ারস অব লাইট” প্রথম ইংরেজি-বাংলা দ্বিভাষিক গ্রন্থ হিসেবে প্রকাশ পায় ২০১৫ সালে নিউইয়র্ক থেকে। পরে এই বইয়ের চাইনিজ ও পোলিশ অনুবাদ প্রকাশ পায় যথাক্রমে ২০১৯ ও ২০২২ সালে তাইওয়ান ও পোল্যান্ড থেকে। অচিরেই এই বইয়ের একটি আরবি অনুবাদ মরক্কো থেকে প্রকাশ পাবে বলে কবি অনুষ্ঠানে জানান। উল্লেখ্য হাসানআল আব্দুল্লাহ’র কবিতা অনূদিত হয়েছে ১৬ ভাষায় এবং হোমার ইয়োরোপিয়ান মেডেলসহ তিনি চারটি আন্তর্জাতিক কবিতা পুরস্কার পেয়েছেন। তিনি বিশ্বের নানা দেশে আমন্ত্রিত অতিথি হিসেবে আন্তর্জাতিক কবিতা উৎসবে অংশ নিয়েছেন। কবিতাসহ সাহিত্যের নানা শাখায় তাঁর প্রকাশিত গ্রন্থসংখ্যা ৬০। সম্প্রতি তিনি নিউইয়র্ক সিটি হাইস্কুলে গণিত শিক্ষকতা থেকে অবসর নিয়েছেন।

### বৈশাখী কবিতাপাঠ ও বই উৎসব

১৪ এপ্রিল, সোমবার, শব্দগুচ্ছ আয়োজিত ‘বৈশাখী কবিতাপাঠ ও বই উৎসব’ অনুষ্ঠিত হলো উডহেভেন পাবলিক লাইব্রেরিতে। শব্দগুচ্ছ সম্পাদক হাসানআল আব্দুল্লাহ’র স্বাগত বক্তব্যের পর নববর্ষের শুভেচ্ছা জানান নালন্দা প্রকাশনির রেদওয়ান জুয়েল, বক্তব্য রাখেন কবি-অধ্যাপক সৌরভ সিকদার, ও প্রবীণ সাংবাদিক ফজলুর রহমান। নারী স্বাধীনতা ও সামাজিক অন্যায়ের বিরুদ্ধে রুখে দাঁড়ানোর প্রত্যয়ে দিক নির্দেশনা মূলক বক্তব্য রাখেন অধ্যাপক হুসনে আরা, বিশিষ্ট একটিভিস্ট রওশান আরা নীপা, কবি-গল্পকার নাজনীন সীমন এবং দুই তরুণ শিক্ষার্থী ইমরানা আক্তার ও পুষ্পিতা ভৌমিক। আবৃত্তি শিল্পী মিথুন আহমেদ আবৃত্তি করেন আবুল হাসানের কবিতা। সঙ্গীত পরিবেশন করেন চারজন কণ্ঠশিল্পী জলি কর, সুব্রত দত্ত, রুপালী ঘোষ, ও মুক্তি সরকার। কবি হাসানআল আব্দুল্লাহ’র কথা ও সুরে বৈশাখের গান করেন জন এডামস হাইস্কুলের একাদশ শ্রেণির ছাত্রী জান্নাতুন সামী। কবি

