



POETRY PLANETARIAT

Kathmandu/Medellin Volume 10 May 2025

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Editor

Keshab Sigdel

Cover Photo

Lhakpa Rangdu Sherpa

Published by



World Poetry Movement (WPM)

worldpoetrymovement.org

POETRY PLANETARIAT

Volume 10, May 2025

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Cover Photo : Lhakpa Rangdu Sherpa

Publisher

World Poetry Movement
Secretariat Office: Medellin, Colombia
Phone: +57 604 5909092

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11th Volume Submission Notice:

We invite submissions for the 11th issue of *Poetry Planetariat*. The theme is “Palestine.” We encourage poetry submissions that express solidarity with the people of Palestine and people in other nations and territories that are made the victims of wars. The poems should in some way promote the idea of upholding people’s rights to life and dignity. Poems promoting peace, humanitarianism and justice and calling an end to all forms of discriminations and wars in the world are also welcome.

Please send us your poems to **poetryplanetariat@gmail.com** by **30th September 2025**. You can submit a poem as a separate attachment in word document. We appreciate it if the poems are no longer than 50 lines, and are typed in Times New Roman, 12 font size. Please include your bio (in around 100 words) on the same word document that contains your poem. Also send your upper bust photograph as a separate attachment as jpeg files.

Table of Contents

Editorial 1

Interviews

Babs Gons (Netherlands) with Sylvie Marie (Belgium) 66
Rati Saxena (India) with Shirani Rajapakse (Sri Lanka) 135
Marius Chelaru (Romania) with Jeebesh Rayamajhi (Nepal) 187
Rethabile Masilo (Lesotho) with Siphiew Nzima (Lesotho) 249

Mountain Poetry

Adil Başoğul (Turkiye) 3
Alenka Jensterle Doležal (Slovenia/Czech Republic) 6
Allan Lake (Australia) 8
Altynai Temirova (Kyrgyzstan) 9
Anandi Zhang (China/India) 12
Antonio Orihuela (Spain) 14
Chandra Gurung (Nepal) 15
David Eggleton (New Zealand) 17
Eldar Akhadov (Azerbaijan) 18
Fatma Aras (Turkiye) 20
George Wallace (USA) 21
Glória Sofia (Cape Verde) 23

Harihar Timilsina (Nepal)	24
İbrahim Tiğ (Turkiye)	27
Janette Ayachi (Scotland)	28
Jiang Yimao [China]	31
John Guzowski (USA)	33
José Manuel De Vasconcel (Portugal)	35
Kamala Wijeratne (Sri Lanka)	37
Karen Melander-Magoon (USA)	39
Lamberto Garzia (Italy)	40
Lana Derkač (Croatia)	41
Laura Garavaglia (Italy)	43
Laurent Grison (France)	44
Lee Kuei-Shien (Taiwan)	46
Lucilla Trapazzo (Switzerland/Italy)	47
Mark Andrew Heathcote (UK)	49
Nai Tiwa (Thailand)	50
Nuray Öngeç (Turkiye)	52
Nurduran Duman (Turkiye)	54
Ori Z. Soltes (USA)	55
Robert Epstein (USA)	57
Ron Riddell (Colombia/New Zealand)	58
Sam Smith (UK)	59
Soledad Benages Amorós (Spain)	61
Tahar Bekri (Tunisia/France)	63
Valeriu Stancu (Romania)	64

Regular Contributions

Abdel Wahed Souayah (Tunisia)	72
Adam Fathi (Tunisia)	75
Adel Al-Maizi (Tunisia)	82
Ahmed Amor Zaabar (Tunisia)	85

Adisley Mayan Valdés (Cuba)	87
Ali Al Hazmi (Saudi Arabia)	89
Amar Shah (Nepal)	92
Annabel Villar (Uruguay/Spain)	94
Aslihan Tüylüoğlu (Turkiye)	95
Assem Bazzi (Lebanon)	97
Bimal Baidya (Nepal)	99
Bimal Guha (Bangladesh)	101
Bishwa Sigdel (Nepal)	103
Blaž Božič (Slovenia)	104
Brane Mozetič (Slovenia)	106
Brigidina Gentile (Italy)	108
Cemal Öztürk (Turkiye)	111
Chen Hsiu-Chen (Taiwan)	113
Christine Peiying Chen (New Zealand)	115
Cyril Wong (Singapore)	116
Daniel De Culla (Spain)	118
Daniel Quintero (Argentina)	120
David Leo Sirois (USA)	123
Debarati Bhattacharyya (India)	125
Denja Abdullahi (Nigeria)	126
Dennis Haskell (Australia)	128
Diego Alonso Sánchez Barrueto (Perú)	130
Diego Rojas Arias (Ecuador)	132
Dimitris P. Kraniotis (Greece)	133
Dragan Dragojlovic (Serbia)	144
Dragan Mitić (Slovenia)	146
Dursun Özden (Turkiye)	148
Eliza Segiet (Poland)	150
Enrique Sánchez Hernani (Perú)	152
Faruk Buzhala (Kosovo)	154

Fernando Gutiérrez (Colombia)	156
Francis Catalano (Canada)	158
Francis Combes (France)	161
Francis Kurkiewicz (Brazil)	162
Gabor G Gyukics (Hungary/USA)	164
Gaëtan Brulotte (Canada/USA)	166
Gene Grabiner (USA)	168
Germain Droogenbroodt (Belgium)	170
Giorgos Koutouvelas (Greece)	171
Gregor Preac (Slovenia)	172
Guido Oldani (Italy)	174
Guillermo Saravia (Perú)	175
H. Mar (Brunei)	177
Hadaa Sendoo (Mongolia)	179
Han Shan (China/USA)	180
Helen Jia (China/Australia)	181
Hemant Biwas (Nepal)	182
Idris Amali (Nigeria)	183
Irma Kurti (Italy)	185
Isilda Nunes (Portugal)	186
Jaime Oscar M. Salazar (Philippines)	192
Joe Kidd (USA)	194
John Curl (USA)	196
José Muchnik (France/Argentina)	198
Julijana Velichkovska (Macedonia)	202
Julio Cesar Pavanetti (Uruguay)	204
Kama Sywor Kamanda (Congo)	206
Kemadjou Njanke Marcel (Cameroon)	207
Konstantinos Bouras (Greece)	209
Lawdenmarc Decamora (Philippines)	211
Laxmi Bardewa (Nepal)	213

Leng Guan (China/USA)	215
Li Shangchao (China)	216
Lotfi El Shabi (Tunisia)	217
Ma Di'er (China)	219
Mahnaz Badihian (USA/Iran)	221
Maman Toukour Lawali (Niger Republic)	223
Márcia Pflieger (Brazil)	225
María Ángeles Pérez López (Spain)	226
Maria Do Sameiro Barroso (Portugal)	228
Maria Miraglia (Italy)	230
Miguel Ángel Vázquez (Spain)	234
Mike Aguzin (USA)	235
Ming Di (China)	237
Mouldi Farrouj (Tunisia)	239
Muhammad Gaddafi Masoud (Libya)	244
Natalie Celio (Perú)	246
Nedeljko Terzić (Republic Of Serbia)	254
Obediah Michael Smith (Bahamas)	255
Oumar Farouk Sesay (Sierra Leone)	257
Pilar Rodríguez Aranda (Mexico)	259
Prollas Sindhuliya (Nepal)	261
Rabia Çelik Çadirci (Turkiye)	263
Radhouane Ajroudi (Tunisia)	264
Randy Barnes (USA)	266
Ranjana Niraula (Nepal)	268
Regina Ramos (Uruguay)	270
Rita Gustava Pulli (Finland)	272
Robert Maddox-Harle (Australia)	274
Rozalia Aleksandrova (Bulgaria)	276
Sandhya Pahari (Nepal)	278
Sarah Thilykou (Greece)	280

Slavica Gadzova Sviderska (North Macedonia)	281
Srinewas Prasad Yadav (Nepal)	283
Stan Lafleur (Germany)	285
Sumina (Nepal)	286
Su Yun (China)	288
Taghrid Bou Merhi (Lebanon/Brazil)	289
Tamer Öncül (Cyprus)	291
Taro Hokkyo (Japan)	293
Thór Stefánsson (Iceland)	295
Tilsa Otta (Perú/Mexico)	296
Thakur Belbase (Nepal)	298
Tone Škrjanec (Slovenia)	300
Tracie Lark (Australia/ New Zealand)	302
Ülkü Cengiz Taşkin (Turkiye)	303
Viacheslav Kupriyanov (Russia)	304
Yanlan Yu (China/Canada)	306
Yeşim Ağaoğlu (Turkiye)	307
Zade Kuqi (Kosovo)	309
Zhang Zhi (China)	311

Men and Mountains

Portuguese poet José Manuel De Vasconcelos, in his contribution to this volume, writes,

The high peaks of the mountains
are gods in silence
their voice does not reach us
lost in the wind and the distance
the heights only reveal
a kind of mime
the genius of an inaudible sound
The firm presence is the nakedness of what keeps quiet
("Muteness and Voices")

The "muteness" of the mountains needs an agency, so the truth is revealed. And now is the time to speak of the "nakedness," the truth about the mountains, and hence, the truth about human lives! Mountains play an important role in global ecosystems and human livelihoods. Unfortunately, these mountains themselves are becoming vulnerable due to climate change. Melting of the glaciers caused by rising global temperatures is affecting freshwater supply for billions of people. It is posing a risk of natural calamities like floods and landslides leading to disruption of lives.

Poets have indicated the inseparable relationship between men and mountains. British poet Mark Andrew Heathcote writes in this volume:

Oh, I will climb a mountain
and access a vaulted blue sky far out of reach
and honestly, I don't mind if I die here
as long as I am scouting Him who created me.
And him me.

("Let me climb a mountain")

Mountains have been a source of wisdom for ages. They not only contribute to the physical existence of humans, animals, and plants on this planet, but they have inspired people to reflect and think, thus opening vistas of great civilizations. Thai poet Nai Tiwa contemplates the role of the Himalayas as a teacher of humanity:

The true answer lies in the heart's depths,
From the outside to within, cause and effect.
Between us, between the world, between people,
Escaping, or not escaping, from all stories.

("The Wisdom of the Himalayas")

When the world is aspiring for peace, mountains offer refuge to the world. They are not only metaphors of lives and convictions, but also act a real home to solitude and peace. New Zealand poet Ron Riddell describes mountains in this vein:

The monks robed in red
mindfully go about their days:
cooking, cleaning; gardening, gathering

they could do the same things
down in the city
but find they are happiest

up in the mountains, sharing
the solitude, sharing the silence
and the prospect of peace.

("Up in the Mountains")

Poetry has always portrayed mountains in all its majesty and divinity. Now, we are living in a time when we need our poems to take a turn to decode the silences of the mountains and tell the alarming truths about the vulnerability of mountains. This is because the vulnerability of mountains is responsible for various crises in the human world. The new environmental crisis will likely minimize the justice and equality agenda. So, it is time to respond to this bigger challenge humanity is facing now.



ADİL BAŞOĞUL (Turkiye)

Translated from Slovene by **Sonja Kravanja**

Trace of the Mountains

At all times, the mountains were fixed like a broken clock
All the time, my mind was wandering
All the time, mountains and people were lost

I thought like long and lonely nights
I thought like a clock whose mainspring is wound
I thought if I could go beyond time and find you in the mountains

With noble words on my tongue
and a distinguished bundle of poetry in my hand
If I could find you among the mountains,
smiling at the beautiful days to come

The reason for time was unknown,
but the voice of deep meaning was inside me
Once upon a time, the one who committed suicide went from the
peaks of the mountains to the abyss

The bottoms of deep valleys are filled with broken clocks,
indicating suicides

The twisted peaks of the mountains bore the minute and hour hands

I heard the moaning of the mountains and the sound of
the clocks chiming at midnight

Was it a dream or reality? Where was the truth?

I looked at the mountains to understand what the
power was and where the time was.

Did I find you?

Didn't I find it?

Whenever I close my eyes and think of you

Chrysanthemums with branches broken by snow in the mountains

Those broken clocks of the times that committed suicide

Dead bodies of time are always under the water at the
bottom of deep valleys.

Maybe the longed-for past that was never experienced

Did I bring it to you? Did I come to promise you, or did I not come?

Didn't you see

Dewdrops leak from the eyes of the mountains into the
valleys at moon time

The first of the three cemres of the mountains would
drop into your palms

Have I never seen you?

Have I never come to you

Time divided the history of the broken clock that committed suicide

But why don't the human dead in the mountains get old?

Have you never seen the mountain children coming?

They are memories that give birth to the babies of the
future on a mountain peak
Even though it hurts, that broken clock will make the
voices of the dead hear

You are in my dreams
You are in my reality
You are in my truth

The future establishes itself through endless time.
When I came to you
Memories that give birth to the babies of the
future on a mountain peak.

BAŞOĞUL is a Turkish poet and journalist. He graduated in Philosophy from Istanbul University. He also worked as a journalist for the newspaper *Günaydın* for four years in Istanbul. His poetry books in Turkish include *Liriklikler*, *Senfonikler*, *Yürektekiler*, *Gönüldekiler*, *Yunus Gönüm*, *Masumlar Sevdaluklar* and *Ayruluklar*. His works have been published in different literary magazines in Türkiye, Spain, Bulgaria, and Italy.



ALENKA JENSTERLE DOLEŽAL
(Slovenia/Czech Republic)

Easy Thoughts

“Even when all the vessels break, you do not break.”
St. Thomas Aquinas

I believe in the something
all things are made of
something that gives everything its being
that contains everything

the all
from which trees and mountains grow
that causes the oceans to foam
gives birth to cherubs and obedient seraphs
makes mythological animals gather into a fold
lets shapely rainbows draw their colours
reindeer draw their breath
and makes the locusts multiply

the all
that permeates my being in autumn and spring

and tears me to pieces in winter
and begins to swallow me as morning draws near

the all
that multiplies itself in a waterfall of symbols

DOLEŽAL is the author of five poetry collections and three books of prose. She was born in Slovenia and now lives in Prague since 2002. She is an associate professor at the Institute of Ethnology and Central European and Balkan Studies at the Faculty of Arts, Charles University in Prague (Czech Republic).



ALLAN LAKE (Australia)

View of Mount Ossa

During the previous millennium
carriers of transmissible strains of
unnatural religion/monarchy
migrated from far off elsewheres
to distant, detached, sometime
refuge, sometime prison, some
crime called genocide – island
of snake, not apple. Lutruwita,
Van Dieman’s Land, Tasmania.

Time absconds and belligerent
bearers of mad tidings – often
relieved of unearthly delusions –
make simple lives with spent
convictions.

Completely unmoved:
Mount Ossa.

** Mount Ossa is the highest Mountain on the island of Tasmania*

LAKE, originally from Canada, has lived in Vancouver, Cape Breton, Ibiza, Tasmania, and Melbourne. His latest chapbook of poems, *My Photos of Sicily*, was published by Ginninderra Press. His poems have been published in journals such as *The Hong Kong Review*, *Quadrant Mag*, *The American Writers Review*, *Tokyo Poetry Journal*, *The Antigonish Review*, *New Philosopher*, and *The Fabians Review*.



ALTYNAI TEMIROVA (Kyrgyzstan)

On Moonflower Mountain

Moonflower
in the spring twilight,
Scarlet purple like Lilith...
It's a separate whole planet,
like the rear color of the moon...
Great love is hidden
in this flower –
of mysterious and enigmatic
Queen!
A part of the Aigul Mountain area...
Every spring, this flower blooms,
Stealing many hearts
So many people walk with a heavy tread,
So many people find the way to come
to break off and steal these flowers again.
As in the time of invasion
Like in the past... old habits die hard!

The soul yearns, longing
for the moon-faced maiden, Aigul,
the beauty of legend,
beloved of the hero
who protected her from destruction and scorn.

in a cruel fight...
Now he stands like a great mountain,
and she blazes with a lovely flower,
in his silent embrace.
they'll be inseparable forever
lending their beauty to the world
with the charms of love,
magical and bright,
becoming rare
On the pages of Red Book!

* * *

The stream of river splashes water gently,
White foam tries to escape incessantly.
Mountain breeze kisses the stream
That runs singing round the clock
Pulling the willows on the bank.
Red plums are girls' favorites.
They cast a shadow playing
With sunlight and breeze
Swaying back and forth
One can be startled with
a ravishing angel of the stream.

* * *

Here is a field in front of the door...
Different herbs are peeking into the field.
A guy is travelling,
and the woman too,
a little boy is playing making dust...
As a wonderer, my way is my home
I can pay a night's visit
along the pathway
Image of the city is coming near
It is very beautiful
Whomever it invites to the city
Whoever it absorbs into its hugs?!

It is warm and pleasant in the city
It doesn't deal with chaos of the world
There is a wind from all around...
It came to, and it leaves away.
As if it pays its visit to the city,
The wind feels alone without the city,
It came to, and it leaves away
Again and again...
Sometimes it pours like rain,
Sometimes it storms with its strong power—
My way brought me to my home
It is another wonder in my way:
There is an ancient White Yurta
All the secrets are hidden there,
In their old boxes decently
It is my Motherland!
It is the place of my poor people
Where they were settled during the centuries
All their ups and downs were seen
It was tormented and broken
Sometimes, it became a new one
My way is my White Yurta
The happiness is seen from the top side – Tunduk*
And torments of the generations,
And the dream and their throne inside!

* *Tunduk is the spherical roof of boz ui that is made of sharply bent poles!*

TEMIROVA is a poet, playwright, and translator. She has been a member of the Writers' Union of the Kyrgyz Republic since 1991 and is the coordinator of the World Poetry Movement in her country. For her literary works, she has received state awards and other international recognitions.



ANANDI ZHANG (China/India)

Three Poems on Water and Mountain

1

River and mountain —
Travel companions
On a winding journey.

2

Drizzles seep deep.
Torrents carry away.

3

Water in the cup
Contained.

Water over the edge
Spilled.

Water falls.
Splash!

Water winds
Down the stream.
A tortuous journey.

Water rises and falls
In waves and fountains.
Endless variations.

Wherever it flows
It follows its inner law
While following paths
Natural or man-made.

ZHANG currently lives in Auroville. In these years, she has been reading, compiling, and translating into Chinese the works of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. For her, reading, writing, translating, and sharing poems is a journey of embracing the totality of life.



ANTONIO ORIHUELA (Spain)
Translated from Spanish by **Ángela Orihuela**

Mountain

A mountain
has another mountain
in her entrails

ORIHUELA (1965) is a poet, novelist, essayist, and columnist. His literary and intellectual work, markedly libertarian in tone, has been part of the collective movement of 'conscience poetry' since its emergence at the beginning of the 1990s. He directs the poetry festival Voces del extremo.



CHANDRA GURUNG (Nepal)

Mountains: A Widowed Portrait

One evening, the radio constantly honked
The news of war
The wind continued to blow in ambiguity
Carrying in its eyes the turbulence of a sea of sorrows
While the horizons continued to snivel

After this, the long river of time died out;
Folks who gone to war didn't return home

Dressed in white, like a widow, the mountain broods all day long
The hills on the left and right stare at her face
The flirty wind passes, tickling it
The middle-aged trees standing on the slope across the grove
Dance, bending their waists, to allure her.

One morning, she wore a red tika of the sun
On her forehead
Added golden vermillion of sun rays
On the parting in her hair
Applied crimson on her cheeks
And set out on a new journey.

In the meantime, to welcome her
The blotless sky stretched its arms
And the earth smiled in joy.

GURUNG is the author of three collections of poems, including *My Father's Face* (2020) and *Jaba Yuta Manchhe Harauchha* (2022). He was selected as one of the 41 contributing poets in *Translating Migration: Multilingual Poems of Movement* (Singapore). Two of his poems were selected for “The Best Asian Poetry-2021” anthology published by Kitaab, Singapore.