জেবুল্লোসা জ্যোৎস্না ও সুরিত বড়ুয়া পড়েন স্বরচিত কবিতা! তবলায় ছিলেন পিনাক পানি গোস্বামী। সড়ক দুর্ঘটনায় আহত হওয়ার পরও অনুষ্ঠানের শুরুতে এসেছিলেন এমিরিটস অধ্যাপক জোন ডিগবি। কিন্তু তিনি অসুস্থ বোধ করায় সত্বর হাসপাতালে নিয়ে যাওয়া হয়। তাঁর কবিতা পড়ে শোনান আশফার হক। নৃত্য পরিবেশন করেন জান্নাত আরা ও জান্নাতুল সুজান। উপস্থাপনায় ছিলেন নতুন প্রজন্মের দুই উপস্থাপক মাশরিফ হোসেন ও আহনাফ আবিব। অনুষ্ঠানের তত্ত্বাবধানে ছিলেন কবি নাজনীন সীমন, কবি হাসানআল আব্দুল্লাহ ও লাইব্রেরিয়ান কেন্ গর্ডন। বই উৎসবে অংশ নেয় মাওলা ব্রাদার্স, নালন্দা, ফেরল প্রেস ও শব্দগুচ্ছ প্রেস। অনুষ্ঠান শেষে বৈশাখী আপ্যায়নের ব্যবস্থা করা হয়।

### নিউইয়র্কের জন এডামস হাইস্কুলে ভাষাদিবসের অনুষ্ঠান

কুইন্সের ওজন পার্কে অবস্থিত জন এডামস হাইস্কুলের ‘বেঙ্গলি স্টুডেন্টস এসোসিয়েশন’-এর আয়োজনে একুশের অনুষ্ঠান হয়ে গেলো ২৫ ফেব্রুয়ারি, মঙ্গলবার। অনুষ্ঠানের উদ্বোধন করেন স্কুলের প্রিন্সিপাল মিস্টার কিউবেরো। ছাত্রছাত্রীদের দ্বারা পরিচালিত এই অনুষ্ঠানে স্কুলের প্রিন্সিপাল, শিক্ষক ও ছাত্রদের বাবা-মা’সহ প্রায় দেড় শতাধিক দর্শক শ্রোতার উপস্থিতিতে নাচ, গান, কবিতা আবৃত্তি, ভাষা আন্দোলনের ইতিহাসের পথ ধরে একান্তরে বঙ্গবন্ধুর সাতই মার্চের ভাষণ ও মুক্তিযুদ্ধের পটভূমি তুলে ধরা হয়। এর আগে আমেরিকা ও বাংলাদেশের জাতীয় সঙ্গীত পরিবেশনের পর একুশের গানের সাথে শহীদ বেদীতে একে একে পুষ্পস্তবক অর্পণ করেন উপস্থিত সকলে। অনুষ্ঠানে বিশেষ অতিথি ছিলেন কবি হাসানআল আব্দুল্লাহ। তিনি শহীদদের স্মরণে ইংরেজি ও বাংলা উভয় ভাষায় কবিতা পড়েন। অনুষ্ঠানে বক্তব্য রাখেন স্কুলের এসিস্ট্যান্ট প্রিন্সিপাল মিস রড্রিগাজ, গাইডেন্স কাউন্সিলর মিস মুনিয়োজ, ও ইএনএল শিক্ষক মিস রোমেরো। নৃত্য পরিবেশন করেন মিস উরশি পল। আমন্ত্রিত অতিথিদের মধ্যে আরো উপস্থিত ছিলেন বাংলাদেশের বিশিষ্ট প্রকাশক, নালন্দা প্রকাশনির রেদওয়ান জুয়েল। স্টুডেন্ট এসোসিয়েশনের সভাপতি মাশরিফ হোসেন ধন্যবাদ জ্ঞাপন করেন। অনুষ্ঠান শেষ হয় সমবেত কণ্ঠে ‘আমি বাংলায় গান গাই’ সঙ্গীতের ভেতর দিয়ে। গ্লোবাল কিটস প্রোগ্রাম নৈশভোজের আয়োজন করে। পুরো অনুষ্ঠানের পরিকল্পনা ও তত্ত্বাবধানে ছিলেন স্কুলের ইংরেজি বিভাগের শিক্ষক ও বেঙ্গলি স্টুডেন্টস এসোসিয়েশনের পরিচালক কবি নাজনীন সীমন। শহীদ মিনার তৈরি করেন স্কুলের আরেক বাঙালি শিক্ষক রাশেদ চৌধুরী। বিকাল সাড়ে তিনটে থেকে এ অনুষ্ঠান চলে সন্ধ্যা সাড়ে সাতটা পর্যন্ত।

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

Now that he cannot go to Bangladesh, Poet Hassanal Abdullah who lives in New York, with many books the world over to his credit, it's Kolkata which he, and many other Non-Resident Bangladeshis living in USA and other Western countries chose to come to as their destination for love of poetry.