DAVID EGGLETON (New Zealand)

Alpenglow Reddening

White meteor's tail flashes across the stars,
then a red meteor's,
then sparks fly down the Main Divide,
as sun rays climb —
over jutting crags, sub-alpine basins,
montane prairies, dry foothills,
balconies of stone in back-country nests,
swamp cushions gemmed with dew,
green oils and buttery lights of the plains;

over common weal of riven rock,
over broken scarps of clay,
over glacier histories carving the land,
over rubbled cloud piling high —
so the tuatara of time barely shifts ground.

EGGLETON was the New Zealand Poet Laureate 2019 - 2022. He is the former editor of *Landfall* and the Phantom Billstickers *Cafe Reader*. His *The Conch Trumpet* won the 2016 Ockham New Zealand Book Award for Poetry. In 2016, he also received the Prime Minister's Award for Literary Achievement in Poetry.



ELDAR AKHADOV (Azerbaijan)

Ascent

Where there are icy dreams,
To the peaks, menacing from birth,
At the call of the heart and spring
We begin the ascent.
The valleys are blown up by grass.
On the ridges, the snow is still smoking:
Embraced by the wind, but alive,
It burns our faces.
The blizzard has not yet run out of steam:
Avalanches of echoes, swords of whistles,
And beyond the alpine meadows
The path is steep and rocky.
Behind each ledge of rock
The risk of retreat is inevitable.
But there, below, the cauldrons are boiling,
And the golden air is gentle.
There, sparks of leaves have caught fire,
There, the day is paganly furious...
And before us, there is only the heights,
Where the sky is the color of amethysts.
For every step, for a moment, for a third,
For approaching the eternal goal —
It is not scary to flare up and burn

In the whitish flame of a blizzard...
A short exhale. And — forward.
And then — let fate be perverse.
But there is no way back
For the one who chooses this.

AKHADOV (1960) was born in Baku and lives in Krasnoyarsk. He is an honorary member of the Writers' Union of Azerbaijan and co-chairman of the Literary Council of the Eurasian Peoples' Assembly. He has sixty-eight books in four languages: English, Spanish, Serbian, and Russian.



FATMA ARAS (Turkiye)

Translated by **Baki Yiğit**

A MOUNTAIN ECHO

A sour milky conversation at the tables!
something is turning dark, something is turning green
those who dredge words up within words add meaning to themselves.

The earth is fed up, the sky is fed up with sounds
everyone has his own cloudy days
time flows, time freezes
whatever is a lie makes one go to hell and back
rotten, long-lasting friendships.

One who crosses out love can do anything to the heart.

The waters changed their beds, the shores were polluted
I feel nauseous inside and out
words like thorns prick my loneliness
I leaned my back on the sorrowful mountains
feelings are diphtheria patients.

I lived, I saw, sounds changed with snow.

ARAS (1954) was born in Yukarı Aratan village of Aralık district of Iğdır. Her first poem was published in the European edition of *Hürriyet* newspaper in 1975. Her writings are published in several magazines at home and abroad. Some of her poems are a part of university curriculum at Gazi University. Her published books include *Saklıyım*, *Göğü Azalan Kuşlar*, *Ağrılı Beklemeler*, *Söz ve Hançer*, *İkiz Acılar*, *Bir Ateşten Bir Buzdan*, and *Bu Yüreğin Yedeği Yok*. She retired as a chemical technician and now lives in İzmir.



GEORGE WALLACE (USA)

I Am Mountain, I Am Stone

I am mountain, I am stone, the religion of stone, its mate and its government, I am the cutting and hauling, carried from quarry to dray, carelessly dumped, meticulously accounted for;

I am the walls of Avignon, I am Oscar Wilde's prison, I have been contemplated by history and found wanting, encircled by motorways, pried by the poor and hungry, salacious irreverent and proud;

manhandled by laborers fearful of the whip, I have been cowed by factory chimes;

I have been whispered to life or blasted out of it, delicate as cut fruit, the scent of me, my marble veins, intoxicates small nations; paid for with broken bone, liberated, put into position, grappled with;

and I am mountain, and I am stone, the heart of a nation, ready to bust a skull, the replica of any man, of many men;

I have been stood by and stood up against trottoir and motherlode, sharpened kitchen knives and filled potholes; I have cut the umbilical, I am the stone baby cut his first teeth on; common and pure, firm as an emperor, jaw stone, cliff stone, not precious or rare, indelicate as a jester's oath, a levy, a moat;

I am the democratic army of stone, a mountain chain, I stand shoulder to shoulder with peers and patriots; I am the whetting stone, solemn as a vow;

roll me from the tomb-mouth of your god, build a temple of me, or a bridge; build of me a pier for bowline, a cloister a castle; no hurdle too high, no keystone too heavy, archway to forbidden places, crib, crypt, pendulum, tomb; a barrier to climb, roadside marker from here to Rome;

and graves, and graves, and aqueducts and graves;

I bridge agricultural water, I lighten the utopian load; I am the stone at the leper's window, kerbstone at the solicitor's door; heave me at tyrants, hold me up against a wilderness of seawaves, hoof or heel me, ironhooped; I am catholic, saddled, barrelbusting, cobblestone, I am a channel for blood and beer, sling me at biblical goliaths -- lapidary, secret, penitent, cool as the lovers' cool embrace;

sculpt me like Camille Claudel!

I am mountain, I am stone; carved into exquisite life by the light of a new mad Mediterranean moon

WALLACE (1949) is a New York City-based poet and world-traveling performer with over 40 chapbooks of poetry and 5 CDs of his spoken word poetry to his name. From his base of operations at the Walt Whitman Birthplace, where he has been a writer in residence since 2011, Wallace has reaped top international honors and made festival appearances in recent years across the US, Europe, and in select locations in Asia and South and Central America.



GLÓRIA SOFIA (Cape Verde)

Mountain Time

(Dedicated to Grandma Antónia)

I'm from the time of not knowing
I am from the time of being born mature in the mountains
I'm from the time of candor in the eyes

I'm from the time when the rains
The words were suspended clouds
In the souls of the mountain universe

I'm from the time when my laughter
They formed mountains of poems

I'm from the time of knowing nothing
Of the world to feel and never dream

I'm from the time when hands smiled
To the mountainous gentleness of touch.
I'm from that time!

SOFIA was born in the city of Praia in Cape Verde. Her poetry has been translated into fifteen languages, and she has participated in poetry festivals in Romania, Turkey, and Albania.



HARIHAR TIMILSINA (Nepal)

Translated by **Keshab Sigdel**

Why Do the Himalayas Appear Black Today?

The Himalayas appeared as if they spoke to me
As if their snowy peaks were smiling at me.
Why do they weep today,
Gazing at me with sorrowful eyes?

Like a storm-laden cloud about to break,
Like the veiled moon of Amavasya,
Like an eclipsed sun,
Like a heap of ashes—
Why do the Himalayas look black today?

My grandmother's silver hair
Mirrored the soft, white snow.
My mother's bright teeth
Shone like their glistening peaks.

My beloved's tender glance,
A temple of snow in the golden dawn.
Every white beauty I have known
I have compared it to the Himalayas' purity.
But today—suddenly, inexplicably—

How have the white Himalayas turned black?
Who is to blame for this desecration?
Questions crowd my mind.

Just as red suits in a woman's parted hair,
Light to the sun,
Blue to the ocean and sky,
White belongs to the mountains.

How, then, have my white mountains darkened?
Have my eyes deceived me?
Lo! Did something my eyes failed to discern?
Or is it a mere illusion?
Has time itself fallen ill?
Or is it a dream-turned nightmare?
Once luminous, once pure,
Now, they smolder a heap of coal.

Did someone set fire to the mountains?
Did someone smear them with filth?
Did careless feet trample their sacred snow?

If not, then tell me—
How did my Himalayas turn black?
Like a child's silent tears,
They melt, drop by drop.
The weight, the heat, the grief—
Have they become too much to bear?
Or does their pain burn from within?

The melting of the mountains
means sorrow rises higher.
The melting of the mountains

means the world itself is dissolving.
O men, asleep in the heart of the earth!
O men, heedless, playing with fire!
As the mountains grow, they blacken.
As they melt, they vanish.

Do you not see?
The melting of the mountains
is the melting of the world.
It is the fading of life itself.

Stop the mountains from melting.
Stop the mountains from turning black.

If these unwanted tears of the Himalayas do not cease,
If their once-bright smile is not restored,
Neither you nor I will be safe.
And in the end, this earth will not survive.

TIMILSINA (1979) was born in Changunarayan, Bhaktapur. He primarily writes songs and poems. His published poetry books are *Gaun Bekta Sanjh* and *Hiyunko Laj*. He is also the author of a Nepali novel, *Kakhara* (2022). His lyrics “Gojima Daam Chhaina”, originally written for the movie *Changa Chet*, got immense popularity. He got second place in the new national anthem writing competition organized after the establishment of the Republic in Nepal. He is associated with a poetry group, Sanjhya Sahitya.



İBRAHİM TİĞ (Türkiye)

Translated by **Ersin Engin**

Limping

every mountain has a path to take
dead end of every road

as rusty bolts pulled on the doors
remains unfinished, the childhood everyone remembers

there is always a beyond of every mountain
a bit distant, a bit slippery, a bit fairytale-like
the sadness of death falls on your tan skin
your sins cover that limping shore

oh, chant of chants, forget and lull
the god you painted in the sky
indeed, mankind is at a loss.

TIĞ (1970) is a poet, editor, and architect. He was born in Bakırcılar Village of Devrek. His poetry books include *İlk Yaz Vurgunu* (1994), *Neler Gizliyor Adın* (1998), *Yitik Zaman Düşleri* (2006), *Sarıaylar* (2014), *Sur ve Sır* (2018), and *Gök* (2024). Some of his poems have been translated into Azerbaijani, Uzbekistan, English, Romanian, Spanish and Persian. In 1994, he founded, owned, and wrote for the Daily Bölge Haber Newspaper in Devrek. He is the President of the Rüştü Onur Art and Culture Association. He has been publishing the *Şehir Edebiyat Magazine* in Devrek since December 2004.



JANETTE AYACHI (Scotland)

Nan Shepherd Herding Stars

For eighty-eight years, you lived in the same bedroom
 dreaming of how to penetrate the mountain
 at the foothills of the Cairngorms
feigning a free worm's-eye-view of its majesty.
There was never a love
 that matched the immensity
 of your Scottish scenery
rinsed in wild garlic, thyme, myrrh & aniseed,
 gorges & gullies in the forms of bodies
woodlands & corries naked under a puffed-up sky.
Those icy ravines with turquoise waters
 pouring out of the mouth of a hill
 & a pantheon of daffodils
always as onlookers above the stream each spring
 waiting for the ducks to brawl.
The fleshy moss beds & loose lichen carpets
 called you in closer
a purpose beyond the simple magnification
as say a naturalist would bespoke,
 still keeping proximity that latches into possession
 you became the living mountain,
the breathing landscape,
 with a lantern of hope in the enormity.

Such a smooth crusader on assault from the precipice
salty tears tasted on your top lip
 the heavens lost on the brink of magnitude itself
scuttling back & forth on the excursion into thick forests
where to fit
 when the world suddenly feels so giant
 etched into the periphery; a graphic fibula
a deeper gaze, a fatter gauze
 but the brook & rock bleed through
 past the arterial promise of tranquility
to pierce the penumbra of inner peace
 you don't choose a side you choose what's inside
 Spirit whispers into the wind
slotting guidance into the pockets of air
 & you, wearing Elk antlers as a golden crown antenna
 cradling mountains millions-of-years-old
so you felt young again against it
 above the graveyard of ancient roots.
 The mountain ridges lived in your vessels
a catapult of pulse snagged
 day after day roaming for souvenirs
 night after night herding stars
to take back to your sleepless attic of night
 orbiting in that same bedroom, for 88 years,
 like the seasons, the planets
ballgowned in tweed & muslin & Yak wool
 chained in binoculars & keys.
 Who minds what's indoors
when the outdoors is ever-changing
 yet is always constantly the same.
 Those who are afraid of the unknown
who prefer to nestle in the familiar
 are continuously stuck
 in a paradigm of forever

gamma & femur
 unwillingly, unknowingly
 lost in transit, in pilgrimage,
capable of nothing & everything
 at the same time
 & eager for neither;
Nan Shepherd: she was desperate for both.

AYACHI (1982) is a Scottish-Algerian poet. She holds a M.Sc. in Creative Writing from Edinburgh University. Her poetry book *Hand Over Mouth Music* (Liverpool UP) won the Saltire Poetry Book of the Year Literary Award 2019. Her poetry and prose have been published in several magazines. She is working on her travel memoir *Loner Lust &* her debut novel *Of Sweet Figs and Forget-Me-Nots*. Her latest poetry book is *Quick Fire, Slow Burning* (2024).



JIANG YIMAO [China]

Translated from Chinese by **Prof. Zhang Zhizhong**

The Winter Rhyme of Jinfo Mountain

The wind that blows through the hills flows through the ages,
greater than or equal to the north wind.

The snow intends to cover the sky,
following the path of the wind,
coming in a continuous stream.

The Golden Mountain is veiled in a white robe,
still lying on its back in peace,
and there is a blurred white light.

The mountain is filled with pines, firs, ginkgo trees, and cuckoos,
hugging the stubborn stone forest for warmth,
wearing a snow apron and felt hat,
head held high in silence,
all hailing the Golden Mountain, where the Golden Buddha descends.

The snow in low places crowds
to cover the tundra and dead grass covering the ground floor.
He who is lying on soft broadleaves and pine needles,
gives a strange smile from time to time.
Evading the strife and the wind on high,

quiet time in the forest shade,
listen to the sound of the receding stream,
and look forward to the leak of the morning light,
with the blood-red, slanting sun.

YIMAO (1961) was born in Fengdu County, Chongqing. He is a member of the Chinese Writers' Association and the National Committee of China Natural Resources Writers' Association. His poems have been published in hundreds of newspapers, journals, and anthologies at home and abroad. He has won several literary awards including the 6th Geodetic Literature Prize, The 7th China Gem Literature Award the 29th Italian “Squid Bone” International Poetry Prize, and the 2022 Kyrgyz World Literature Prize.



JOHN GUZLOWSKI (USA)

Climbing

One time, when I was a college kid
hiking up a mountain in the Smokies,
I met a guy, an older guy, maybe in his 60s.

On his back, he was carrying
his mother in some kind of home-made,
wooden cradle. She was old too,
maybe in her 80s, and shrunken
into a ball of bones and old cloth and skin.

I laughed when I first saw them. I had to.

He was struggling under her weight,
but he was happy. So was she.
She was smiling and chatting away,
talking about how lovely
the mountain was in the morning sun,
how much she loved it all,
how this was the last time
she was going up because she knew
she didn't have another climb in her,
but it was lovely, lovely, lovely.

When I sat down finally to rest,
they passed me by,
his mom still waving at me
on the trail sloping upward.

GUZLOWSKI is a Polish-American writer. His writing appears in *Rattle*, *Ontario Review*, *North American Review*, and other journals in the US and elsewhere. His poems and personal essays about his parents' experiences as slave laborers in Nazi Germany appear in his memoir *Echoes of Tattered Tongues*. He is also the author of the Hank and Marvin mystery novels and a columnist for the *Dziennik Zwiazkowy*, the oldest Polish newspaper in America. His most recent book of poems is *Mad Monk Ikkyu, True Confessions, and Small Talk: Writing about God, Writing and Me*.



JOSÉ MANUEL DE VASCONCELOS
(Portugal)

Muteness and Voices

*The ephemeral must shout
plead and prove
The eternal may become silent*
Vizma Belševica

i.

The high peaks of the mountains
are gods in silence
their voice does not reach us
lost in the wind and the distance
the heights only reveal
a kind of mime
the genius of an inaudible sound
The firm presence is the nakedness of what keeps quiet
everything is muted since in this heart surrounded
by capricious clouds
the bronze soul of the hillsides overflows
in our dreams
its inescapable security
just a roar
which is less of itself than ours

ii.

The green leaves tremble
in the rhapsody of days
intertwined voices pile up
waves that a permanent summer
throws at the exultant shores
to the fiery domain of noisy screams
— stridency and exultation
the rain of passions that unveils
swallows in the wind yesterday very much alive
in the undulated gaze
today lost in the yellow landscapes
of a feverish Africa
Life made up of walled segments
of small hills
that fade in the sun
contorted misalignments
in the blind mass of time
that confuses everything
in the submerged desert of instants
that shall be reborn
with each dawn
imposing the tracery presence
of the incessant screams of the ephemeral

DE VASCONCELOS, born in Lisbon in December 1949, is a poet, essayist, translator, and lawyer. He writes poems, essays, and literary reviews in magazines in Poland and abroad. He has translated poets like Federico García Lorca, Eugenio Montale, Umberto Saba, and Paul Valéry. He is the vice-president of the Portuguese Association of Writers and collaborator of the Osservatorio Permanente Sugli Studi Pavesianinel Mondo.



KAMALA WIJERATNE (Sri Lanka)

They Line the Horizon and Touch the Sky

They line the horizon and touch the sky
Those mountains
On the far skyline
Steeped in the sunset's glow
Blue purple figurations
In a multi-coloured cameo

How much I yearned to walk
On those blue peaks
And touch the sky
In my child's imagination
It seemed so simple
To step from peak to sky

But I know now
There are thousands of miles
Between one peak and another
Although they seem to huddle together
Like one family
Shoulder to shoulder

There are gaps and hollows
Valleys and ridges between them
Plateaus and promontories
Sharp and steep
And cascades that spume and spray

And habitations of trees
Stand alone or in groups
And denizens
Four footed,
Two footed
And feet less
Those with wings
And those hidden
Under the earth

After four-score years or more
With a diseased heart
And a disabled limb
I know I cannot scale those heights
I can only gaze and wonder
At the powers that crafted
Such ethereal beauty

WIJERATNE is a Sri Lankan fiction writer and poet writing in English. She received State awards for her short stories and poetry in 2004, 2013, and 2015. She was awarded the Sahithya Ratna Literary Award in 2020 by the Cultural Affairs Ministry of Sri Lanka. She has been published in Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, and beyond.



KAREN MELANDER-MAGOON (USA)

Kurds and the Mountains

Descended from Medes and Armenians
Kurds have inhabited the mountains of Iran, Syria, and Turkey
For centuries
Jin, the women, have fought and led
Yet do not rule
They saved the Yazidis
Massacred by ISIL
Creating a corridor of protection
Along a mountain pass
They know the mountains
As all Kurds must
Betrayed by every fickle friend
The Kurds embrace their mountain ally
Knowing they cannot be vanquished
In their mountain home

MELANDER-MAGOON was born in Dubuque, Iowa, raised in Seattle, Washington, and later Stockton, California, where she left to study music at Indiana University, leaving after graduation to sing major roles in opera for over twenty years in both Germany and Austria. She has written poetry for as long as she can remember, winning a pen and a dollar for her first poem, which was published in the Seattle Tribune. She has published seven books, including *A Year of Anguish*, *A Time for Miracles*, *The Earth Turns*, *Millions of Suns*, *A Forest of Words*, and *Footsteps Whispering*.



LAMBERTO GARZIA (Italy)

The Horse and the Source

Climbing to the foot of the Mountain*
where the goat and the wolf are born,
your moving eyes indicate
a spring and threads of water...

And in a flash, I think of the horse that has wings,**
and that you of Pegasus and the hoof spoke of
it to your students yesterday at school...
And like me with a word suspended and surprised.....
—myth of love.

Notes:

- * The 'Mountain' refers to the Maiella, located in the south-eastern part of Abruzzo and having a height of 2793 meters.
- ** The 'horse that has wings' refers to the mythological animal Pegasus, who struck Helicon with a blow of his paw and caused the spring of Hippocrates, a symbol of Poetry, to gush from the mountain.

GARZIA is an Italian poet based in Sanremo. He is the president of the Italian Association Ukiyo-E Cultures and the founder of an important Italian poetry prize, "Ossidi Seppia." He has published three books of poetry and a prose work, *Capped Dice* (2022). His works have been translated into Japanese, Chinese, American, and French.



LANA DERKAČ (Croatia)

Translated from Croatian by **Boris Gregorić**

Dr. January

Medvednica¹ teaches Logic.

On her foothills, attired in trees

I take a nap.

In the second premise, she is clothed

in the darkness of the fifty minutes past midnight

I propose, thus, it must be wearing the pajamas,

or her top part must be black.

I wake in snow.

The window resembles the New Year's crystal globe
in which I am confined, or so I believe.

The morning washes off the snow, every certainty,
the final count of angels' downhill rides.

One cannot discern where exactly the snow turn

into the pale washed-off sky over the mountain,

And are those skiers angels once again this morning?

On Dr. January's precept

they are assigned and sent onto the path

even with the smallest dosage of snow flurries.

As the day becomes clear,

quicker they vanish from the foothills

replaced by other skiers.

Yet a few, winged, linger on.

On Tuesday, I have a dream:
For two days, it's been snowing like crazy in Medvednica.
Instead of teacups, a waiter
hauls snow and buries the patrons' bodies.
These turn to whiteness on chairs as
the waiter gets away with an empty platter.

¹ Medvednica is a mountainous region north of the Croatian capital of Zagreb.

DERKAČ (1969) is the author of fifteen collections of poetry, prose, drama, essays, and a novel. Her work has been featured in many magazines, journals, and anthologies in Croatia and abroad and translated into 22 languages. Her recognitions include national and international literary awards, such as the Zdravko Pucak Poetry Prize, Duhovno Hrasce Prize, Vinum et Poeta Prize, and Risto Ratkovic Prize.



LAURA GARAVAGLIA (Italy)

The Glacier

1.

Slow. Gray. Flowing between moraines.
Having lost its candor, snow is but
wrinkled skin.
The glacier bleeds out in the thread of a stream
eternal its flow.
It is the wind to suggest everything.

2.

The fractured crust multiplies plates by a hundred
trickles the mantle of honey
the heart of nymphs, bitterness
that drips slowly
streaking your face and hands
confused planet lost
in our solar system

From *La Simmetria del gheriglio* (2014)

GARAVAGLIA lives and works in Como, Italy. She is a poet, translator, and journalist. She founded and chairs the Cultural Association 'La Casa della Poesia di Como' and is the organizer and curator of the International Poetry Festival 'Europa in versi,' held in Como every year since 2011. She is the director of the poetry series "Altri Incontri" for I Quaderni del Bardo Edizioni. She published six books of poetry translated into more than ten languages, has been invited to poetry festivals in various countries around the world, and has lectured at Italian and foreign universities.



LAURENT GRISON (France)

At the edge of the cliff

men get lost
often looking for hope

you walk in peace
from the village to the torrent

on the edge of the cliff
you listen to the murmur of life

here a ravine of doubt
there a suffering land

whose darkness is receding
in the primeval forest

where the sap of the trees
refuses all hatred

by a chance of meteors
the sky inks the mountain

the relief unfolds
the horizon becomes light

before the raised stone
that dominates time

you draw the image
of a serene world

GRISON is a poet, artist, art historian, and literary critic. His poems have been translated into twelve languages and published in several countries, including France, the United Kingdom, Australia, the United States, Belgium, Greece, Portugal, Spain, Poland, Nepal, and Japan.



LEE KUEI-SHIEN (Taiwan)

Mountain View

The autumn
spreads down the tenderness of rains
from the whole sky
as a fountain.

I am embraced by the mountains
in stubborn immobility,
feel the wind being at my ear sides,
whispering beside my ears.

I open whole life
as a fountain
displaying to her
the charm of love.

The distant mountains
are at last gradually melted, entering into
the eye expressions are opposite, staring at each other
intertwined to become
a dusk overall.

KUEI-SHIEN (1937-2025) is the author of sixty-two poetry books with translations in different languages. His poems in English translation include *Love is My Faith*, *Beauty of Tenderness*, *Between Islands*, *The Hour of Twilight*, *20 Love Poems to Chile*, *Existence or Non-existence*, *Response*, *Sculpture & Poetry*, *Two Strings*, *Sunrise and Sunset*, *Selected Poems by Lee Kuei-shien*, *As The River Flows*, and *As The Drums Beats*.



LUCILLA TRAPAZZO (Switzerland/Italy)

The Voice of the Glacier

(For the mountains of Engadina)

Listen. It does not thunder
it does not rumble the voice of the glacier
in checkmate of chattering
and chains. It floods instead
in timeless white
and carries on its shoulders
unconquered the sky.

Pierced by miasmas and penknife
the parched tongue
(hiding trace of ancient water)
waits for a light
of hope. The day beyond the sleep
of the minds. Beyond the implosion
of a species in yearning for itself
lingering like an ancient star
on the abyss.

- *Falling, it still wonders why* -
And life will return without edges
renewed. The golden eagle
with outstretched wings
in whirlwind will chase the hare
of the snow. We will be trees

and water and chlorophyll of fertile land
in harmonious doubt: is it still life
without a conscience to contemplate it?

TRAPAZZO is a poet, translator, artist, and performer. She has six books of poetry to her credit. Her poems, translated into 18 languages, have won important international awards, including Poet Laureate *Kurora e Poesisë* (International Festival of Korca, Albania 2023) and Golden Feather 2021 (Russia).



MARK ANDREW HEATHCOTE (UK)

Let me climb a mountain

Let me climb a mountain
and access a vaulted blue sky
I don't mind if I die here
as long as I am scouting
with eagles and sleeping on a bearskin
I'll take horizontal steps if need be
on my aching bent limbs,
bleeding sweat and blood.
I will mount that distant summit
to gaze atop the world
and I will hazard not to plummet
I will risk it all on a pitch and toss
and howl like a coyote at the moon,
if I don't hook a sentient firefly
heavenly bound with me.
Oh, I will climb a mountain
and access a vaulted blue sky far out of reach
and honestly, I don't mind if I die here
as long as I am scouting Him who created me.
And him me.

HEATHCOTE is an adult learning difficulties support worker. His poems have been published in journals, magazines, and anthologies online and in print. He is from Manchester and resides in the UK. He is the author of *In Perpetuity* and *Back on Earth*, two books of poems published by Creative Talents Unleashed.



NAI TIWA (Thailand)

The Wisdom of the Himalayas *(After visiting Nagarkot, Nepal)*

Cold winds whisper over the Himalayas,
Mountains stacked, far away, shrouded in white mist.
The golden light glimmers, stretching long,
Nature speaks, expressing its meaning.

Nature speaks in its simplicity,
Transmitting visions, bringing them near.
Images flow from the outside to within,
Touched gently by a calm heart.

The Himalayas stretch like a long line,
Veiled in white mist of questions.
The heart seeks to find the true meaning,
Searching for answers to define the heart's truth.

Our answers, unique to each one,
To untangle confusion and doubt.
Every single question hides significance,
To discover answers that are one's own.

The true answer lies in the heart's depths,
From the outside to within, cause and effect.

Between us, between the world, between people,
Escaping, or not escaping, from all stories.

Cold winds whisper over the Himalayas,
Mountains stacked, far away, shrouded in white mist.
The golden light glimmers, stretching long,
Nature speaks, expressing its essence.

NAI TIWA is the pen name of Ekkarat Jitmanpean, a Thai poet who was born in Bangkok. He started working as a columnist for newspapers. But his passion is writing poetry, nonfiction, and short stories, which he partially composes from his real experiences and attitudes. He has received awards such as the Matchon Award, the Seven Books Award, the Award for Poetry Book in the National Book Fair, and a Shortlist of the SEA Write Award. He was also invited to join the Literary Arts Festival in Bangladesh and Nepal.



NURAY ÖNGEÇ (Turkiye)

Translated from Turkish by the poet

My Mountains

My mountains are fortresses,
To every being in this world...
It rises so lofty,
It stretches its head with such honor,
It pierces the clouds.
It doesn't bow down or kiss hands,
It does not bow its head even once...
It is so huge, its body is too heavy,
Its heart is soft, kind, compassionate...

It calls the wolves and the birds, and says,
"Come, come again, whatever you are," like Rumi...
It opens all the corners of his body...
It embraces the snow,
It envelops and kisses the crazy winds...
It hugs and becomes a home for birds.
It becomes a benefactor to the souls that come to it...

It decorates his arms with hyacinths and crocuses,
It covers his shoulders with heavenly flowers and tulips.
It smells fragrant and intoxicating,
It loves its friends so dearly...

Mountains, my mountains, is it enough to live with you?
Mountains, my mountains, who can find friends like you?
To age with confidence?

ÖNGEÇ is the author of three poem books, *Aşk Olsun Aşk*, *Düş Perçemi*, and *Mavi Düşler Durağı*. More than two hundred of her poems are composed by Turkish composers. She is also a painter. She retired as an English teacher and lives in Mersin.



NURDURAN DUMAN (Turkiye)

Translated by **Andrew Wessels**

the watery side of the world

today, too, is in its proper place, the gardener and the nymph
it's strange, but they gave me an old walk
i see the watery side of the world now

i am bending down and drinking laughs thrown into my palms
your face is going to love me
your hands now are more and more and more birds

the joy of looking at you is like a child running
you kiss the flower-shaped scars spilling over my forehead
each letter written down is one febrile illness

i'm opening myself to what you hear to the clouds you listen to
since when and how is this mirror inside you
it's reflecting my eyes
i dress myself as you see me

when it's told and finished the story the edges of its eyes are wrinkling
the cloud's face is getting old, pulling the lace curtain
the mountain is a hand, the fog is now something else, something else

DUMAN is a poet, playwright, editor, and translator in Istanbul. Her books include *Yenilgi Oyunu*, *Istanbul'la Bakışmak*, *Mi Bemol*, *Semi Circle* (2016, US), *Selected Poems* (2017, Macedonia), *Selected Poems* (2019, Belgium), and *Steps of Istanbul* (2019, China). She received several literary recognitions, including the Golden Camel Award of 2020. A member of Turkish PEN, she teaches poetry and creative writing in universities and workshops.



ORI Z. SOLTES (USA)

Miriam Ruminates at the Foot of the Mountain

O my baby brother,
how did you extract us
from the thrall
of Egypt's pharaoh's rule
and bring us to that other
mountain of our instruction?
My eyes ascended as you wended
up the steep and craggy slopes
of Sinai.
Not once did you look back:
no doubts—regarding us, regarding *me*,
regarding where your path
was leading you:
that lightninged peak
so loudly swathed in stillness,
containing something
you alone could seek:
the stone
on which our patriarch dreamed of a ladder,
on which to carve the chosen rules of freedom.
And soon the clouds devoured you—and us,

by fear that you would not come *back*:
because, perchance, some different paradise
marked out the space where listening,
you might just choose to dwell
alone, forever, your thundering mind
and heart a watered, peaceful well
within your own inspired place.

SOLTES teaches art history, political history, and philosophy at Georgetown University in Washington, DC. A former Director and Curator of the B'nai B'rith Klutznick National Jewish Museum, he is the author or editor of twenty-five scholarly books, several hundred articles, exhibition catalogs, and essays. His poetry has appeared in a handful of journals, three edited collections, and as a volume entitled *Then and Now: Love Lost and Sometimes Found*.



ROBERT EPSTEIN (USA)

Three haikus

slow-moving creek —
Mt. Tam walks with me
the whole way

in the distance
in just one gulp
the whole of Mt. Tam

haiku morning —
I fold the afterlife
into the mountain

EPSTEIN is a licensed Psychologist living and working in the San Francisco Bay Area. Haiku has been not a pastime but a passion for nearly thirty-five years. He has written numerous books on his own haiku and edited many haiku anthologies on various themes. His most recent haiku book is *On Time: A Haiku Book in Color*.



RON RIDDELL (Colombia/New Zealand)

Up in the Mountains

The monks robed in red
mindfully go about their days:
cooking, cleaning, gardening, gathering

they could do the same things
down in the city
but find they are the happiest

up in the mountains, sharing
the solitude, sharing the silence
and the prospect of peace.

RIDDELL's recent books are *Dance of Blue Dragonflies* (poetry) and *Pachamama & the Jaguar Man* (novel). His previous work has been translated into a dozen languages. Book One of his long poem, *The Wanderer*, was launched in New Zealand in 2020 by HeadworX Publishers of Wellington. His latest collection of short poems is *Exil Stationer/Stations of Exile* (Simon Editor, 2020).



SAM SMITH (UK)

Continuous

Mountain slopes are sectioned by unmortared walls that are widest at the base and have flat cope-stones for capping. Surface adhesion and weight are all that keep each stone in place.

Portions of these walls get knocked back to rubble by panicked and clumsy sheep. These gaps, agape like uncomprehending morons, will see a man with scarred hands — a keeper of straight lines, a holder of conversations with stones,

“And where do you want to go this time?”

seek again to find the one stone that fits; will see him only reluctantly resort to his lump hammer for uncertain cuts, wince from the naked split. He prefers always to maneuver a rock from one fallen part into another. Thus, although contiguities

may change, use is continuous; a moment's
instinctual thought was given, say, to placement
of a flat binder, forgotten when
looked on but a month later.

SMITH was editor of *The Journal* (once '*of Contemporary Anglo-Scandinavian Poetry*') for nearly 30 years. He now lives in Blaengarw, South Wales, UK, and has several poetry collections (the latest being *The Complete Pieces*, KFS) and novels (the latest being *The Seventh Man*) to his name.



SOLEDAD BENAGES AMORÓS (Spain)

Translated by **Sandra Bruce Parker**

My Mountain

Before I knock you down, Duero elm,
with his axe, the woodcutter (...)
Elm, I want to write down in my wallet
the grace of your green branch.

Antonio Machado

'To a dry elm'. Fields of Castile.

My mountain emerges from the depths of the earth.
My mountain surrounds millions of years of history.
My mountain preserves the traces of hundreds, thousands of generations.
My mountain is anonymous, welcoming, silent...
It is not a mythological mountain, nor did it witness biblical deeds.
He did not exterminate any empire with his fire
but endured countless battles
and, from its summit, came, at the end of the war,
the happy ringing of the bells.
My mountain is in me, and I belong to it, my blood and my soul.
It's mine, it's ours.

Before the mountain thieves steal it from us
with an insatiable hunger for false progress,
before they devastate you to turn you into "*mine dust*",

and let the explosives destroy you...
I want my mountain, to climb, continue, climb...to your summit,
along your paths, through your stones
and talk to my deepest self
and hear your immortal voice
and smell your greens, grays...rainbows of colors.

I don't want this to be the last opportunity to pilgrimage
until you.
I will shout fossil words from your insides to move new consciousness:
land and river
 forest and stone
 grass and paths
 time and silence.

I will fight!

AMORÓS is a poet and professor of Spanish language and literature.
His poems have been published in Spain, Portugal, Romania, Cuba,
Chile, Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Paraguay,
Iran, Taiwan, Nepal, and India.



TAHAR BEKRI (Tunisia/France)

Translated by **Patrick Williamson**

If Your Mountain...

If your mountain is a dark cavern
for dirty work
hideout for vipers and reptiles
how can you rise to greet the sun?

If your mountain is a nest for the Assassins
going down the slope constantly
to bloody the plain
how can you love the peaks and clouds?

If your mountain is nothing but a pile of stones
with no grass or trees
with no snow or springs
how can you bear brooks and rivers?

If your mountain is only a shelter
for wolves, vultures, and carrion
how can you caress the stars
nurture men with the night of dreams?

BEKRI (1951) is a Tunisian poet and currently lives in Paris. He has published thirty poetry, essays, and art books. He was awarded the *Prix de l'Académie française, langue et littérature française* in 2019.



VALERIU STANCU (Romania)

Sermon on the Mountain

The mist-shrouded dawn
had not yet begun to chase away
the uncertainties of the night,
when the Master went up the mountain with his disciples
and said to them:
it is the most imposing thing
that the gods have raised on earth,
the highest peak,
where only dreams nest.
Only the pride of men
and your pride in being my disciples
surpass its height and arrogance.
Millennia from now,
this mountain will be nothing more than grains of sand
deprived of a future
thrown by the hand of fate
into the depths of seas
that do not even exist today,
but the pride of men will raise it up,
in their haughty souls wandering the wicked waters.
When these grains of sand
deprived of a future
will blossom,

you will go out
with your disciples,
to show them
how vanity is born,
"whose kingdom shall have no end."

STANCU, born in 1950 in Iasi, Romania, is a writer, journalist, editor, and translator. A member of the Romanian Writer's Union, he is editor-in-chief of the literary magazine *Cronica*. He has published sixty books of poetry, short stories, essays, and a novel. His poetry books include *Triunghiuri cu pupila albastră* (2009), *Balada sârmanului pescar* (2010), *Tîrgul de nopți* (2010), *Ceremonia risipirii* (2011), *Zodier de copilărie* (2014), and *Arlechin bolnav de noapte* (2014). He has received recognition from the President of Romania for special merits as well as from the Romanian Writers' Association.

Poetry shows us the way

Babs Gons, in conversation with Sylvie Marie

*The Dutch poet **Babs Gons** (1971) is the author of two poetry books, *Hoe kan het toch?* (*How Can it Be?*, 2017) and *Doe Het Toch Maar* (*Do It Anyway*, 2021). She also published a children's book, *Het begint met een droom* (*It Starts With A Dream*), and a collection of columns *Alles wat je liefhebt wordt mooi* (*Everything you love will be beautiful*) she wrote for a paper. She has edited *Hardop* (*Out Loud*, 2019), an anthology featuring spoken word poets. She is one of the most popular and active in her country, and the many spoken word poetry shows that she launched and organized in The Netherlands became the cradle of a whole new scene. Since September 2023, she has been the Poet Laureate of the Netherlands. She presents her work at festivals, literary programs, in museums, debate centers, and libraries, reads on radio and television, and has traveled with her work to South Africa, Sudan, Curaçao, Suriname, Hungary, and Brazil. She has received several awards, including the 2018 Black Achievement Award for Arts and Culture and the 2019 International Slam-O-Vision Contest Title for her poem 'Assman vs. People Woman.' She also won the Gouden Ganzenvaar 2024, the Johnny in 2023, and several nominations for her debut poetry book.*



Sylvie Marie (1984) is a Belgian poet and a WPM International Coordinating Committee member. She is the author of four poetry collections: Zonder (Without), Toen je me ten huwelijk vroeg (When you asked me to marry you), Altijd een Raam (Always a Window), and Houdingen (Positions).

Marie met Gons in Medellín during Medellín Poetry Festival. This conversation between the Low Countries reveals the aesthetic and performative power of poetry and the dreams it nurtures.

MARIE: *Imagine you are allowed to create a utopian society. What place would you give poetry and spoken word in it?*

GONS: I think that poetry is key to realizing a utopia. Poetry, spoken word, and art, in general, are wonderful tools for change. Poetry is communication and connection, leading to a better understanding of our experiences. Poetry helps to make sense of life, enables you to see the beauty in the world, and provides you with a softer outlook on life and the planet. A poem disarms, enhances empathy, creates understanding, gives joy, and distresses.