His dear "Dada", Jyotirmoy Datta had translated numerous poems of his into English, as well as writing on his work, which Hassanal says made him well known in many countries. He is often invited to poetry festivals in different countries of the world. Yesterday, he visited Jyotirmoy Datta with his new publications and books . . .

**Kankabati Datta**, Kolkata/India

December 6, 2024

(Collected from FB Post)

কবি হাসানআল আব্দুল্লাহ আমার বন্ধু। দেশের বাইরে থাকলেও আমাদের যোগাযোগের ঘাটতি নেই। প্রতি বছর বই বেরচ্ছে। দেশের বাইরে আন্তর্জাতিক পরিমণ্ডলে তিনি নন্দিত ও স্বীকৃত। তার জন্য আমার গর্ব হয়। গত বছর প্রকাশিত তাঁর 'স্বতন্ত্র সনেট' (অখণ্ড) আমাকে পাঠিয়েছে তাঁর প্রকাশক মারফৎ। ১৯৯৮ সালে এটি প্রথম প্রকাশিত। সেটি আছে আমার কাছে। এখন পেলাম ষষ্ঠ সংস্করণ। একটি কবিতার বইয়ের ৬টি সংস্করণ প্রকাশ হওয়াও একটি বড়ো ঘটনা। আমাকে সে 'কবি' মনে না করলেও আমি তাকে 'কবি' বলে মানি। 'স্বতন্ত্র সনেট'-এর পর্ববিন্যাসে সমস্যা থাকলেও মিলবিন্যাসে স্বাভাবিক রয়েছে। ষষ্ঠ সংস্করণকে স্বাগতম।

তপন বাগচী, ঢাকা/বাংলাদেশ

ফেব্রুয়ারি ২৭, ২০২৫

(ফেসবুক পোস্ট)

Hi Hassanal,

It was good to see you at First Tuesdays! As you requested, I am sending you both the cento from that evening and the poem I read. I appreciate your soliciting both of them.

I've had a chance to look through *Under the Thin Layers of Light*. I am intrigued by the fact that many of the English-language versions are translated from Bengali into English and that, I am assuming, it was those English-language versions that were translated into Spanish. The dynamics and language politics of translation are so endlessly fascinating. I look forward to the chance to read the book more closely.

Shabdaguchha

I actually tried once to bring some of the Mexican writers DarkLight Publishing has translated into English to read on my campus, but there were—if I remember correctly—visa problems that prevented it. Roberto Ayala is a really nice guy.

Anyway, thanks again for soliciting both the cento and my poem. I look forward to seeing you again. Cheers!

**Richard Jeffrey Newman**, New York/USA  
March 16, 2025

My dear friend Hassanal,

I was very pleased to see you again in Greece. It was a wonderful opportunity to talk, reminisce, and strengthen our friendship. By the way, I will write to my brother and some friends in Iraq, so they can arrange for us to get three copies of the Iraqi Pens magazine: two copies for you, and one for me.

I battled the flu in Greece two days before my return to Warsaw, but unfortunately, it eventually won! I hope to be able to defeat it once and for all, as I have an extensive cultural program ahead of me in Poland. I am sending you previously unpublished poems, which I translated myself, so I hope you will edit them whenever you deem necessary.

My wife and I send our warmest regards to you and your esteemed family. Take care and keep in touch. Hug

**Hatif Janabi**, Cracow/Poland  
June 4, 2025

Dear Hassanal,

Thank you so much for your book of wonderful sonnets, which I finished reading this evening. I quite enjoyed them, particularly the love poems. I think Swatantra Sonnet 77 was my favorite, though I also marked down numbers 16, 87, and 94 as ones that particularly moved me.

It's been great having you as a part of the Friends of Dickens New York, and I hope you'll be able to join us at future meetings!

Yours,

**James Armstrong**, New York/USA  
January 5, 2025

## Contributors:

**Hassanal Abdullah** (b. 1967) is an author of 60 books in various genres including 21 collections of poetry, and three novels. His *Collected Poems* (in Bengali) was published by Ananya in two volumes. He received the Homer European Medal of Poetry and Art (2016), Klement Janesky International Poetry Award (2021) from Poland, Paul van Heys Award (2024) from Germany, and a translation grant from New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (2019). His poetry has been translated into sixteen languages and was published in anthologies throughout the world. He introduced *Swatantra Sannets*, seven-seven stanza pattern and abcdabc efgdefg rhyming scheme, and wrote an epic illustrating human relationships with cosmology. As an invited guest, he attended many international poetry festivals. Mr. Abdullah taught math for 27 years.

**Željka Avrić** was born in Banja Luka. Graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy in Novi Sad. She lives in Sremska Mitrovica. She writes poetry, short stories, literary reviews and essays. Her poetry has been translated into Russian, English, Hungarian, Macedonian, Romanian, Bulgarian, Slovakian and Polish language. She is a member of the Association of Writers of Serbia, Association of Writers of the Republic of Srpska, Matica srpska and the Slovenian Academy of Literature and Arts, based in Varna, Bulgaria.

**Binayak Bandyopadhyay** was born in Kolkata. He is a poet and novelist. His work has been widely published in Dosh and from Ananda Bazar publications. He took part in the Iowa International writing course in the United States and received several awards from Kolkata. He lives in Kolkata.

**Bengt O Björklund** is a poet, journalist, photographer, musician, writer, and artist. He was born in Stockholm in 1949. In 1968, he landed in prison in Istanbul where he met a bunch of international artists, poets and musicians. It was there he began his creative activity. In 2018, Bengt was named Sweden Beat Poet Laureate and honored with a lifetime award by the National Beat Poetry Foundation, Inc. based in Connecticut, USA. He is the author of five poetry collections in Swedish and two in English. He lives in Stockholm with his artist wife, Gertrude.

**Kazimierz Burnat** is a Polish poet, translator, publicist, journalist, and an animator of the literary movement. His poems have been translated into many languages, including English, Ukrainian, Vietnamese, Chinese, Mongolian, Swedish, Serbian, and Latvian. He is the president of the Polish Writers' Union and the host of an annual International Poetry Festival in Polanica-Zdrój. He published eight books of poetry and co-authored about one hundred and eighty anthologies, almanacs and monographs published in Poland and abroad.

**Gregory Cioffi** is a professional actor, an award-winning director, professor, and published author. His debut novel *The Devil in the Diamond* was released in 2023 by Henry Gray Publishing. Many of his stories have been archived in numerous libraries including Yale University's Beinecke Collection (Rare Books and Manuscript Library).

**Chandan Das** is a poet, editor and publisher from Midnapore, West Bengal, India. He edits a literary magazine, *Titurshu*, from Midnapore, and regularly contributes to the journals and magazines published from Kolkata and abroad.

**Joan Digby** is Professor Emeritus of English Literature and former Director of the Poetry Center—at Long Island University. She and her late husband, British poet and collagist, John Digby, co-founded The Feral Press, a small press publishing limited editions primarily of poetry. Their more than 350 publications are collected by many university libraries. A past presidents of the National Collegiate Honors Council, Joan has published academic work on higher education in addition to several books of poetry. Much of her work is focused on the human connection to animals, both fictional and real.

**Sudhir Dutta** was born in Midnapore, West Bengal. He studied English Literature at Kolkata University. He joined the government civil service in 1979, and took a long gap from poetry. He reestablished his presence in literature by publishing *Tabu Moi O Chresto Kabitaguchha* (2022), which received the Ananda Prize.