Poetry is a part of our everyday life. People who think they have nothing with poetry don't realize that life is drenched in poetry. We use poetry during births, marriages, and funerals. We also use it to flirt, to educate, to escape in all aspects of life. My utopian society would be a post-racial, post-imperialist, post-capitalist society with a Ministry of Poetry, ensuring we'll always look for poetry in politics, daily life, and conflict. I'd like to think that we cannot fight wars with poems, it will be a poetry slam battle.

MARIE: *How did you realize all this about poetry?*

GONS: I learn about poetry daily, from every meeting with other poets, every event, and every festival. I get a lot of messages from people about how they receive poems. And it's fascinating to find out what poems mean to people. I tend to think that poems are impotent, meaning they

can't feed you, keep you warm at night, stop a war, or cure a disease, but if I have learned anything in the last few years, it is that poems can cause a lot of other things. They can clear things up, create connections, and give hope, and hope is such a powerful impulse. Just like imagination. Just like love. They may be the most revolutionary impulses.

And I think poems can make us imagine a radically different world.

I never thought you could live so intensely with poetry as I do right now. There is poetry everywhere. It's on my table, in the streets that I walk, in meetings with people, and in lonely moments. Memorizing poems while being in the hospital has got me through my recent cancer treatments. It's also where it's most uncomfortable. It's also a refuge. It's where I dare to speak. It's where I dare to dream.

***MARIE:** Which event gave you the spark, and how did it unfold to being a writer yourself?*

When I was young, books, stories, and poems were really something magical for me, like portals. And I started writing poems at an early age. But only when I discovered spoken word poetry in my late twenties did I realize this was the kind of literature I had been searching for. During a stay in New York in 1997, I came upon a lot of spoken word events, and I was so captured by it. I saw people on stages, like-minded people, who told recognizable stories with passion and fire in a language that was so relatable to me. Back home, I started organizing monthly events in Amsterdam. That's where it started.

***MARIE:** Yes, you became an organizer of many spoken-word events. What drives you to put so much energy into it, and what does that bring you?*

GONS: From the beginning, I felt such wonderful energy; the events were visited by a lot of like-minded people, people looking for the same kind of vibe for the same kind of performance poetry. I mean, the spoken word is not new, of course; it has been around for ages, we called them

griots, djeli's, troubadours, jazz poets, beat poets, etcetera, but how it presents itself since the nineties, it was like this whole new movement; it was vibrant, it felt new, and it there was so much joy and passion. And besides that, it felt so necessary to build this stage for new voices, unheard stories, and other visions. It gave me this beautiful sense of community.

Even though I have been on a solo path for the last ten years, I still need to gather regularly to join other poets and feel that community. Besides that, I made it a mission to keep working with the younger generation; I think it's very important to tell them about the movement, how it started, the whole story, tell them about our storytelling ancestors, etcetera. And for me, to teach is to learn twice; for my own growth, it's essential to stay in contact with the world and language of a younger generation.



Let me ask you the same question. I'm very curious about your world of poetry, how you unfolded as a writer, and what drives you.

MARIE: *Poetry really is something you hold on to in life. Or poetry holds on to you and sees you as a perfect medium to spread the power of words.*

Yes, that is the same for me. I remember very well the first books I read when I was very young and the comfort I instantly found in the world of words. It feels like it came to me, literally. That moment when a writer visited my primary school and told us about his 'power' was real magic. Maybe that was what I needed the most back then: some space where I could be the creator of, some world of my own, where I could dance and express myself without the judgment of my rural environment.

Now, poetry has become much more than that. It's a source of insight—it's like the words are mightier than me and that I only 'find' them if I am willing to listen. Yes, I see myself now more as a medium to unlock the wisdom of words and more than just expressing myself; I express life just by listening to the music we create when we speak. And it reveals so much every day! I can't just switch that sense off; it leads me to many places and people. It gives me a key to understanding and discovering life; I pass that gift on to my audience. And it still evolves!

Since September 2023, you have been the Poet Laureate of the Netherlands, a very important title that gives you a large stage and makes you the poetic voice of your country. What brings you that?

GONS: It is a huge responsibility, but I also see it as a continuation of my work from the last few years. I have been traveling a lot with my work, I have been organizing lots of events around spoken word and poetry, and I have been addressing social and political issues forever. Of course, writing regularly for a national paper about current affairs can be tense; when I said yes to this title, I had no idea if I could create under this pressure, but I know now I can. But it has cost me some sleep, let me be honest...

***MARIE:** I can imagine that sometimes political or social problems are so complex that they paralyze your creativity. Or you feel you 'have to' write something, but it doesn't come. How do you get along with that?*

GONS: If that happens, then it's not the time. And that's okay. You can't make poetry of everything; maybe at a later moment, you'll find the right words. Even when I was in Medellin, I had to skip one night because I fiercely wanted to write a poem for the National Commemoration of the MH17 plane crash. It had been ten years since a passenger plane with mostly Dutch people on it was shot down by Russian back forces while flying over eastern Ukraine. It was a heavy task because I had been personally involved, and I felt the weight of writing for all the people whose loved ones were cruelly murdered. Even a couple hours before the deadline, I could not find the right words and the right tone. But I trusted the process; that is something I learned, to trust the process. I know I can find the poem.

Besides that, as a Poet Laureate, I have a lot of freedom. I can choose my subjects, or rather, I let the subjects find me. There is always a head full of things I want to write about. The most challenging part of this time has been the issues of life itself. I had to deal with loss and illness that prevented me from dedicating all my time to poetry. Luckily, I still found enough time and space. Another part of being a Poet Laureate is performing on different stages and at various occasions and starting a couple of projects. I have been busy developing projects in cocreation to involve more people in poetry; I'm really into involving more people who feel like there is a distance between them and literature.

I agree with what you said. I also feel poetry is more like a medium. Poetry is about expressing life. Isn't it magical to have this source of insight? Poems show us the way, and it's very mighty to have this superpower!



ABDEL WAHED SOUAYAH (Tunisia)

Translated by **Mostari Lagha**

The Wedding of the Universe

I am not sad, Palestine
Would a poet grieve while the wedding there is adorned with roses?
Behind our screens, we watch
The greatest wedding in the history of this universe
I will wear a red T-shirt
A beautiful green pair of pants
And shoes
I will join the people of Palestine in their dance
And become a rose blooming in the wedding of the universe

What is happening in Gaza
Is a moment that resembles
The moment of creation
Just before the six days
The moment when God decided
to create the universe
For the universe was, for God, a poem in which we are
Its protagonists

Water its lexicon
And, Palestine its rhythms

They bomb, and we water the land with roses
Wait for gardens of God's words
Wait for a poetic forest, coming soon
And for all the criminals' tears trying
To atone for their sins
Bouquets of roses, cheering with joy, heading toward
Jerusalem
Never concerned with your good deeds

Whoever did not participate in the celebration of the universe
Is not welcome
Our dead are alive
And your living are dead
For Gaza is reclaiming its sovereignty,
Setting the universe in order
To each their role
Whoever took part in her wedding is truth and beauty
And whoever did not take part is ugliness and error

I am not sad, Palestine
I will dance
I will scatter roses left and right
For we are the fertilizer of the universe
And we are the meanings,
Giving this existence its lifeblood
Your martyrs are the water of life, Gaza
Your streets are immortal poems
Your tunnels are a new language,
A torrent of meanings
For you are the beginning,

And you are the end
Come on, substitute money
And children
For Gaza
In the hope that you may grasp the meaning of life
So what reconstruction do you wish for
In a country where the rose is equal to a book?

SOUAYAH was born in Bembla, Tunisia. He studied Arabic Literature at the University of Sousse and later taught Arabic language and literature. He heads the Tunisian Writer's Association (Monastir chapter). He is considered one of the pioneers of "Mouvement du texte," the modernist literary movement in the country. He has authored five volumes of poetry and also writes short stories, literary criticism, and scholarly essays. His latest publication is *I write for the tree* (2017).



ADAM FATHI (Tunisia)

Letter to a Sniper

Turn away from me for a while sniper
Try to see yourself alive
Before killing Azza (my breath of a daughter
Who helps me breathe in the marble
The ear of light that has committed
Only its steps in the darkness
The child of dreams that came out of the straw doll
And the goose's beak
Who set out to find her awakening
On the paths of Jerusalem
And on the shores of Gaza)
**

Turn away from us for a while sniper
Bite the wind
Search the basket of apples
Chase the cloud of apparitions
Hum a tune
While the dreams awaken
In the days of Azza
Wait a little until the pain
Makes Azza mature
Try to sleep a little or pretend

While Azza asks the Seven Sleepers:
What are you waiting for here?
For Jerusalem to fall?
For Gaza to perish?

**

Savor your bitter coffee
Empty the powder charge from your heart
Call your father
You will see a tint of fear overwhelm you
Before I die within you
Before you see me as
The last sign of life in you
In vain, you amass my dead
To elevate yourself
My dead will never be ladders
In vain you roar and foam
You will see nothing of me
But a soul that does not give up
And blood that cries out in a gasp of pride:
We will resist

**

Do your nails while chatting with the walls
Give me a little time sniper
To dig a grave
Next to yours
Then tell me
When do you plan to leave?
How much of our blood will it take
For you to fall asleep for a while and forget us?

**

Death has sealed my horizons
So I embraced the sea as a gateway to the end

I said I might drown in five minutes
Or perhaps
I would find the sea drowning
And call it towards some boats
(As if burning the borders
Could comfort
Those who burn between the borders)
I thought I could console the sea with a tear
Finally, writing Robinson's story my way
Giving a good role to Friday
I had so much thought of writing it
In the language of birds and the dreams of buds
I embraced the sea
Like one embraces music
A home
A garden
I said I might
Drown in five minutes
To see my loved ones drowned:
"Peace"
"Values"
"Justice"
"Truth"
I embraced the sea
To distance myself from myself
And from the world
From the blood of children
From the smell of children
Roasted
Roasted
In the eye of the fires
While the world around me sleeps
Or pretends

I embraced the sea to forget
Even if only for five minutes
But death could not bear to be far from me for a minute
**

Where are you leading my lambs, triumphant wolf?
Where are you going, sniper?
Here, our people have not dispersed
Despite the winds of wandering
Here our land has not broken within us
And our blood has not evaporated
What tempts you
To desire my death?
A stone
That beats in my daughter's sling?
My stone
Is but a tear springing from the hand
My stone
Is but a petrified rose
My stone
Is but a hand striking the heart
Perhaps it will beat again
My stone
Is but a dance on the days
Awakening a delayed dawn
Why do you not wake up then
From the delusions of barbarism?
Why don't you return to me
The key to my house?
Why don't you put down your rifle?
**

Here the heart overflows with funerals
Here, the poetry overflows with mourning

Where to turn the face?
No green to play in
No blue to flee to
No sea or boat
Nothing but a stifler of horizons
Red tyrannical
Every time we fear it
In the darkness of night
We question its waves
Then we question our blood:
Which of you stirs within us?

**

Turn away from me sniper
Occupy your dead time
By inventing your false tales
And forget Gaza
In the dome of Jerusalem

Yawn a little
Sing the glory of yesterday
Learn the gait of the goat
Stretch like a wolf
Burn the stones and trees
In the forests of my ancestors
And between the lines of my text
Or leave death and ignite
Your cold blood in my singing and dancing
And forget Azza
(Have you been a child like her?
Have you ever been a child
Before getting used to hunting me?)
Here you are hunting your dawn

Here you are from drinking so much blood
A voracious beast in the shadow of a carnivore
The human has left your breast
Here you are from loving death so much
Slave to death
Killing only yourself

**

I am tired of death
Oh, how tired I am of this death
How tired I am of you
O death of childhood
I no longer know
Who among us is Samson
Every time she betrays us
And who among us is Delilah?

**

Turn away from us a little sniper
Flip through yesterday's newspapers
Yawn with boredom
Wait a little
Roll some tobacco
Smoke and go back to sleep for a while
Or pretend
Until the fire gives birth to a garden
And we see the dream become reality
In vain
You amass our dead to elevate yourself
Our dead will never be ladders
In vain
You roar and foam
You will see nothing of us

But a soul that does not give up
And the blood that cries in a gasp of pride:
Jerusalem will never fall
Nor will Gaza be destroyed.

FATHI (1957) is a poet, translator, and journalist. He has thirty books on poetry, translation, and other writings. He has been writing articles and press cards for forty years. His works have been translated into French, English, German, Italian, Swedish and Spanish. He produced and presented many radio and television programs. His poetry books include *Seven Moons for the Castle Guardian* (1982), *The Song of the Eloquent Trade Unionist* (1986), *Hymns for the Rose of Dust* (1991), and *The Blind Glassblower; His Days and Works* (2011). He was also awarded 'The Carthage Poetry Prize' (2014) and the Sarkon Boulos Prize for Poetry and Translation (2019).



ADEL AL-MAIZI (Tunisia)

Translated by **Abdullah Gasmî**

The Holocaust of the Last Jew

To live in this world
Like a match in the dark
swings
Doesn't burn
doesn't fade
In the wilderness of his sorrows or pain
Impressed!
To live as if they were wild beasts
She chases him with a broken human law
I started kicking his corpse like an occupying Jew.
I saw on the phone screen kicking a naked corpse.
luxury
I even saw
Angel's lust
It dangles
Touched by death
It rises like the calls of a drowning person in a bottomless pit
To live like a childhood
Or like a woman's moan
At this time of year
Break it

Insomnia until a cloud of blood
Insomnia until the next dawn
Even rubbish is the abyss
Insomnia to the point of forgetfulness
It overlooks the sea
As if guarded by the cries of infant souls
murdered
Insomnia as if it were a dipped shroud
In the water of cold music
He still practices dream tobacco smuggling to those who do not beg for
anything and are assumed to be the living dead.
Smuggling gasoline is a mistake, and smuggling pills to numb the
clock when the runway is narrow
In the hallway, there was a guide guiding me to my room in the Snobra
El Kef hostel.
I was all along the halls listening to a premature baby crying
cries like a stone
cries a bandage
cries uncontrollably
The subway train cries
He cries a clear attempt that shines through at the end of this text
And blood coming out from under closed doors/
Gates of the forest
Even in that little restaurant down the hotel lobby for breakfast in the
morning
With croissants and scrambled eggs
I took my son to a plate
I put a little salt on him, and with the brush and knife, I cut off one of his
fingers and tasted it.
The taste was off-putting and had some bitterness
I forgot that I left his legs outside the stove in the oven and
spoiled the food.
I burned my funeral in tomatoes

I tried with the brush and knife with the head
I ate a little of the chopped brain, but it lacked the spices
I licked fresh blood mixed with a chocolate conscience
The taste of charcoal seeped into my language
I was trying to raise my head to the screen:
A child was ruined by a butcher with a bomb.
Half a brain mixed with red resentment,
One-third of the organs are damaged.
[Oh my God, the kneading was more real than my mother's bread
Vibrating under the rubble of houses
piece of meat]
No doubt the price of a steak would be reasonable for tonight's dinner:
Pastries with baby meat imported from Gazza

AL-MAIZI is the author of several poetry and poetic fiction books, including *The Homeland of the Poem*, *Yesterday, A Thousand Years Ago*; *Hooks Fly with Me*, and *As For Me, There Is No Paradise*. He won the Fadwa Tuqan Prize for Arabic Poetry (2013), awarded by the Palestine International Foundation in Jordan. His poems are included in many poetry anthologies and encyclopedias. Some of his poems have been translated into French, English, Spanish, and Portuguese.



AHMED AMOR ZAABAR (Tunisia)

I am the Messiah

I am the Messiah
But
They see my name carrying a sin, Palestinian
Yes
I am Palestinian
The earth is watered from my veins
My blood is free, shouting
Kill me a thousand times
For the life of humiliation is bitter
I will return, and return to see my land free
For I am the soul of the soil
I am the Phoenix
And I am the Messiah
While you are dust on the mirror of our past
You are a wounded illusion
For when our hands rise
The wind will scatter you

ZAABAR (1963) was born in Ouardanine, Tunisia. He is a poet, writer, and media specialist. He has three poetry collections to his credit. He was the former Chairman of the Cultural Committee of the Arab Cultural Forum in Britain and the former Chairman of the Media Committee of

the Arab Club in Britain. His poetry has been translated into French, Spanish, Chinese, Italian, and English. He has participated in various poetry festivals, including those in Morocco (2016), Tunisia (2016), Rome (2017), Spain (2018), Cuba (2018), Mexico (2019, 2024), and Colombia (2023). In 1984, he won the First Prize for Short Story at the Sidi Bouzid Festival for Young Writers in Tunisia.



ADISLEY MAYAN VALDÉS (Cuba)

Thoughts

If you were to walk through my thoughts at this moment
you would know the language of flowers and hummingbirds,
the color of the dew when it kisses the hibiscus,
and how the colony looks
in the endless party of arecas and lilies!

If you read my mind
you would enchanted drink from my mouth the image of your dream
described in these letters.

You would sing to the light that lives in these eyes
the murmuring flight of the canary,
the eternal gaze of desire,
and you would see in the air a heart singing in surprise!

We are the owners of our thoughts.
And if I had the power to retain them,
if I could carve;
I would sculpt them

As long as my eyes shine

As long as my eyes shine
I am the handkerchief that dries your tears.

I take care of the feet that run to meet me,
your walk drives me to follow in your footsteps;
My goal is to offer you rest in my arms.

As long as my eyes shine
you will read the language of love between my lips.

VALDÉS (1985) is a poet and a medical doctor. She started writing poems and stories as a teenager. In 2023, she joined the literary workshop at Casa de Cultura and was invited to read her poems at book fairs and poetry festivals. Her poems have been published in *Ventana Sur*, and the Tina Modotti Cultural Center translated and published them into Italian. She won a provincial poetry prize in 2024.



ALI AL HAZMI (Saudi Arabia)

Throwing Your Grief as a Rock into the Waters

In your forties
Wingless
You urge the meaning to fly once again
As though you are powerful enough, once more, to step over the clouds

Heading towards your own wilderness
The winds put all the sins of the tale upon your shoulders
Since you stopped at the gates of your past
With chained legs
Neither your years returned to the song
Nor did the gorgeous girls come back from the trees of childhood
jocundly
To your fields

In your forties
There, near the springs
Longing takes you toward the deer
That no more listens to your songs
When you feel their approaching steps
And when the bird of words chirps
On a lonely branch in the heart
You throw your grief like a rock into the sea

And see your face burning
In the furnace of the lost painful moment

In your forties
When you are fastened
To the flutes on the shawl of a ballad
Find a dove forgotten in your own traveling meaning
Do not exhaust the tender melody
With sighs of the memory that circles around your soul like a bracelet

In your forties
The past assumes you are so close to its orchards
While you are there, still stuck in the wilderness of your fantasies
When you started your voyage
Towards your glittering metaphor
You paid no attention to the thorny questions
Starting from afar at your feet

In your forties on the roads
No more you need to fold your shadows
As you head towards the pleasures of life
Trying to reach the lost bank of the river
Memory asks, "When did you go bewildered in the presence of oblivion?
What would have hurt your innocent past if you stopped at its noble
gates for a greeting?
Dropping off the burdens of rejection that have watered your eyes with
the thirst for nothingness

In your forties,
A woman from the past visits you;
Don't be rude to her flutes by asking about her distant love stories.
Save her from the deceptive mills,
And restore her to pure joy

And to her flowers;
Listen to the bird of her soul
Neglected in the trees of absence;
Be like the soft rains for her if she goes astray;
Be the metaphorical chord if she smiles;
And be an existential passion
If she looks at you.

But, when you approach her extensive fires,
Be nothing but ashes.

ALHAZMI graduated in Arabic Language and Literature from Umm Al-Qura University. He started publishing poetry in 1985. His published works are *A Gate for the Body* (1993), *Loss* (2000), *Deer Drink Its Own Image* (2004), *Comfortable on the Edge* (2009), and *Now in the Past* (2018). His poems have been translated and published in several international magazines in France, Spain, Turkiye, and Cuba, among others.



AMAR SHAH (Nepal)
Translated by **Keshab Sigdel**

Mask

I shine the showcase
And display the masks

The masks—
Of different sizes
Of different colours—
The artists have etched in them with great effort
The emotions of gravity, pity, and fear

My customers can arrive anytime now—
Leaders and actors
Social workers and businessmen
Poets and artists
Journalists and civil servants
Industrialists and brokers
Saints and teachers

I need to keep all kinds of masks ready
And display them in my shop

The leaders choose the masks of their need
And go to the public meetings

To make provoking speeches
Columnists wear the mask
And write sponsored articles
Criminals wear the mask
And do everything to prove righteous
Intellectuals too wear the masks
And philosophize their biases in their lectures

If you, too, want to give a lecture on socialism
In a five-star hotel
Or want to plan a strategy to attain communism
In a lavish meeting room
You too may need these masks

You are welcome to my shop—
This is my business!
But if you want to begin a movement to undo those mask
I strongly support your campaign
That is my faith!

SHAH (1958) is a creative writer and a retired technocrat. He has to his credit two short story collections, *Aadi Yug* (1989) and *Kurukshetra* (2014), and a collection of poems, *Yatra ra ghumtiharu* (2016). His new poetry book *Gau chhodeko manchhe* (2025) is expected to be published shortly. He has received literary awards, including Lokendra Sahitya Puraskar, Rapti Sahitya Samman, and Tanneri Sahitya Samman.



ANNABEL VILLAR (Uruguay/Spain)

Africans

Mare Nostrum, salt and seagulls,
Africans rocked by the waves
awaiting life in a shelter
and then, it is in the lap of God,
awaiting death
in the foam
and then, it is in the lap of God.

VILLAR is a poet, translator, and cultural manager. He is the founding member of Liceo Poetico de Benidorm. He is the author of *Viaje al Sur del Sur* (2015), *Cantar la Vida* (2015), *Meditación* (2017), and *Claustrophobia & Vértigo* (2018).



ASLIHAN TÜYLÜOĞLU (Turkiye)

*(Translated from Turkish by **Baki Yiğit**)*

The Last Age of Insurrection

What are you waiting for;
The breakage of a flower at its neck
The patience a stone cracked with!

A cloud catches on fire at its hair
And crashes into cold
To become the tears
Of a self-alienated people

Others have taken offense at strangers
Hope is a tenant of the sun
In neighboring countries, the door of the massacres opens
The tom-tom sounds of war have into sight
Cities have become large shelters for refugees
Already continual alarm sirens

The scattered dialect of freedom
In the tent of love, two shots, a gun, and a woman
The garden is bleeding for the child who buried his mother
He inwardly knows and silently sings
The fragmented song of darkness.

The heavy curtains are hanging from the window
And escaping from the unhappiness of the houses
An egg is rolling off the counter and committing suicide
While I was thinking about these, my aunt is considering it
As instance, and wants to have abundance through prayers
Whereas this lid is to cover the poverty of the pot

Inside me, I am involved in the long laughings
Of the woman who makes fun of herself
“I couldn’t even be the shadow on your dimple
I couldn't settle into the curl on your lips.”
Ah! What a shame! Haha!
“I collect from the memories
A heavy mattress folded in the cupboard
I put the bed sheet of the longings on my lifetime.”
What does it mean!

When passing through the magic circles
Still, I saw man's heart is poor
I adopted thorns, not roses
That angry primitivity gradually increases its black robe
An old revolutionary devotes his last strength to a glorious fight
By confronting the F-type siege too

Otherwise, he knows it will get worse and worse gradually
He knows if the height in the mountains is absent
It would be a precipice for us

TÜYLÜOĞLU (1972) is the author of seven collections of poems and two prose books. Her poetry has appeared in magazines such as *Varlık*, *Türk Dili*, *Şiirden*, *Edebiyatist*, and *Yasakmeyve*. She studied electronic engineering and later graduated in Turkish language and literature.



ASSEM BAZZI (Lebanon)

Burial Rites

Mother entropy
All-embracing
Ever present
Ever welcoming
Ever loving
I bring you my flesh
I drag my gods before you
I plop the skinned animals of my being onto your Altar

Mother entropy
No escape
Most compassionate
Sing to me the endless lullaby
Sing me the song of all the dead tongues
Sing to me the silent tune of everlasting peace

In dynamo
Violence
In stasis
Release

Raise the spear
Topped with a cross

Drag the red behind
Cleansing the passing

Raise the hysteria over the stoned face
Sit and rise with every godly lyric

Inhale the fumes
Gain vertigo

Enclose the rot in the mountains
Beneath the weight

Send the son back onto winds evading clouds
Keep the father in place
Appease the mother's tears with your absence

BAZZI is a poet and the founding member of the el-Yafta poetry circle.
His published poetry book is titled *From Martyr to Rat*.



BIMAL BAIDYA (Nepal)

Translated by **Keshab Sigdel**

My Deity

At the time of my birth,
I had my body bare.
I had no words,
No name,
No identities of my own.

When I was born,
I had no religion,
No caste,
No clan,
No lineage,
No culture—
I had nothing called mine.

When I was born,
I knew no letters,
Had no nationality,
Was not entrapped by political ideologies,
Not burdened by opinions.
I was free from haste or stress,
I had no pleasures or grief.

During my birth,
I had no shame or distaste,
No guilt,
No wishes,
No ambitions.
The only thing I possessed
Was my pristine innocence.

When I was born,
Life alone was my meaning—
There were no other definitions.
There were no deities in the mountain pass to please,
No altars to vow before.
I knew no gods.
If there was any god,
It was only my mother,
Who gave birth to me.
She was my only goddess!

BAIDYA (1966) was born in Malapath, Ilam. He has four poetry collections to his credit: *Aakash chunna khojne manharu* (2060 BS), *Samaya ra sapanaharu* (2072 BS), *Akshar symphony* (2075 BS), and *Yugko tatma ubhiyera* (2080). He is the president of the Bhanu Statue Preservation and Literature Promotion Committee, Ilam, and the adviser of the Municipal Foundation for Art, Literature, and Culture, Ilam. He has also received several awards, including Chisap Lila Narmada Sahitya Puraskar, Jayananda Prasad Prasai Best Book Award, and Basu Sashi Literature Award.



BIMAL GUHA (Bangladesh)

Translated by **Professor Md. Abu Zafor**

Those Who Don't Read Poetry

We write poems

We write poems across nature's white pages.

We write poems on quires of paper.

Some of my acquaintances have enquired about me
if these poems are of any use to humans.

They have more things to query –

Do poems ever benefit any man?

They say isn't writing poems a waste of time?

Huge verses have been composed by Rabindranath and Nazrul

Or, by Jibanananda and Shamsur

How many people read that stuff?

But I retort– poems are read by those

to whom life is a container

that contains all beauty.

And poetry is a complete artistic expression
of beauty of all life forms.

We write poems, we compose life everyday

We pull out images of abstract philosophy

and the ever-transforming essence of our consciousness.

This deep poetic expression– this memory-ethos–

kept embalmed and treasured for future knowledge.

Poetry is that illuminated original flow

Time's transforming form of evolution.
Poetry shows the way out
when the world is confronted with so many hazards,
divisions, inequalities, and impurities.
Those who do not read poems
do not find the actual beauty,
the original flavours, and the smells of the world.
With their sensory eyes, they simply see
outward concrete images.
Real images of things elude them.
Those who do not read poems do not truly understand
the magnanimity of sunrise and sunset.
And the sprouting theory never stirs their minds.
We write poems; we write life every day.

It is poetry, which is a spontaneous outflow
of making sense of the truth
a contemplation of our consciousness.
It is the ancient and eternal form of expression—
the portrayal of all our guts and prowess.

GUHA (1952) is a poet from Bangladesh. He is an adept artist in the sense that he gives artistic shape to his poetic subjects with skillful rhetorical use. He has received many awards for poetry, including the country's most prestigious Bangla Academy Literary Award in 2021.



BISHWA SIGDEL (Nepal)
Translated by **Stormy Hazarika**

Living Colour

Mixing shades in a palette,
I reflected,
I was a different colour.
One created by my parents.

I add to this another hue
in the collage of colour,
with my creative brush.

A little soil,
A little breeze.
Some fire,
and a little water.
A lot of life.
Caressing Nature,
I gave birth to the whole art.

Mixing colours, I think.
I am the brush.
Stroking colour onto a blank canvas.
Living colour.

SIGDEL is a poet and fiction writer. He is the author of the poetry collection *Taaliko Samajshastra* (Sociology of Applause). *Pale Shadows at Dusk*, a bilingual translation of his poetry into English and German is published in 2025. He also edited the literary magazine *Akal Kushum*.



BLAŽ BOŽIČ (Slovenia)

Translated by **Lukas Debeljak**

plywood & gasoline

another morning was about to
clear the world's conscience.

splintered plywood blindness forested silence,
weak at the knees, say:

against and *in your face* hushed

and everything gentle that remained to us elsewhere
petrified
and still sometimes faintly whispers
this or that in admonishment —

another morning: that it might be for us to triumph someday
when one of ours returns to us,
that they might be for us,
torn apart and wild legacies,
ossified as loss and lesson
in front of *teksas*, or the *technical school* —
and all the bog pulp of the years we endured:

splintered plywood blinds in the morning,
someone announces they're
returning from abroad

undergrowth still persists on the tallow
ruins of steps as a notation of the city,

the spot where, in the warmth of 2005,
gasoline was sniffed

you said you'd retreat,
do nothing other than
document: those living abroad,
all the provisional exits and
us: fragile notations,

unintelligible across the sky's feeble margins,
set aside on the path's evening edge —
like a bothersome promise, an incantation to the evening

or the violence of rain and on
tearful killing grounds

or in the carrion of this time
where you provisionally triumph over what's to come,

wishing the rain's furrows to be the only ones to fall:
over the sky's blooms, as you name
these fallen birds
you dismiss & trample

out of love and

that's when you triumph: over us, fugitives,

as bare as the city

BOŽIČ (1991) is a poet, musician, classical philologist and translator. He has published a chapbook, *Grč* (Gnarl, KUD Kentaver, 2011), and three books of poetry: *Potem smo si vranice odprli na nežno valujoči livadi* (Then We Opened Up Our Spleens in a Gently Rolling Lea, KUD France Prešeren, 2013), *K območnim poročilom* (And Now to Local News, Center za slovensko književnost, 2016), and as the latest *mleček, žbunje; grobovi v njem* (spurge, brush; the graves within, Center za slovensko književnost, 2022).



BRANE MOZETIČ (Slovenia)

Translated from Slovene by **Barbara Jurša**

abortee

I am lying on a pebble beach. With lots of flooded branches, pieces of plastic, and remnants of fishing nets around me. Like after a storm. But the sun is beating down through the clouds, and numerous bathers are jumping around, throwing themselves into the water, making insufferable noise. A scream is heard from the sea, then another one; wet feet are rushing out, spraying me with water, so I get up and open my eyes. Everyone is fleeing the beach, leaving behind their towels, deck chairs, parasols, and sandwiches. In an instant, I am left by myself. The dog is sitting beside me, alertly watching something among the waves. It seems like a white T-shirt inflated by water, I am paying more attention as it comes nearer. The dog jerks, runs, and jumps into the water; he is now swimming towards the T-shirt. I am wading knee-deep in water, while the thing is so close that the ribbons have become thin legs; I'm shoing the dog away; the inflated cloth is a bloated animal carcass, pure white, hairless, with a long tail curling in water, everything is moving, as if the thing were alive, and in front, right in front, there is the head, jutting into water, actually a tiny one, given the bulge of the torso, it is slightly turning, as if it belonged to a cat or some rare breed of dog. I'm terrified. I run back to the shore, grab a long branch, the one that lies closest, and return with it to drive the dog away and push the creature back to the sea. I push it far away, but the waves throw it back to my

feet. I recoil. I keep repeating the same thing, but the creature keeps returning. The head is becoming human-like. The claws are finger-like. Stern faces are gathering behind me. They are saying: This is your baby, who you threw off the raft. After so many years of wandering the seas, he has finally found you. Now take it! Cotton nappies, a sand pail, a toy shovel, and brightly colored pacifiers are pushed into my hands. The tail brushes against my leg and stings; I turn tail. Countless hands are after me; the rain pours from the sky.

MOZETIČ (1958) is a Slovenian poet, writer, translator, editor and publisher. He has published 16 poetry collections, three novels, short stories collection, and five picture books for children. He has more than 80 books published in translation abroad, most of them in Spanish, Italian, English, and German. He has translated over thirty books, mainly from French, including the works of Rimbaud, Genet, and Foucault. His last translated poetry book was *Obsessed with Life: New and Selected Poems* (Poetrywala, Mumbai, 2023).



BRIGIDINA GENTILE (Italy)

The Wife of Lot

Nobody knows my name.
I'm the wife of Lot,
the one who couldn't resist
and turned to look back.
Yes, I turned around!
back, towards the past.
The present scared me. The future? Who knows!
I'm a woman, and I am not, anymore.
I am a statue of salt.
Didn't Orpheus turn around to look at Eurydice?
And she remained forever in Hades.
I turned around and for this
I was transformed into a statue of salt.
And no one remembers me by my name
except as the wife of Lot.
Why can't I have a name?
I wonder. I ask you!
I'm a woman with strength and fragilities,
heart and soul of all women,
I am the same and yet so different
from all the women of yesterday and always.
I still wear long garments
to cover my body that is forever young,

forever beautiful. What makes me different?
Still, I feel in this prison of salt,
my heart beating and my thoughts vibrating.
I feel the fire, the energy of desire.
Because I've been disobedient, because
I've used my head because I'm curious
and I want to understand, and I want to decide,
that's why I am no longer a woman.
I am not allowed!
I am the wife of Lot.
Does Eve tell you anything? She disobeyed,
like me.
The serpent? No! It has nothing to do with it.
Eve did what she wanted.
She chose!
I wanted to turn around and look
one last time at what I should have left
forever. I wanted to keep my home
in my eyes and in my heart.
Someone had decided for me too and
without giving any explanations. Someone had
and still has the power to decide
the women's fate.
But from my prison of salt, I can
shout my anger, my desire for justice,
without resorting to wars and destruction.
And in immobility, I travel.
I can cross oceans and continents,
and I can make my voice heard,
faster than the speed of light
and louder than the thunderous roar.
I haven't betrayed anyone, not
even myself. I made a choice.

And for that, for having decided
I am no longer a woman.
And I ask you:
What is my name?
Nobody knows my name.
I am the wife of Lot.

GENTILE studied cultural anthropology and later moved to poetry. She has lectured about creative writing and translation at universities in New York, Granada, Madrid, Paris-Nanterre, Oslo, and México City. She has been invited to numerous international festivals and readings all over the world. She writes poetry, fiction, and plays. Her poetry books include *Eros in the Attic and Other Hybrids* (2018), *The Queen's Tombola* (2020), and *Spirit's Infused Poetry* (2024), *Life is Like a Salad* (2019), and *The Other Penelope: Weaving the Myth* (2011 and 2021) are her narratives.



CEMAL ÖZTÜRK (Turkiye)

Translated by Mehmet Emin Karaarslan

Consecrated Intimacy

Blend in with me like a beam of light
reflected through crispy clear waters,
without blurring.

Leave your tooth-and-nail fights behind,
strip off your insignias of rank and status,
and come to me.

Let go of the chips on your shoulder,
leave your thriftiness aside,
come to me
let's talk like long-time buddies.

Those who are flying with happiness
also show that,
happiness is nothing more than an inscription on water;
it is fleeting.

Your better nature is what lasts.

For God's sake, leave your personal interest aside for a moment.

Let's go to the mountains and lift our spirits!

ÖZTÜRK (1955) was forced to quit his undergraduate study at the Department of Physics Engineering at Hacettepe University due to a year-long prison sentence at Mamak military prison during the 1980 military coup. However, he later graduated in Microbiology from Istanbul University. His published works are *The Tree Grew Up Disguised* (1998), *Dreams Blossoming in the Dark* (2020), and *Professional Secrets of the Sun* (2021).



CHEN HSIU-CHEN (Taiwan)

Translated by **Lee Kuei-shien**

The Fire was Burning

While the earth did not smoke
but from outer space, it was covered by billowing smoke
black smoke, black, black, and black
made daytime turn into dark night.
The sky suffered from secondhand smoke.

The elephants were assaulted on the bottoms by fire tongue
the jaguars were paralyzed
flying birds were shot down from the sky by the flames
a mournful monkey embraced her child like the Pietà statue.

The trees wavered, their green hairs dancing over the red fire
shouting in pain
and eventually turned into ashes.
The cremation and tree burials were held in the rainforest for months.
The Aborigines had no enough tears to extinguish
the flames caused by human desire.

The earth grew everything to live
and up to now being set on fire time after time.
Was the media blindness caused by the evil fire?
Many people drank coffee watching the news

and knew nothing about
the distant rainforest being burning.

The people lit candles on the earth
to sing happy birthday with vital capacity.
The earth used black fireworks to celebrate the people's birthdays.
When the rainforest was on fire,
there were many politicians spitting their curses,
nothing to do with the lungs of the earth.

HSIU-CHEN is the author of thirteen books and has participated in poetry festivals in Asia, Europe, Africa, and America. She was awarded Estrella Matutina by the Festival of Capulí Vallejo y su Tierra from Peru in 2018.



CHRISTINE PEIYONG CHEN (New Zealand)

Woods

Snow shines in the distance, up high
Maple trees nearby glow red, low down;
silver ferns emit faint light even lower
Snails diligently nibble on the backs of leaves,
devoting their lives to a single leaf
Moss covers the stones,
delicate and intricate like tiny stars — mini peonies

Cryptomeria trees grow steadfastly in silence,
their roots forming intricate patterns on the ground--
Perhaps their dream is to reach the clouds with an upright pen
Rain falls but doesn't wet the clothes; trees provide cover
Beside the road, a tall withered pine tree lies,
perfectly placed within the path's edge
A good tree doesn't obstruct the way
Its branches burst with reishi mushrooms

Surroundings are quiet, each occupied in their own way, alive or dead
Rain rustles, birds chirp with varying pitches and depths
Are they summoning souls or granting them peace?
The wood is vast; it hosts all kinds of birds and trees
Even Death can be a virtue.

CHEN is a poet, translator, and columnist for a New Zealand newspaper. She won the 'Ossi Di Seppia' literature award (2023) from Italy and the New Zealand Literary Award--Chinese literature category (2022). She is also the Oceania coordinator for the World Poetry Movement Oceania.



CYRIL WONG (Singapore)

Complementarity

A monk told me about how Niels Bohr used Hokusai's *One Hundred Views of Mount Fuji* to explain the notion of complementarity. *The different lights ... that only together did they give the full and impressive picture*, the physicist was reported as saying, all angles adding to the fullness of perspective. An electron not just a particle but also a wave; the men we were not distinct from the men we are – the reality complex, the knowledge no less erotic, the truth non-finite and momentous. We are the same. We are different, with saggier middles and deeper lines. We are the ever-changing. If repulsion sets in, this becomes a symptom of a limited imagination. Think about it: the body not an accretion of atoms but a long wave connecting with more waves to form an ocean, a flickering orgy of unbounded energy. No longer *I* but *we* are more than a sum of lives,

the banalities of dying. All light
to all dark. All breath and exhalation.
We are touching. We are moving apart.
We are a part of each other. Or we die
and are reborn as one another: the truth
so unprofound, we forget it wholeheartedly.
We fall and rise. In the bigger picture,
the movement so unspectacular,
language becomes unnecessary
when love is no longer duality and time
disappears between a laugh and a final moan.