**Katarzyna Georgiou** is a Polish poet, translator, literary activist, a member of the Polish Writers' Union, Lower Silesian Branch (ZLP) since 2018 and the Association of Polish Authors since 2014. She studied in Toronto, Canada, and worked there as a kindergarten teacher, teaching English for a few years. Returning to Poland, she worked for 14 years at the Alis Private Education Team in Wrocław as a teacher. She is the Co-founder of the Civic Library in Potasznia, (the community nearby Milicz town) together with the Brapoja and Sztukater Associations. She is the author of eight books of poetry and two full-length translation from English to Polish, *Under the Thin Layers of Light* (2022), and *The Scattered Display of Limbs* (2025) of Hassanal Abdullah's poetry.

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**Phillip Giambri** was the 2022 Nassau County Poet Laureate Society poetry contest winner and a 2020 Acker Award recipient for Storytelling and Community Service. His 2022 memoir *Good Boy, Bad Boy, A Better Man* covers his early life in the 40s in South Philadelphia up to his life in the East Village in the 70s.

**Laura Gravaglia** is an Italian poet, journalist, teacher and the founder and president of La Casa della Poesia di Como ([www.lacasadellapoesiadicom.com](http://www.lacasadellapoesiadicom.com)). She is the director of the International Poetry Festival "Europa in Versi" that takes place every year in Como. Her poetry has been translated into many languages and she has attended numerous International Poetry festivals around the world.

**Toma Grigorie** is a Romanian poet. He graduated from University in 1966, and defended his PhD thesis in 1983 at the University of Bucharest. He taught in a high school between 1963-1974, then he taught at the University of Craiova, the Faculty of Letters, between 1974-2005. He worked as Associate Professor at the Romance Languages Institute "Adam Mickiewicz", Poznań, Poland, between 1996-1998. He Published 20 books.

**Hussein Habasch** is a poet from Kurdistan lives in Bonn, Germany. His poetry translated into more than fifty languages, and he was invited to International Poetry Festivals from many countries of the world. He received numerous national and international awards including the International Best Poet Prize from China (2016), the Great Kurdish Poet Hamid Bedirkhan Award (2022), etc.

**Kanail Jana** was born on February in Midnapore, West Bengal. His notable books are *Rahdradhoo Raupyajug*, *Marun Shaharer Kuasha*, and *Namasya Ghurpoka* etc.

**Hatif Janabi** earned his Ph.D. in theatre from Warsaw University (1983) and taught at numerous universities including Warsaw University, University of Tizi-Ouzu in Algeria, Indiana University in the US. He is the author of more than 30 books, and a well-known translator from Polish to Arabic.

**Krystyna Janiszewska**, a civil servant, poet and painter. She is the author of seven volumes of poetry. She also contributed to numerous anthologies and presented her poems at six author's evenings in Poland over the last three years. She is a member of the Creative Art Work Team in Koszalin.

**Helga Kidder** lives in the Tennessee hills with her husband. Her poems have recently been published in Orbis, Atlanta Review and others. She has five collections of poetry. Her fifth collection, *Learning Curve*, has poems about immigration and assimilation.

**Teresa Kaczorowska** is a Polish journalist, scholar, novelist, president of the Cultural Journalism Club at the Polish Journalists Association in Warsaw and president of the Mazovia Writers Association. She lives in Ciechanow, Poland. She is the author of 28 books including 8 collections of poetry.

**Alicja Maria Kuberska** is a Polish poet. She is the author of five collections of poetry and a novel. She also edited an anthology, *The Other Side of the Screen*, in 2015, *Love Postcards*, in 2018. Her *Selected Poems* was published in Russia. Maria is a chief editor of series of anthologies entitled *Metaphor of Contemporary* (Poland). She has continued to numerous anthologies published from many different countries.