WONG is a confessional poet whose work is based mainly on "a barely submerged anxiety over the fragility of human connection and a relentless self-querying." He is a two-time recipient of the Singapore Literature Prize (2006 and 2016) and the National Arts Council's Young Artist Award for Literature (2005). His most recent work is *Beachlight*, published by Seagull Books in 2023.



DANIEL DE CULLA (Spain)

A Little Spider on the Plate

It is in the Fuentes Blancas Park, Burgos
Place for snacks and recreation
Place par excellence
To celebrate the birthday
Of girls and boys
Because there are slides and swings.
On this birthday of the boy Eder
There was a lot of candy supply
Leaving room on the plate
For the occasional spider
That came down from the nearby mound
And from the Miraflores Charterhouse
To breathe fresh air
Tired of so much Carthusian prayer
And its smell of a burning candle.
-Mom, there are a lot of sweets on the plate!
The boy exclaimed with joy.
And even a little spider, look!
Don't kill it, mom
That came to my birthday
And there are plenty of sweets for everyone.
The little spider filled its belly with sugar
Getting belly pain

Going towards a jar
Where the children shit
And not in another part of the park
Between the hedges and the trees.
The jar was full
And, to make a joke
The boy called to the other children
For running to the spider
And it did not fall into the jar.
They all ran
To see the spider
When a child's dad invited
Lazy and glutton who saw it
He happily told them:
-Come children, come all
You will see the little spider that has spun
Its spider web
About the crap of a month
And not cleaned.
Everyone laughed the funny
Escaping, after
To the slides and swings.

DE CULLA is a poet, painter, and photographer. He is a member of several literary organizations, including the Spanish Writers Association and Earthly Writers International Caucus. He has participated in many poetry and theater festivals and collaborated with various magazines and reviews worldwide.



DANIEL QUINTERO (Argentina)

Construction site

Something will have to be done with poetry
It's not enough to look her in the eyes
caress her hair
imagine your mouth
something will have to be done
especially when the rain doesn't wet it
when the night he claimed to protect her
He abandons her, and the fire walks around
seeking to devirginate her
something will have to be done
something that definitely reaches
May you overcome your irremediable pain
his lonely anguish
your paper beat
something will have to be done, we say
and we see his head go by
rolling between the legs
we see his blood pass
his will
we would have to upload it
get her drunk
Make love to him
ask for a child

A shout
something that identifies us
got us pregnant
fill us with joy
pierce our insides to see it born
to see what we did for her
that was necessary
put all that indignity in your mouth
chew it
anything else
something to drink from its glow
their useless captivity
the music that brings us
your unfailing memory
carry her on a walk
reconstitute it
give him to drink of our blood
our wine
our future
make your guts the role
a procession of excited insane people
burst flowers on the skin
perfume your entire presence with screams
his audacity
the grit with which we will never forget her
something will have to be done
something inevitable that gives us peace
or protection or triumph or disappointment
a favorable course
kiss your absence
ask for your fallen children
forgotten
unborn

burned at the stake
armed with the salty wood of the shipwreck
infect us with their irresponsible malice
dream breaker
bad by herself
something that justifies all the words
intertwined by the vomit where we redeem ourselves
make poetry the cause
show off your arrogance
show that everything else
at the end of the day
it is of no use.

QUINTERO was born in Buenos Aires in 1959. After a long night, his first collection of poems was published in 1986. Working for the Directorate of Culture of the National Territory of Tierra del Fuego, he generates research work on the poetry of the Island Aires de Archipiélago.



DAVID LEO SIROIS (USA)

Slow Lightning

All the gravities
that held me
let me go
No – not crimson clouds –
not white –
can hold me down
I walk up & up
into the rarefied air
of a mountain
that can't tell me
its name or age
Night cannot remember its name –
it just soaks all the clocks
in darkness
Between
the cobalt twilight
& sunrise –
my blood
the only thing I trust
Ah, but how many birches
have poured their
slow lightning
over my eyes?

How many anchors
have their roots offered –
all those hints
of permanence
pressed against restless feet
I would like to run this river's
silver braids between my fingers
I would like this insistent oxygen
to stop reminding me
I am made of need
I would like naked gravel
plus the strange gravity
that keeps it here
& the atmosphere that paints it
with sunset's or twilight's palette –
to press me close as I listen
for mute prayers
held in the dovetailed hands
of this long wet grass

SIROIS is a Canadian-American poet widely published in thirteen languages, such as Hindi, Bengali, French, and Spanish. He hosts Spoken World Online, the Zoom arm of SpokenWord Paris. His first collection of poetry is *Humbledoves* (Poems to Pigeons & Plants).



DEBARATI BHATTACHARYYA (India)

Corpses' Cry

The mornings are still burning
Along with the road, the sea, and the garden
Instead of butterflies, missiles keep flying
Incessant bullets come through the sky
The smell of gunpowder fills up the air
Still and cold lay the children in a pool of blood
Greedy tongue and mouth on the tender flesh did devour
Infinite bruises guffawed on each flower
Blood replaced nectar
Salty tears sunken in fear on the face of the foe, sprayed fire
Death made noise endless on the lifeless shore
Pride of conquer through the damp streets of Gaza roar
Countless coffins queued up in protest
Cry the corpses loud with the sunshine
Human life ransomed each day, not Israel or Palestine.

BHATTACHARYYA is a prolific poet from Kolkata writing in Bengali and English. She currently lives in Scotland. She has authored five poetry books in Bengali and a rhyme book for children. Her recent collections of contemporary poetry, *Wada Phir Wohi* and *Srabone Agun*, were published in 2020 in Kolkota and Dhaka, respectively. Her English poems have been anthologized in *Chants of Peace* and *Butterfly Effects*. She was awarded the 'Amitesh Maity Smriti Puroshkar 2015' for promising poets for her debut collection *Bhorer Kuasha Bujhi Tumi*.



DENJA ABDULLAHI (Nigeria)

I will not Raise My Child in this Place

I will not raise my child in this place
where dreams are aborted and future polluted
where streams are caked with slimes
where nights are days
and days linger in listless emptiness

I will not raise my child in this place
where the day wears an umbrella of soot
and diseases prowl like a leopard at night
tearing children away from unmanned homesteads
of absent fathers and sacrificial mothers

I will not raise my child in this place
where children are deformed before they are born
and at births, their umbilical cords are cut with rusty knives
by hapless midwives who have long-forgotten
the ebullient herbs to resuscitate a jubilant mother

I will not raise my child in this place
where childhood is amputated
where the playgrounds are oil-soaked rivers and creeks
where the elders look on in raucous breath
as children become fierce and worldly-wise

I will not raise my child in this place
where governance is a farce
where the soil is poisoned
and the few with might
feast in league with those who killed the land

I will not raise my child in this place
where the gangster is the hero
where anger is the only way to fame
where politicians heckled *Abuja* for resources
controlled into private pockets and vaults.

I would like to raise my child in a place
where growth is calm and nature-friendly
where water brims with life, and the air is free
where truth is nurtured, and the path is straight
I will raise my child to learn to berth the world he wants.

ABDULLAHI is a well-known Nigerian poet, playwright, and culture expert. He has authored thirteen books of poetry, drama, interviews, and scholarly essays. He was the President of the Association of Nigerian Authors from 2015 to 2019 and recently retired as a Director of Performing Arts with the National Council for Arts and Culture, Abuja, Nigeria. He is also the Chairman of Orpheus Literary Foundation, Nigeria.



DENNIS HASKELL (Australia)

“I don’t see colour”

Art installation by Fijian-Australian, Salote Tawale, PICA, August 2021: “I don’t see colour’ is an attempt to process the implications of (colour) blindness to race and history...”

Only those born blind
are indifferent to colour:
it is the world’s rhythm
pulsing in our eyes
but as much shining in us
as embodied out there;
is it, then, a surprise
that colour in sea
and grass and rock and sky
spears us differently
to colour in skin?

Salote Tawale’s
is a Fijian room
whose walls are
doomed to pastels
of white, yellow, green,
a floor white, black, and grey,
a room where hardly human heads,

bald, bucktoothed, mouthless,
scowling in pink and green
mark a way
that Fijians were seen
by white colonial masters.
Colour marked identity;
and somehow a plastic-
goggled, colourless mask
she hangs there
marks no identity at all,
its red streamer
of a beard
entirely out of place
on any face.

No colour can begin
to be crueller
than the colour of skin.

HASKELL is an Australian author of nine poetry collections, the most recent *And Yet...* (WAPP, 2020) plus 14 volumes of literary scholarship and criticism. He is the recipient of the Western Australia Premier's Prize for Poetry, the A A Phillips Prize for a distinguished contribution to Australian literature, and an Honorary Doctorate of Letters from The University of Western Australia. He is a Member of the Order of Australia for "services to literature, particularly poetry, to education and to intercultural understanding."



DIEGO ALONSO SÁNCHEZ BARRUETO (Perú)

Poem in Spanish language

Laredo

Los ingenuos nos tendimos en la tierra
imitando a las ramas del huarango.
Era poco lo que deseábamos:
un mar prehistórico, una embarcación segura
y la templanza suficiente
para no ahogarnos.
Pero el verano mandaba otros motivos,
tan inanimados
y silenciosos
como mi respiración sobre la arena.

El camino dejó de ser una figura retórica
entre los geoglifos,
para convertirse en un horizonte trizado
por la fatiga.
Sí, el sol fue nuestra patria
y las sombras un bosque imposible
en las quebradas vacías
mientras nuestros ojos se suspendían
sobre la candela de las nubes.

Era poco lo que pedíamos:
una promesa de lluvia
que volviera a enderezar
a los troncos viejos
como una parábola bíblica.
Pero nuestra fe era una serpiente
que hábilmente se escondía
de las palabras,
de cualquier intento de poesía.

BARRUETO (1981) es poeta y docente. Sus libros de poesía publicados son *Por el pequeño sendero interior de Matsuo Basho* (2009), *Se empieza un camino sin saberlo* (2014), *Pasos silenciosos entre flores de fuji* (2016) y *Un sol líquido* (2022). Es miembro de la Asociación Latinoamericana de Estudios Asiáticos y Africanos, Perú.



DIEGO ROJAS ARIAS (Ecuador)

While I read Margaret Atwood

“memory is an enemy
that only tells you about absent things.”
I insist,
but keep on looking, despite all the warnings,
among the most irregular shapes of thought,
the caress of the salty echo in the voice of the sea
or that of a last, fading star
As you carry on that trip over the long road,
the wide sky, colored as old music
pushes us to write more than we can
or need to say;
a herd of stray dogs rips, desperately,
a huge, black trash bag, in search of food crumbs,
a few meters away from the bar where we were the regulars
I wish I could chop my heart filled with the bread
of your empty promises, and be able to nourish it

ARIAS (1986) is a published poet. His poetry collections include *Amor escupido* (2013), *La poesía con sangreentra* (2015), *Con todos los diablosencima* (2017), and *El paraíso de los nadie* (2020). Some of his poems have been translated into English and Spanish.



DIMITRIS P. KRANIOTIS (Greece)

Delusions

I was looking around
Without finding out
If there was someone
Without dreams
And I wanted to run
Forward
Throwing two nets
Full of delusions

But suddenly
The girl of “five minutes to”
Filled me with sadness
For she didn’t want
To tell me “how”
Or “why”
She didn’t want to see
What I was seeing

But I didn’t throw
Written words
On the floor
So as not to step on them
The mob of “who-cares”

I ran in the heatwave
With drowned thoughts
In the lake
Which the map
Doesn't want
To paint blue

KRANIOTIS (1966) is a poet and a medical doctor (internal medicine specialist). He is the author of eleven poetry books. His poems have been translated into 36 languages. He is the Director of the Mediterranean Poetry Festival (Larissa, Greece), Chairman of the Writers for Peace Committee of PEN Greece, President of the World Poets Society, and member of the World Poetry Movement.

A poem carries the culture of the place

Rati Saxena, in conversation with Shirani Rajapakse

Rati Saxena is a poet, translator, editor, and Vedic scholar from India. Hailing from Rajasthan, she now resides in Kerala. Saxena writes in both Hindi and English. She is a founding member of WPM. She is also the Director of the Kritya International Poetry Festival in India. Saxena has written extensively and published thirteen poetry books, as well as criticism, research, and travelogues. Her poetry has won many prestigious awards. She is on the editorial board of several journals and has participated in numerous poetry festivals.

Shirani Rajapakse is an internationally published, award-winning poet and short story writer. Five of her seven books have won awards or been placed in competitions. Her work appears in many literary journals and anthologies and has also been translated into Spanish, Farsi, French, Urdu, and Chinese.



In this conversation, Saxena talks about activism and ancient texts and shares her views about poetry being a medium for change and peace with Shirani Rajapakse.

RAJAPAKSE: We live in unpredictable times when no one is certain about the future. What role can poets play in this changing and challenging scenario?

SAXENA: No doubt we live in a very unpredictable time, and the future looks uncertain. But if we look at the past, we see that the human race has faced such difficulties at different times. War, cruelty, and greed are not new things for humanity. Our history is evidence of such challenging times. The most difficult thing is that man doesn't learn from his mistakes. There is an interesting story in the Indian Epic *Mahabharata*. The story is of a question-and-answer dialogue between Yudhishtira and a Yaksha. The Yaksha asks, what is most astonishing? Yudhishtir replies that we see numerous living beings dying every day, yet everyone believes that he is immortal. What can be more astonishing than this? This is the situation with us; we forget our suffering very soon and feel we will conquer the world.

In the past, many kings wanted to win over the whole world, but they disappeared. They are only with us in name and can be found in our history books. So why are there wars between countries? Mostly, such wars are for the satisfaction of the ego.

We have another difficult situation that is related to nature. We have destroyed almost all of nature and are facing natural disasters. In Eastern philosophy, nature (Prakriti) is an important power. In ancient Indian philosophy (*Rigveda- Nasadiya Hymn*), Prakriti, meaning nature, is mentioned as a superior power - as the supreme creator. In modern times, we can see that nature is a supreme power, and if we don't care for it, this earth will be destroyed very soon. Natural disasters are the biggest problem of modern times. There are also other problems related to social justice and mental health.

Do we think we will eliminate all these problems in the future? As human nature is not the same, imagining such a situation could be a myth. But there is no doubt we can create a balance and remind society and nations what is good for the human race and the Universe and what is dangerous. The poet must awaken the people, culture, and nations and warn them. This is a bit difficult as the media greatly influence us and we don't have much time to understand these things.

RAJAPAKSE: Writers have always been the target for speaking out against oppression, corruption, and human rights violations by states and other entities. Yet their very voices have been the cause for them to be silenced or harassed. Julian Assange's release from Belmarsh prison demonstrates the role continuous and consistent public protest has in changing opinion. There are, however, many other writers and activists who were not so fortunate and have either been permanently silenced by their oppressors or are still languishing in prisons. How do we change this and create conditions where writers are protected or helped to escape oppression?

SAXENA: Writers or poets are primarily thinkers. Along with writing, their duty is to think for the welfare of humankind. While ordinary people live in their world, sometimes, the influence of politics is limited to the particular approach writers have to think ahead of their time. For example, in the case of a war, ordinary people will be influenced by their political leaders or the media. Still, writers must think ahead and ask what the use of war is when facing many other problems. In India, too many writers who were highlighting social issues or taboos and problems were harassed. One senior poet, Varavara Rao, was jailed because he was helping the indigenous people called Naxals who lived in the jungles. In this time of social media, it is easy to harass thinkers by trolling them. This can happen in the name of religion, political identity, or views of war. This is not a new thing. It has been happening since ancient times. The political and religious ideologies have a powerful impact on society. The thinkers can think without any of these influences. That is



why people misunderstand them. The color of ignorance is darker than knowledge. In India, we are facing such problems, too.

This practice cannot be changed entirely because of the power and influence of economics and politics. Moreover, the ignorance of common people is a blessing, so they keep working against real knowledge. Still, we can't stop trying. At least poets and writers should keep speaking the truth so that a balance in society can be maintained.

RAJAPAKSE: Tell us about the resistance movement in India, your involvement in it, and the role poets play in calling for change.

SAXENA: India is facing many challenges now. We have to deal with many problems. The safety of women, caste problems and inter-caste marriage taboos, farmers issues, unemployment, etc. India is a big continent with more than 26 official languages. This is good as poets are active and raising their voices for different issues in all languages. We

have strong poetry groups like Feminists, Dalits, and social reformers, along with some poets writing for nature and some for farmers. Literature is growing and spreading in India. However, we can't compare this with ancient times, when we had tons of literature in languages like Sanskrit and Tamil.

RAJAPAKSE: There are poems written in languages other than English that we rarely get to read because of language barriers. Some poets may be very popular and revered in their native countries, yet we may not have heard of them. Ancient writer's works may also have never been translated. Are we losing valuable texts because of the high cost of translating and publishing, and what do you think is a solution to making poetry more accessible to everyone in their languages?

SAXENA: English is not the world's poetic language. I have visited many countries where English is not known by writers, like South American countries, where the primary language is Spanish. In many countries like Vietnam, Turkey, some parts of Africa, the Central American islands, and parts of Canada, people know French and their own languages. In many European countries, English is not known to people. So I don't think that not knowing English is a problem. I was invited to 42 countries to read poetry and always read in Hindi. My poems were read in the local language in translation, along with my reading. I feel my poetry reached many people. India has 26 official languages, and in every state, we speak a different language and we write in our own state's language. I find that poetry written in the mother tongue is more powerful.

I write poetry in Hindi only and read in Hindi in any country from China to Canada. Yes, there will be translators who read after my reading. Translation is always good, but sometimes bad translations spoil the real meaning of the poetry. Poetry is not only for reading from the books; listening is also important, as the poet's body language and rhythm make poetry.

That is why I value poetry written in the mother tongue. In the Kritiya Poetry Festival, we selected poets from different world languages and translated them into local Indian languages. We then asked the younger generation to read with the poets. English was always on the screen only. I find that many can read international poetry.

RAJAPAKSE: In translations, there is always the danger of the meaning getting lost and the form being sacrificed, making translated work rather strained and devoid of its original beauty, even if it is a good translation. How do you think translators can address this to make the translated work resemble the original as closely as possible?

SAXENA: Translating is difficult. One has to be very careful in reading between the lines. A poem carries the culture of the place where the language belongs. It is also necessary to understand the poet's ideology, time, and space. The translator should be careful and understand that he is not a poet while translating. He need not add or remove any meaning without the poet's permission. He is only a medium that transposes poetry into another language without changing philosophy, culture, and space. I have been translating the poetry of national and international poets. Most of the time, I discuss with the poet and find out things like when he wrote, where he was, and what was in his mind while writing. Sometimes, it takes about five drafts for each poem. The translator should wait until the poem opens itself up to the translator. I waited for years to understand some books.

But you are right. I have seen terrible translations as well. Sometimes, the translator creates his own poetry. That is very wrong. I believe a translator has to be honest and target language, bringing a new culture to readers of his language. A translator should not try to translate the culture. One should take on a job working in translation only if one has a passion for it. Otherwise, it is a thankless job for the translators. But no doubt this is a need of our time and duty.

RAJAPAKSE: Poetry is one of the oldest forms of creative expression, written by people in almost every country, yet it is the hardest to sell. Why do you think this is, and what can be done to increase sales of poetry books globally?