**Mindy Kronenberg** is a widely published poet, writer, critic, and professor of writing and the arts at SUNY Empire State University. Her work has appeared in print and online journals and anthologies around the world, and has been featured in art exhibits at galleries and museum installations. She is the author of *Dismantling the Playground*, a poetry chapbook, *Images of America: Miller Place*, a pictorial history, and an illustrated book of poems, *Open*.

**Hiram Larew**'s poetry appears widely. His latest collection, *This Much Very*, appeared in 2025 (Alien Buddha Press). As Founder of Poetry X Hunger, he's bringing a world of poets to the anti-hunger cause.

**Dariusz Thomas Lebioda** is a Polish poet, author of novels, short stories and reviews and essays. President of European Medal of Poetry and Art—HOMER. His poetry has been translated into many languages and featured from all around the world. He participated to many International Poetry Festival held in four continents.

**Roberto Mendoza-Ayala** is a poet and publisher from Mexico. In 1994, as a member of the *Nautilium* literary group, he was awarded the FONCA Grant for creative writing. He has published the following books of Poetry: *Las Otras Estaciones* ((1994), *Negraluz* ((2004), and *Ultrasanidos* (2012). He has also published a collection of short stories, *Cerquita de Dios* (2006). His poems, stories and essays have been published in national and international anthologies and magazines. He is the director of Darklight Publishing based in New York.

**Yusuke Miyake** was born in Tokyo, and writes Tanka, Haiku, and poems. His poems were also included various poetry anthologies along with the poets from Turkey, Romania, and Israel. He translated Myanmar witness poems with other Japanese poets. He is the recipient of Gendai-Tanka criticism Award 2012.

**Richard Jeffrey Newman** has published two books of poetry, *Words for What Those Men Have Done* (2017) and *The Silence of Men* (2006). In addition, he has co-translated three books of classical Persian poetry, most recently *The Teller of Tales: Stories from Ferdowsi's Shahnameh* (2011). Newman is on the executive board of Newtown Literary, a Queens-based literary non-profit and curates the *First Tuesdays* reading series in Jackson Heights, Queens. He is a Professor of English at Nassau Community College.

**Tammy Nuzzo-Morgan** is the first woman Suffolk County Poet Laureate (2009-2011). She is the founder and president of the Long Island Poetry & Literature Repository, publisher of The North Sea Poetry Scene Press, and the editor of Long Island Sounds Anthology and other anthologies. Dr. Nuzzo-Morgan has penned six chapbooks, a memoir, entitled: *The Long Way to Home*, and a children's book, *Would You Hug a Porcupine*, two full-length books of poetry, *Chasing Clouds* and *If I Could Only Bottle This*, her collected scholarly essays, and a book on the healing power of poetry. She teaches at LIU, at the C W Post campus, as an Adjunct Associate Professor in the departments of English, Humanities, and Sociology.

**Roland Orcsik** was born in Becse (Serbia, ex-Yugoslavia) in 1975. Since 1992, he lives in Szeged city (Hungary). He is working at the University of Szeged in the Institute of Slavonic Studies. Orcsik is one of the editors of literary monthly "Tiszatáj". His first novel was published in 2016 under the title *Phantomcommando* (it's translated into Romanian, Slovak and Serbian languages), *Portable Ocean* is his second novel (2025). His works are translated into thirteen languages.

**Tushar Prasun** was born in Jessore, Bangladesh and lives in Dhaka. Currently, he is the head of Anubhav Prakashani. He writes regularly in newspapers and magazines in the country and abroad. He is the author five poetry collections. He received the 2025 Shabdaguchha Manuscript Award.

**Julio Pavanetti** is a Poet. Member of the Spanish Writers and Artists Association and of the Spanish Collegiate of Writers Association. Corresponding member of the Venezuelan Writers Circle. His poems has been included in more than 120 anthologies and have been translated into 29 languages. He participated in various world poetry festivals and received numerous awards and distinctions. He has published 15 poetry books.