SAXENA: Poetry is never sold, at least in India, because poetry is not a commodity. The thing that can be sold is part of a business. Another thing is that poetry is a difficult medium compared to other literary mediums like short stories or novels. Moreover, these days, poetry has taken the prosaic form because the meter is sometimes inappropriate to express serious and urgent issues. In the Indian subcontinent, cinema culture has also taken over the role of poetry. Film songs attract people more than poetry.

I feel that governments should support selling books, and publishers, too, have to be more honest. Long ago in Kerala, the writers created a society run only by writers. They used to collect a little money from members and publish books. They also had a good culture in those days, where poetry books were sold at railway stations, on trains, and on buses. These books were very cheap and printed on very ordinary paper. Most people bought them to pass time during their journey. But nowadays, everyone has a mobile phone and is on social media. There are fewer readers for all kinds of books, from course books to general books.

But we have to find new mediums, like audiobooks, online discussions, picture books, etc. We can't guarantee success, but we must try. The fact that poetry survives despite all the difficulties is a positive thing. My intuition is that poetry will never die. We must keep writing.

RAJAPAKSE: Poetry is very personal. At the same time, it can be very public and political. How do you view poetry? What is a poem to you?

SAXENA: Nothing is personal in this world, and poetry can never be personal. Suppose a poet is writing about his/her love; in the poet's mind, the words are for his/her lover, but when a reader reads, he/she can attribute all the feelings to his/her own lover. For example, when a

Palestinian poet writes about war, it affects all the readers who are not physically affected by it. In another way, they understand the impact of the war. In India the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* are two epics. Even after thousands of years, poets or writers still use those simple myths to discuss contemporary problems. Many feminist poets still use Draupadi, the main character of the *Mahabharata*, to express the plight of women. Thus, the story of a woman becomes the story of many women even after many years. Therefore, personal poetry also highlights social problems.

RAJAPAKSE: Hindi is very musical and conducive to writing poetry more than English. Is there a difference in how you write and think in Hindi and English and how the poem develops depending on the language you use?

SAXENA: I am sorry to say Hindi is the least musical language among all Indian languages. Bangla and Malayalam are the few languages which are more musical. Hindi is called Khadhi Boli, meaning a language that is straight or has less musical quality. Sanskrit and Urdu words make this language a bit musical. I don't write poetry in English; my poetic language is Hindi. I only translate my poems to English. My study in Sanskrit allows me to use similes, figures of speech, and metaphors easily, making my poetry a bit musical. However, I write in English for research-oriented subjects, like poetry therapy and books related to Vedic study. This is because these subjects are almost international and I think that anyone who is interested should read those books.

RAJAPAKSE: What can ancient texts like the Atharva Veda teach us about life and coexistence, and are the Vedas applicable to us today?

SAXENA: This is a vast topic that cannot be responded to in one paragraph. We want to learn about ancient books because we want to learn about our past and how we lived when we did not have many facilities. Human history is most interesting. Undoubtedly, we read primary philosophy in Vedic books, which can guide us sometimes. Moreover, we learned more myths than real texts about these books.

This is because these books were hidden from ordinary people for many years, telling them that only the Brahmins could read these books and that the others were not allowed to read them.

Then, in the name of these books, many other mythical stories were created, which gave a very different view of the philosophy and culture of this land. Until now, people have imagined that everything, even making airplanes, is in the Vedas, which is very wrong. Therefore, talking about these books and expressing how ancient people thought, lived, and behaved enabled us to learn the truth. In those days, our ancestors lived a simple life, loved and respected nature, and tried to understand the Universe. They created their philosophy, which was relatively pure. From them, we can learn the simplicity, love for nature, and faith in all living beings.

RAJAPAKSE: Is poetry relevant to modern times, and what message can poets give to the world?

SAXENA: Poetry is relevant in every period of time. That is why we find several poets around us. It gives us a suitable medium to express our feelings, our love, and/or pain. At the same time, it connects us. Poetry can be the biggest therapy for our mental and physical difficulties. Poetry could be a voice for ordinary people as it is close to nature.



DRAGAN DRAGOJLOVIC (Serbia)

Translated by **Stanislava Lazarević**

The Apocalypse

Whoever falls asleep here
will dream of the fear of distant ancestors
and will see shadows
at the highest point in the sky
trying to turn the bolt
on the axis around which
revolves around the Earth.

And whoever wakes up
will see some people tearing down
hills and mountains,
destroying the Earth
striving to penetrate its depths,
and divulge its secrets.
They will see the forests being cut down and cleared,
The rivers and their tributaries being harnessed,
and water, gas, oil resources,
ores and minerals being stolen -
to make weapons,
weapons and only weapons.
To kill mercilessly,
to become masters,

to make the Earth revolve around them,
and not around the Sun.

The Earth proceeds along its way, silently.

And we, the hopeless and powerless
wonder if there is a God
and we stand with cameras
waiting to take pictures
of the Apocalypse
that we knew was inevitable.

DRAGOJLOVIĆ is a poet and translator who has authored twenty-two poetry books, five novels, and three collections of short stories. He has also published four fictional works for children. He has also served as the Serbian Ambassador to Australia and New Zealand. In October 2020, he received an international award at the Shanghai International Poetry Festival in China. He is a member of the Academy of American Poets and the Serbian PEN.



DRAGAN MITIĆ (Slovenia)

Thank you for loving me!

Thank you for loving me!
Listen, I said »thank you«,
You know very well I am not polite
and God grant you never get over me,
my tiny memory, my giant memory.

And thank you for being honest,
leaving me alone, before it ended all.
Left as nothing happened, and left me in tears,
to meditate in the dark: What went wrong?

But you knew well that I am fool,
and I cannot understand the injustice
You left me with nothing but the body alone,
and I hardly live on.

Thank you, once again,
for everything that does not need to say thank you

But if you wish try to find me,
I'll be wandering the world!
My painful memory, my tiny memory...

MITIĆ has received a large number of prestigious awards for his literary works, which he started publishing in 2020. The works were published in more than two hundred books or literary magazines in the region, found a place in several anthologies, collections, anthologies, and some have already been translated into Slovenian, Macedonian, Bulgarian, Russian, English and Polish Language.



DURSUN ÖZDEN (Turkiye)

The Madman of Hasan Mountain

Every grand mountain, every new age, has its wise mad dervish
Drunken white horses, the tent of Cappadocia, underground city,
 judge-witch's work
The madman of our village too—a saint, lover, activist, expert
They enjoy themselves, drinking kımız-wine during festivities
Savoring the timeless, every person
In the red-covered poppy field
Dancing bridal girls
Entering gracefully through the heart's door
In earthquake time; the moon wavered, the ground shook,
 my fault shifted
A wet rail—my poetry house collapsed; its columns and beams fell
The madly flowing, love-struck Kızılırmak river
Wrapping around Anatolia's waist, cascading
The dawn's red kissed by cheerful fairies
Reviving at the smoky chimney
My eyes on homemade wine, at the vineyard-poetry house in Avanos
My saz, my words remain, this scream—the poet's silent stance
Now is the age of pottery, the seed bank network
The organic Osman vineyard, the exchange of ancestral seeds
The time of the shaman, friend of the moment and assembly,
 kissing the earth
Rising higher with every kiss, sacred ground

The work of Ata-Turkey and quenching steel—
 who is that fortunate soul?
Secretly sipping port wine in defiance of the sultan, soul to soul,
A pleasant chat with Ata over club rakı
O beloveds! Our village wind is a different creation
Quite amusing with a boxwood combed bald head,
 sweeps and cleans like a flood
His hand is open; even the maddest is a saint...

OZDEN (1950) is a poet, investigative journalist, travel writer, and documentarian. His first poem was published in 1970 in Kurtulus Newspaper. He began his journalism career as the Kocaeli correspondent for ISTA News Agency in 1975. He served as the President of the Kocaeli Branch of the Road-Work Union from 1976 to 1980. He has conducted extensive research on 'lost ethnic cultures' in 99 countries. He has published forty books and directed and produced dozens of documentary films.



ELIZA SEGIET (Poland)
Translated by **Dorota Stępińska**

Inertia

When an unimaginable image from before
suddenly became part of the memories,
which
silently and inexpressibly return,
something has to be done.

How do you describe the tongues of fire devouring trees,
feeding on forests?
The destroyer did not hesitate,
he left behind...

Almost nothing,
apart from the towering smoke.

How do you describe the impotence,
inertia of irreversible time,
the grave of plants and animals?
The short breath
of those still alive and invincible?
Remain silent? Look away?

The element is a god, a demon,

remembrance,
a thoughtless vandal,
who at times is helped by man,
supposedly, a *homo sapiens*.

SEGIET is a Polish poet, playwright, and essayist. She has three poetry collections to her credit: *Love Affair with Oneself* (2013), *Mental Mirages* (2014), and *Cloudiness* (2016). *Clearances* (2015) is a collection of monodramas and *Tandem* (2017) is her collection of farces. She has received the Naji Naaman Literary Prize 2020 and the International Award Paragon of Hope (2020).



ENRIQUE SÁNCHEZ HERNANI (Perú)

Poem in Spanish language

Contemplación De Los Apetitos

Amo tu boca en la que se esconde el pez
que cogiste en el río
convenientemente aderezado
y con la pizca de azúcar
que tu lengua le pone encima.

Amo tus labios que se empapan
con el aliño de las ensaladas
por donde navegan pequeños pimientos
pero también algunas estrellas diminutas
y todo un cortejo de miel de tilo.

Amo tu lengua porque simplemente paladea
los arándanos y su avena
porque busca tenazmente las enzimas
con las que transforma las hortalizas
en una vida provechosa
así se cubra de relucientes lagos de saliva
pues creo que de esa manera luce excitante
para la portada de la revista aquella
donde muy pronto aparecerá
mostrando toda su carne compasiva
y el esplendor de sus papilas.

Amo esos labios que descubren
tus dientes magníficos
incluso cuando me muerdes
aún cuando arrancas trozos de mí
para mejorar tu dieta.

Amo tu boca cuando pronuncia mi nombre
y lo convierte en un exótico menú
apetito carnal de las últimas horas del día
todo en ascuas todo con azufre todo a vapor
sin ninguna nube que enturbie
mi contemplación de la sangre que gotea
desde mi boca hacia la tuya.

Mas no tolero la sevicia con la que aceitas
mi turbio corazón cuando te apetece
lánguida deidad de la furia digestiva
pues insistes en usarme como un bocadillo
en los insípidos convites
donde haces rodar mantel abajo
a todos los seres sometidos a tu canibalismo.

HERNANI es poeta, escritor, periodista y activista cultural. Ha publicado catorce libros de poemarios, entre ellos *Catálogo del maestro de obras* (2017), *Taller de obras maestras* (2018), *El trueno de las cosas* (2018), *Parábola de ideas impuras* (2021) y *Plegarias del animal lírico* (2022). Es coordinador nacional para el Perú del Movimiento Poético Mundial.



FARUK BUZHALA (Kosovo)

Driving on the highway

As music plays on my radio,
A remedy for my melancholy's trace,
John Denver's song, a soothing balm,
Guides my soul through sorrow's qualm.
Amidst the yellow line, my path unwinds,
Leading to destinations undefined,
Yet in the scorching heat, illusions arise,
Mirages in the desert's guise.
A silhouette beckons from the roadside's edge,
A hitchhiker's allure, a whispered pledge.
With curiosity's pull, I halt my stride,
Inviting mystery to sit by my side.
Silent companions on this journey we make,
Until curiosity bids words to wake.
"From whence do you hail?" I dare to inquire,
To her fiery gaze, my courage expires.
"Satifar," she murmurs, a distant planet,
A cosmic traveler, inhumanly arcane.
In disbelief, I challenge her claim,
Then sparks alight, confirming the same.
In terror, my screams pierce the light,
As my reality ignites in fright.
Transformed, we ascend, a fiery ascent,

Beyond the cosmos, our journey's extent.
In the galaxy's expanse, our tale unfurls,
A journey of wonder, beyond mortal worlds.
Should I return from this cosmic flight,
I'll share the rest of our story's light.

BUZHALA is a contemporary poet and writer from Kosovo. He is known for his distinctive style of poetry, often exploring themes related to identity, memory, and the human experience. His published works include *Qeshje Jokeriane* ('Jokerian Smile', 1998), *Shtëpia pa rrugë* ('House without road', 2009), *Njeriu me katër hije* ('Man with four shadows', 2012), *Shkëlqim verbërues* ('Blinding brilliance', 2015), and *Një gur mangut* ('A stone less', 2018).



FERNANDO GUTIÉRREZ (Colombia)

Spanish poem

Montañas Fugaces

Los versos a veces quedan
como kilómetros en carretera

Pasan corriendo por la ventana
árboles fugaces
huellas húmedas y borrosas
gotas de agua
que suenan y adormilan
mientras el cabezal de la silla
sostiene los ecos de la nostalgia

Golpean el oído
los zumbidos
de los carros en la vía
que vienen de regreso

Cada viaje en carretera
es un poema no escrito
un recuerdo de la memoria
un momento del pasado
un sueño olvidado
una imagen que se marca
con el fugaz brillo de luz

que pasa a nuestro lado
y nos marca una lágrima
una sonrisa cálida
 un rostro nublado
 una frase olvidada

Los kilómetros en carretera
son versos pasajeros
estampados en el horizonte
como montañas fugaces.

GUTIÉRREZ (1963) es poeta, escritor, periodista y productor de medios. Es Doctor en Comunicación por la Universidad Nacional de La Plata. Trabaja en Uniminuto como docente y Productor de Medios, liderando "El vuelo del Colibrí, semillero de investigación para la producción y realización radiofónica". Ha participado en diversos recitales de poesía, y recibió una mención honorífica en el concurso Casa de Poesía Silva en 2023. Es autor del poemario *Corazón de Vientre* y del libro de cuentos *Cuente a ver*.



FRANCIS CATALANO (Canada)

Translated by **Christine Tipper**

Index

America archaic earth
sandless sandglass
North America Named America
Pangee fragment that advances where slowly
its stones spread
sealed to a lithic secret, the Laurentia unrolls
its own granite conveyor
that disembowels oceans' backs
through the openwork of a puzzle, eyes squinting, I scrutinise
the continent dismantling itself
drifting incisively, it's a chariot
flat on its face excessive
grating basalt since it scraped to the core
it's an infra-America, and its North plunges
cape first into the equator
flush fitting as modeled by mineral sheaves
slabs pledged to its hesitant
nuptial martial march like bones
from a fractured skull whose calluses
adjust adjoin push
-at the speed of hairs
on the damaged head of a convalescent
Here I assist in all its glory
at a spontaneous upheaval of mountains

there a volcano disconnects under pressure
from its ardent chimney
soon in a flight of hedge-hopping archaeopteryx
one of them will fix on its pupil
all the global and invisible
of this flat landscape encircled by carbon
-already inclined to rejuvenate
in a nanosecond, the light sketches
a flower that slips silently
under a leafy cliff
shaped like quartz chance
restored by the megalopolis in the geodes
in layers, the continent works to give birth
to stone and fever the mouth
of craters burp a lapis-lazuli memory
in labour also the ocean
I do not see the man, but its pulverised ridges
drift in the shallows
white like falling snow
among blue algae

Laurentia crouched under America
I return by the ochre countenance of your beaches
the abundant curves of an oscilloscope
to notice oh gothic forest
how Laurentians remember you again and again
the duration of a thunderous season
has smoothed out the traces of your lakes
reverting to tireless fleeting ectoplasm
the water reflects the glacier's obstinacy
to shake the mountains on the ends of their chains
-look at the bottom of the crater
the meteorite recalls the moon's tremors
look what the lakes rise to the surface in clumps
drawing with the dry points of pliant stilts
your deficient platforms Laurentia

as soon as they reach dry land they magnetise you
as they relinquish ice, so too
your memory drips away

Crouched by the side of the abyss I imagine
a reversible world for me where time
would reach its end like a film shown backwards
we'd see Columbus Cabot Cortes Cartier Champlain
copyright in hand rewind
the Incas perhaps discovered Europe
Homo Laurentientis tracked by immaculate beasts
move backward on Beringia in flower
we'd see trees drop next to their fruits
the rain reintegrating the dehydrated cumulus
in torrents from the bottom up
from the cross-hairs of prehistoric times, man surges forth
but it's history that hits him
straight through the heart where the reversible pours out
I watch him flee the past the past
flee from him by a gaping hole in his chest
he distances himself from his own ills
that pass to healing, seeking to perish
these are his only remission
*-for before becoming remedy, America
was a "ready-made."*

CATALANO was born in Montreal. Poet, poetry translator, novelist, and essayist, he has published eight poetry collections, including *Pano ptikon* (Triptyque, 2005), *Qu'une lueur des lieux* (L'Hexagone, 2010), and *Climax* (Mains libres). He has participated in various poetry festivals abroad, and his poems have been translated into Spanish, Italian, English, German, Arabic, Occitan, Ukrainian, and Mandarin. As a translator he has published *Exfance* and *Instructions pour la lecture d'un journal* by Valerio Magrelli (John Glassco Translation Prize), *Yellow* by Antonio Porta and *Bouche secrète* by Fabio Scotto.



FRANCIS COMBES (France)

French poem

Le Massacre des innocents

Il est dit dans l'Évangile selon Saint-Matthieu
Qu'Hérode, réputé pour sa cruauté,
Ayant appris qu'un nouveau roi allait naître en Judée
Fit massacrer dans Bethléem,
Tous les enfants de moins de deux ans.
Aujourd'hui, les historiens affirment
Que le massacre n'est pas avéré.
Mais un nouvel Hérode est né en Judée.
Il s'appelle Netanyahu.
Craignant que le peuple de Palestine
Un jour devienne son propre roi,
Partisan de la solution finale,
Il fait massacrer ses enfants dans Gaza.

--

COMBES was born in 1953 in the South of France. An activist and a poet, he founded the publishing company *Le Temps des Cerises* in 1993. He has authored thirty poetry books, including *Cause commune*, *La Fabrique du bonheur*, *L'Aubépine*, *Poèmes du nouveau monde*, and *La France aux quatre vents*. He has also been the director of the International poetry festival of Val-de-Marne for seven years and is one of the founders of Poets of the Planet.



FRANCIS KURKIEVICZ (Brazil)

The Poem Does Not Make Pacts

It is true that the verse
Has no steel to divert
From the rifle bullet;
It is true that the poem
Has no power
Neutralizing armies;
It is true that the books of poems
Do not have immunology
Against chemical weapons;
It is true that the poet's fist
Can't sustain
The flag of peace
For an indefinite time;
Yes, there is no doubt,
That defeated poetry would be
On the battlefields
- as the truth is always the first victim –
However, captured or imprisoned,
Never would be,
Poetry would never capitulate
In the face of any enemy;

But What Inspires Resistance
Against the injustices of war?
What lifts the mood
Of fatigued dignity?
What makes fearless
The civilian before the cowardly servile?
What mystery is there in the rhizome of human consciousness
That imputes intuition
A transvaluation of existence?

All wars produce their hymns,
All wars weave their lyrical nostalgia,
All wars affirm their song of hope,
Here is the inescapable paradox;

Not all poems evoke peace,
Not all poems lend themselves to prayers,
Some poems possess the virtue of combat,
The fury of reaction,
The blade of Justice;
No poem submits
The silence of fear;
We poets know that well.

KURKIEVICZ is a poet, teacher, and yoga practitioner. His debut poetry book is *B869.1 k96* (2020). He has contributed poems and translations to several national and international magazines. In 2019, he founded Ayatori Editora, through which he re-published his book of children's stories *Meninices*. His poems have appeared in *Acróbata*, *Hiedra*, *Mallarmatgens*, *Arara*, and *Estrofe*.