**Anita Pawlak** is a Polish poet. She was born and lives in Ostrów Wielkopolski. Both in her literary works and private life, she is fascinated by methods of spiritual development and the influence that interpersonal relationships have on this sphere of our existence. She is a Psychology student and trainer of systemic settings.

**Ivan Pozzoni** was born in Monza, Italy. He introduced *Law and Literature* in Italy and the publication of essays on Italian philosophers and on the ethics and juridical theory of the ancient world; He collaborated with several Italian and international magazines. He is the editor in chief of the international philosophical magazine, *Información Filosófica*.

**Sam Powney** writes satirical poetry, verse, and occasional short stories. His first poetry collection, *Special Characters* (Trivial Disaster Press, 2024), explores subjects from Brexit to beg-packing, and from the nature of heaven to Hong Kong's Food and Environmental Hygiene Department.

**Reshma Ramesh** is an Indian bilingual poet who writes in English and Kannada, has the unique honor of her poem being displayed permanently in the ruins of Ancient City of Olympos, Antalya, Türkiye. Her poems have been translated into twenty-one languages and published worldwide. She is a resident poet @ Kaavya Sanje and a dental surgeon by profession.

**Margaret R. Sáraco** published two poetry collections, *If There Is No Wind and Even the Dog Was Quiet* (Human Error), which was a finalist in the Eyelands Book Awards contest. She won first prize in the *Moving Words Film Competition* for her poem "Dear Rorschach" and was a semifinalist in the Laura Boss Narrative Book Awards contest. She earned several Honorable Mentions in the Allen Ginsberg Poetry contests and a Pushcart Prize nomination.

**Robert Savino**, Suffolk County Poet Laureate 2015-2017 & Bards Laureate 2019-2021 is a Board Member of the Long Island Poetry & Literature Repository and Walt Whitman Birthplace. He is an Oberon Poetry Prize winner and co-editor of two bilingual collections of Italian Americans Poets, *No Distance Between Us*. His books include *fireballs of an illuminated scarecrow*, *Inside a Turtle Shell* & *I'm Not the Only One Here*.

**Naznin Seamon** is the author of eleven books including six collections of poetry, two collections of short stories, and a novel. Her first book of poetry, *Adiganta Bistirnoter Dhala*, was published in February, 2000 and was reprinted in 2004. She was the recipient of the Shabdaguchha Poetry Award 2007. Queens Public Library made her

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a feature on "Our Major Minor Voices" podcast in 2022. *Hollowness on the Horizon* (Fera Press, 2015) is a collection of her poetry in English translation. She is an English teacher for a New York City High School.

**Shourav Sikder** is a poet and professor of Linguistics at the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh. His poetry has been featured in numerous journals and newspapers. He wrote more than 30 books, including poetry collections, novels, critical essays, and travelogues. Professor Sikder is a frequent world traveler. His most recent book is a travelogue, *Chena Japan Achena Galpa* (Mowla, 2023).

**Zahid Sahag** is the author of five books of poetry. He is the sub-editor at *Daily Bhorer Kagoj*; and the editor of the online news portal, *Dhaka Tribune*. Apart from poetry, he also writes stage play and short stories. He received the 2025 Shabdaguchha Manuscript Award.

**Barbara Southard** is a visual artist and writer living in Miller Place, New York. She currently is a board member of the Long Island Poetry Collective and serves on the board of Long Island Poetry and Literature Repository. The titles of her three books are: *Remember*, published in 2008, *Time Gamp; Space*, published in 2020, and *Long Island Poems*, published 2022, all published by Allbook Books. She served as Suffolk County Poet Laureate from 2019-2021.

**Violeta Tančeva-Zlateva** has graduated in Yugoslav literature at the Faculty of Philology in Skopje, Macedonia. She writes poetry, short stories, novels and essays. She works as a proofreader/editor at "TRI" Publishing Center, Skopje. She has published 6 prose books and 9 books of poetry. She has also published an "Anthology of Longing" of contemporary Macedonian poetry (2004). Her poems are represented in several selections, panoramas and anthologies. Also, her poems and short stories have been translated and published in different countries. She won the most important prizes for poetry in her country, including the prize "Brothers of Miladin" at the Struga Poetry Evenings 2015.

**Petar Tchouhov** is a Bulgarian poet, librarian, writer, musician, and translator. Works at the Sofia City Library. Tchouhov has published 12 books of poetry (one of which is haiku), a novel, two collections of short stories, and a children's book. A short story of his won an Agatha Award for detective fiction.

**Annabel Villar** was born in Uruguay, resides in Spain. She is a poet, translator and cultural manager. Founding member of Liceo Poetico de Benidorm; Associate Academic and Honorary Member of North American Academy of Modern Literature; Director of "Azul" Poetry Collection and "Benidorm International Poetry Festival". Author of "*Viaje al Sur del Sur*" (2015), "*Cantar la Vida*" (XVI Provincial Poetry Prize of Aspe, Alicante, 2015), "*Meditaci6n*" (Spanish-English, 2017) and "*Claustrofobia & Vértigo*" (Spanish-English, 2018)

**George Wallace** Writer in residence, Walt Whitman Birthplace. Author of 42 chapbooks and 6 spoken word albums in US, UK, Italy, Greece, Macedonia, Portugal, Saudi Arabia, India, Spain. Major international poetry festival prizes and appearances, inc. Orpheus Prize (BG); Alexander Prize (GR); Silk Road POETRY Prize (CN); Naim Frasherí Laureateship (MK); National Beat Poet Laureate (US); Honorary Doctorate, CiESART/Royal Academy (SP).

**Erlend Wichne** is a Norwegian writer, translator from French, researcher and editor. His latest book is 'Sankthans' (Sant John's Eve), where the poem was originally published. The book deals with the memory of a great grandfather who was an interpreter (Norwegian-German) and a local Nazi leader during the German occupation of Norway in World War II.

## Lee Kuei-Shien (1937 – 2025)

### FREEDOMS IN DIFFERENCE

In the park  
the birds on the trees spaced apart by the trail  
are singing different tones.  
One flies coming while another going  
in different postures.  
When a couple fly at same time  
one flies eastwards while another westwards  
selecting different directions.  
When a couple fly to rest on same tree  
one stops on upper branch while another on lower  
perching at different levels.  
After all, does the loneliness originate from the freedom  
or the freedom produces the loneliness?

*Taiwan*

**Lee Kuei-shien** (1937 – 2025), served as chairman of National Culture and Arts Foundation from 2005 to 2007, the member of Board of Directors of International Writers and Artists Association (IWA), and the vice president of *Movimien to Poetas del Mundo* (2014). He published 25 poetry books. His work has been translated into many languages. He was nominated three times as a candidate for Nobel Prize in Literature. He died on January 15, 2025.

## **Soumitra Dev (1970 – 2025)**

### **THE DRUNKEN YOUTH**

The flood comes back every year,  
as the power to rule our land frequently changes—  
the dogs lick the breasts of my birthplace,  
egrets are hurried to bring the fish on trial.

Don't you think that I am defeated, my love,  
I will stand against injustice for the sake of my youth.  
There is still masculinity in me—fire in my heart,  
I will kick open the obstacles and advance at pace.

The British Raj and the zamindar would get alarmed  
even seeing an ordinary villager like Kasim, the valiant.  
I find myself within those peasants, the rebels, who  
made history showing their undaunted courage.

Piercing dreadful darkness, sprouts the morning sky;  
I rush towards hope, leaving disappointment behind.

*Translated from the Bengali by Hassanal Abdullah*

*Bangladesh*

**Soumitra Dev** (1970 – 2025) was the editor of *redtimesbd.com*, a Dhaka-based online news portal. He was a poet, journalist, social activist, and the author of more than twenty books in different genres. He was tortured by the politically motivated mob right after the Yunus government took over the power of Bangladesh and has been sick ever since. He died on April 15, 2025.



# Contributors:

## POETS

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