GABOR G GYUKICS (Hungary/USA)

recognition of ennui

the wind is lost in my hair
and fell into my shadow
on the other side of earth
in this invisible cold

questions lurk in my eyes
my organs slowly evaporating
their absence leaves a gap in the water
my face shows no killing intent
every wound heals on the trunks of unknown trees
the arches of the future disappear on their greenish branches

naked darkness multiplies my shoulders
my chest is a bed of miry leaves
frogs bathe in the pools of my footsteps
stories splash onto the shore's sand
every part of my body is a hired message
my features are a lost smile
in clayey slush

pine needles- rain falls from the sky
no one cries for the wound of another
I carry an avalanche on my fingertips

earth grows wings on the sides of the mountains
and flies up to the stars that burden her body with life

the stones with our names
neither belongs to
nor are magnetized by
any shadowy figures

the smoke of burning birch bark
colors my skin
makes my eyes water
tests the orifices of my skeleton
roots of clouds snake through my intestines

our innocence is based
on the forgotten dreams of the night
the roof of our silhouettes
overshadowed our decisions
the tree branches penetrated millions of parchments
all these might not be correlated to any behaviors

GYUKICS is the author of eleven books of poetry in five languages, a book of prose, and nineteen books of translations, including *A Transparent Lion* (2006), *An Anthology of North American Indigenous Poets* (2015) in Hungarian, and a contemporary Hungarian poetry anthology in English titled *They'll be Good for Seed* (2021). He received the Hungarian Beat Poet Laureate Lifetime in 2020 from the National Beat Poetry Foundation based in Connecticut.



GAËTAN BRULOTTE (Canada/USA)
Translated from the French by **Nathan Rabalais**

High Noon of Our Love

Now, in the light of day is when
Our precious moments will begin
There's nothing that we cannot do
When there is only me and you
The thrill of love is all that's ours
Can light a flame to burn for hours

For in the light of day is when
Our bodies touch, skin-to-skin
And when we meet to become one
We'll feel the warmth of the summer sun
A true wonder we won't soon forget
Can still endure until sunset

For in the light of day is when
The high noon of our love begins
I'll close the door behind me
And as this thirst reminds me
Let down your hair as our pulses rise
And blowing gently on your eyes

Caress your skin until you feel
Sparks and hear the thunder's peal

While sharing in this treasure
Of every fold of pleasure
And as we move with one another
You and I, my dearest lover
You'll recreate the world with me
In ways the Earth has yet to see

For in the light of day is when
The time for love begins again
Rolling, twisting, turning 'round
Wide awake, we'll dream out loud
The beautiful life of which we dreamed
Is even lighter than it seemed

For in the light of day is when
You'll see what matters within
And lying there, closer than ever
Boundless love when we're together
Intertwined and holding fast
For just as long as summer lasts
And yet we never could forecast
Eternity goes by so fast

BRULOTTE is known for his unconventional, innovative, creative writing in French. He has published 15 books so far, including five collections of short stories: *Le Surveillant* (transl. as *The Secret Voice*); *Ce qui nous tient* (*What Holds Us*); *Epreuves* (*Testing*); *La Vie de biais* (*Life Sideways*); *La Contagion du réel* (*Can Reality Be Contagious?*); a novel *L'Emprise* (*Double Exposure*); and a play *Le Client* (*Music Maker*). His award-winning works and poems are anthologized and translated into many languages. As a scholar, he currently holds the *Eminent Scholar Endowed Chair in the Humanities* at the U. of Louisiana at Lafayette, USA.



GENE GRABINER (USA)

Gaza City

In this photograph
across the water
across the bobbing, yellow-striped fishing boats
in the long late light—
we see the gold of Gaza City,
sitting on the Mediterranean,
its sandstone minarets,
concrete apartment blocks,
Byzantine architecture.
Now, the gold is gone,
Omar Mukthar Street
is littered with
shattered tiles— covered
with the gray powder of
exploded and collapsed buildings.
And we see maimed children who
wander in the dust, like
maimed children wandering
in the dust.

GRABINER's poems have appeared in various literary journals and anthologies, including *American Journal of Nursing*, *Main Street Rag*,

Poet Lore, La Presa, The Café Review, Blue Collar Review, Comstock Review, Jewish Currents, Passager, Rosebud, Sandhill Review, Slant, Madness: An Anthology of World Poetry, Dispatches From The Poetry Wars (anthology), Civilization in Crisis (anthology), A Celebration of Western New York Poets (anthology), The World Engaged (anthology). Gene is a member of PEN America, the National Writers Union, and the World Poetry Movement. He is also a SUNY Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus. He lives in Buffalo, New York, USA.



GERMAIN DROOGENBROODT (Belgium)

Artificial Intelligence

Rivers overflow their banks
houses are demolished
cars swept away
by the raging waters:
man has disrupted nature.

In vain
wisdom's warning words.

Would a chip, implanted in the brain,
offer more wisdom or even more blindness
and indoctrination?

DROOGENBROODT is a poet, translator, publisher, and promoter of modern international poetry. He has fourteen poetry books to his credit. A founder of the Belgian publishing house POINT Editions, he has organized several international poetry festivals in Spain. He is the vice president of the Academy Mihai Eminescu in Romania, organizer of the Mihai Eminescu International Poetry Festival, and founding president of the Spanish cultural foundation ITHACA. He was recommended for the Nobel Prize 2017 in Literature.



GIORGOS KOUTOUVELAS (Greece)

Climate Change Conditions

When moderates play chess

They usually end in a draw.

They say,

"You killed that many of mine; I killed that many of yours.

Let's shake hands now, brother.

It's not like we are going to miss the towers from our own villages,

The horses from our own stables or the tiny

soldiers from our own homes".

But of course, in conditions of climate change,

things are completely different

and moderates die first.

See, for example, what happened to autumn and spring.

KOUTOUVELAS (1986) was born and raised in Athens. He has published six poetry collections: *dreamwalkers* (2005), *acts* (2006), *vagrancy in writersland* (2009), *shadow with bones* (2011), *recipes for raw realism* (2014), *fragment of western civilization* (2019), and one theatrical play, *fire* (2007). His poems have been included in many anthologies in Greece and abroad.



GREGOR PREAC (Slovenia)

Like Us, Grown-Ups

What a bomber pilot thinks
Between the airport and the city,
Where he's about to drop the bombs:
"What will he eat after landing,
What will he buy for his mother's birthday?"
I will not buy my son a tank,
Not an atomic bomb for my daughter:
The garage is too small,
And the children are not so responsible
As we adults.
When he sat on her lap,
She didn't know he was going to fall
In the war:
She held him on her knees skillfully, and no bombs fell
From her chest.
The attitude towards weapons, when it is beautiful, is deadly:
It will not end well,
No war ends well,
Some people get guns for their birthdays,
I'll buy my mother olive oil.

PREAC (1968) is a traveler, journalist, writer, and photographer. He has written for most Slovenian newspapers and magazines and for

Slovenian Radio and Television (RTV Slovenia). He is a member of Slovenian Association of Journalists and International Federation of Journalists. He has authored eight books of riddles, poems, thoughts, and short stories. He also translated Nepali, Serbian, Croatian, English, and other poetry for Slovenian literary magazines. To his credit, he has 15 photographic exhibitions, most with portraits of children from his travels.



GUIDO OLDANI (Italy)

Translated by Alessandro Carrera

Neckties

like red neckties pointed toward the sky,
flames are leaning out from the windowsill
wrapping up the geraniums with their smoke.
a big truck with a belly full of water
lifts its hind leg and puts out
they saved the cat, luckily
not the old woman; her screams were undignified.

OLDANI is the founder of Terminal Realism. He was born in Melegnano (Milan). He appears in the major literary journals and poetry anthologies. His publications include: *Stilnostro* (1985), *Sapone* (2001), *La betoniera* (2005), *Med ord och utan* (2008), and *Betongfjärilar* (2018). With the publisher Mursia, where he directs the Argani series of poetry, he has published *Il cielo di lardo* (2008), *Il realismo terminale* (2010), *La guancia sull'asfalto* (Mursia 2018), and *Dopo l'Occidente. Lettera al Realismo Terminale* (2021). He received the Poetry Prize at the International Festival of Poetry & Liquor of Luzhou, China (2019).



GUILLERMO SARAIVIA (Perú)

Poem in Spanish language

Blanca El Alma De Los Niños Y Niñas

Blanca blanca
Blanca el alma de los niños y niñas

Blanca blanca
Blanca el alma de los niños y niñas
Las nubes del mediodía
Blancas blancas
Las voces de los niños y niñas

Largos largos silbidos silenciosos
Impunes cargas de corazones
De crueles sionistas
Rojo rojo
Rojísimas explosiones
Rojos rojos los corazones pulverizados
Rojos rojos los muros descarnados
Rojísima la sangre
Los cielos
Las aguas
Las arenas

Blanco los ojos
Blanca la espuma
Blanca el alma de los niños y niñas

Negra la noche roja
Negras las voces de muerte
Negra la bruta historia humana
Negro el cinismo de los civilizados

Rojo el pasado
Rojísimo el dolor y el recuerdo
Rojo los ojos
Rojo rojo lo desmembrado
Roja la agonía del amanecer

Un día se juntarán el sol y las estrellas
Y los volcanes escupirán lava
Y el cielo será más azul que nunca
Y brotará nuevamente la buena hierba en las áridas tierras
Y volverán las blancas almas de los niños y niñas a poblar
Los territorios hoy arrasados.

SARAVIA es poeta y narrador. Está asociado al grupo literario La Sagrada Familia. Ha publicado el libro de cuentos *Simpatía* (Lluvia Editores, 1987) y dos poemarios *Itinerario* (Vallejo & Co, 2019) y *El tiempo raspa* (Hipocampo Editores, 2023). Es miembro del Movimiento Poético Mundial, Perú.



H. MAR (Brunei)

Black Bird

The blackbird jumped down from the mountain:
he did not know that I saw;
it dislodges small stones.
And eat worms.
I'm angry.
He drank the dew that was left under the big rock.
From the dead grass.
I'm angry.
It jumped on a tree branch.
He looked with brave eyes;
with a very loud chirp.
Like I'm in danger; be careful,
I volunteered to tell a story about crows and goat herders.
He lifted his wings up. And chirping very loudly.
Like I'm in danger; be careful,
it scratched the ground.
I'm angry.
The blackbird began to fly high and claw at the mountain.

H. MAR (1968) is the pen name of Haji Mohd Ali bin Haji Radin. He works as a Senior Language Officer at the Language and Literature

Bureau, Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports of Brunei Darussalam. His published works include *Hidup Yang Mati* (poems and short stories, 1996), *Kota Kaca* (novel, 2003), *Taman 'O'* (collection of drama and short stories, 2003), *Gelora* (poetry collection, 2022), *Exotis* (collection of short stories, 2018), *Taman Mimpi* (collection of dramas, 2021) and *The Lost City* (novel, 2024). His works are translated into English, French, Spanish, Russian, Italian, Arabic, Chinese, and Nepali.



HADAA SENDOO (Mongolia)

The Weight of Tears

I may have these tears all my life
But they're enough to fill a Dead Sea
I may have these tears all my life
But they were enough to wash away my humiliation
I may have these tears all my life
But they're enough to warm my brothers
I may have these tears all my life
But they were enough to wake up my homeland
I may have these tears all my life
But they were enough for me to contemplate the world I left behind
I have these tears at the last moment of my life
They are as priceless as sunlight and raindrops

SENDOO is a Mongolian poet and critic. He is the founder and leading figure of the World Poetry Almanac. He is the author of twenty poetry books. He is a recipient of several awards for his poetry, including the Millennium Poet Award (2000), the Pinnacle Achievement Award for Poetry (2010), the Mongolian Writers' Union Prize (2009), the Literary Renaissance Award (2019), and the Silk Road Award (2019).



HAN SHAN (China/USA)

Translated by **Dingli Qun**

To Goddess

By the grace of God
I'm empowered to look across the Atlantic
And peep at your pretty image
Maybe it's destiny of our past
That brings us together on the silent autumn night
The willow twigs in sight
Are your fascinating aura that no one can resist?
You are not my lady
You are the water and the wind
The twinkling stars in sky
And my goddess in the silent night
Praying, on the shore, I stand
My dear
Please give me a gentle hint
I'd like to be your servant till the end

SHAN is an American poet of Chinese origin. His original name is Han Keyou. He is the editor-in-chief of the Los Angeles-based *Voice of America Culture International Media*. He serves as the President of the World Chinese Poetry Society and is the Honorary Chairman of the Tang Poetry Road International Poetry Society. His poems have been featured in *The World Poetry Yearbook*, *Atoonis Poetry Yearbook 2025*, and other poetry magazines. He has received numerous accolades, including the Wang Wei Poetry Award.



HELEN JIA China/Australia)

In the Moonlight

In the moonlight, by the waterside,
Clothes billowed in the winds,
The curved surface, undulating lines,
Seeking the origin of coordinates,
Endless matters approach zero,
Back to the very source of life...

In the vast moonlit sky, hanging
the ancient memories of the cosmos,
White dwarf stars, their collapsing passions,
Intensifying inward, into compact mass,
Embracing tightly the dense and solid time,
The lingering white afterglow,
Tells tales of billions of years gone by.

Like the resonance of love and soul,
Quantum entanglement across the universe,
Moonlight, at the rim of dreams,
Erupting in calls —Photons, phonons, bosons,
Carrying tiny lanterns, the dampened flames,
Reincarnated on the watery edge of mirrors.

JIA is an award-winning writer, poet, and translator. Her published works include the poetry collection *A Century of Serenity*, the children's poetry collection *Moon River and Sky Town*, and the children's picture book *Scarecrow & Forget-Me-Not*.



HEMANT BIWAS (Nepal)

Translated by **Keshab Sigdel**

Voices

Life produces its voice
At every turn and bend.
The only difference is:
Few are clearly audible,
And the rest remain indiscernible.
The audible voices, too, are growing faint,
While the inaudible ones transform into
Meaningless quests.

I, too, try to find the wave of my voice,
And wait in his lane,
For the man these days lives with an empty heart,
Unable to reflect others within him,
He rather seeks to find himself outside.

BIWAS is a Nepali poet, lyricist, and journalist. He has published two poetry collections, *Afnai man sanga* (2001) and *Saipalko aagan* (2014), and three song albums: *Bibaska samrai* (2003), *Asaujko jun* (2005), and *Yadai janamvari* (2006). He was awarded the best lyricist of the year 2011 by Radio Nepal. A recipient of Rastriya Chhanda Prativa Puraskar (2009), he had been the vice president of the Nepali Writers' Association.



IDRIS AMALI (Nigeria)

Closing in on Gaza*

Like hungry jackals and wolves
Like restless leopards and lions
In their hungry milling numbers
Like a trampling company of elephants
Poised for a great offensive battle
Against ants and rats:

The machine guns
The booby traps
The steel birds of death
The cluster bombs
The rocket-propelled grenades
The new weaponry in their maiden outing
The army of infantry combat terrible
READY
FOR Gaza
Of tortured faith

Closing in on Gaza
They are closing in on Gaza blindfolded

As God watches
The destruction of His immortal hands
By the mortal hands
In this season of death in Gaza of strong faith

* For the army of the gods at the dawn of the new year 2009, Gaza.
Response after watching the live telecast of a massive attack on silent
Gaza 2nd January 2009

AMALI is a poet and Professor of Oral Literature. He has served as the Head of the Department of English, Director, and Dean of Arts at the University of Maiduguri and Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the Federal University of Lafia. His published works include *Generals Without War*, *Back Again: At The Foothills of Greed*, *Efeega: War of Ants*, and *Tears of Desert War*. He has edited *Let The Dawn Come: Voices From North East Nigeria*. He was the National Vice Secretary of the Association of Nigerian Authors.



IRMA KURTI (Italy)

This Music Is Enough

For a long time, I haven't listened
to music's sounds, neither radio
nor headphones on my ears.
This tranquility has covered everything.

A vague desire assaults me these days:
close my eyes, with the notes of a song
inebriate ... But then it abandons me.

For my weary soul, almost asleep,
half-alive, half-dead, is enough
the twittering of the birds in the spring.

Your whispers are transformed
into melodies, your fingers –
as a comb into my hair.
Now, for now, this music is enough for me.

KURTI is an Italian poet, translator, and journalist of Albanian origin. She has published 29 books in Albanian, 25 in Italian, 15 in English, and two in French. She has also translated 20 books by different authors and all of her own books into Italian and English. She is also the recipient of several literary awards.



ISILDA NUNES (Portugal)

And the World?

On History's curve
humanity skids.

Ruby ash
infests the future.

In the utopia's gasp
flow out tears
in gagged voices.

And the Peace?
Forged with fire and salt
vanishes into common graves.

The herald of Death
pretends to betray the oracle
of the supposed dawn.

And the World?
Will it survive in the complexity of birth?

NUNES is an artist, writer, and poet. She has authored several books of poetry and prose. She is Vice President of the Association of the World Union of Writers and Artists and coordinator of the World Poetry Movement in Portugal. She has won several literary awards at home and abroad.

We Need Poetry to Keep Our Souls Connected with Beauty

Marius Chelaru in Conversation with Jeebesh Rayamajhi

Marius Chelaru is a writer, editor, and director of various cultural magazines from Romania and abroad. He is editor-in-chief of the magazine Convorbiri Literare and Poezia, which is published in Iași. He is a co-founder of the Carmina Balcanica Association and the editor of Carmina Balcanica. He has published over 40 books, poetry, literary criticism, essays, and fiction. He has personal volumes in more than 25 languages. He is a member of the Writers' Union of Romania and The Association of Romanian Journalists and has received several awards for his literary works.



Jeebesh Rayamajhi is a poet and, importantly, a dramaturge who has worked for various theatre companies, including Aarohan-Gurukul and Theatre Village. An anthropologist and literati by academic training, he is now the in-house editor of RedPanda Books, a publishing house in Kathmandu.

In conversation with Rayamajhi, Chelaru provides a perceptive reflection about his creative endeavors and the literary scene in Romania.

RAYAMAJHI: Hello, Marius Chelaru. Welcome to this interview. Please share with us what poetry is for you.

CHELARU: Hello, Jeebesh Rayamajhi. Thank you for having me. For me, poetry is more a mood (or a matter of mood), a sort of kingdom of soul connected to sorrows/ joys and what the world means.



RAYAMAJHI: Could you describe your typical writing process?

CHELARU: Poetry is mostly a burning process till I write it. Articles/criticism, as you know, involve specific work and, of course, still a connection to that mood I told you. You need to be inspired, after all.

RAYAMAJHI: Why do you believe poetry still matters in today's technology-driven world?

CHELARU: Never was an easy answer. "Changes" from each epoch... changed the world in many ways. Now, it's not only about the support of stone, papyrus, etc., but about the necessity of keeping poetry and art close to our souls. It is an epoch with goals that sometimes seem far from poetry. Because of these, we need poetry to keep our souls connected with beauty, with that mood I talked about, which is a *must* for poets and readers if we want to remain human and not think only in statistics or numbers.

RAYAMAJHI: Given the dominance of digital media and short attention spans, what about poetry still resonates with people? How does poetry contribute to today's world's cultural and social fabric?

CHELARU: I lived in a hard communist time when it was mainly about "collective productive worker," production, artists being seen like they might be a kind of tools for propaganda or some beings "in their world." So, I think that poetry has always contributed to society, but it always needed two "sides": poets to write poetry for their times and readers who want to be human to connect with poetry. Maybe poetry did not have the position it had in ancient Greece, but we still need it.

RAYAMAJHI: There is a long- divide between people who emphasize its aesthetic function over its social function. What do you think is more important? Can poetry be mobilized as an instrument of social change?

CHELARU: The critic debate is one, its reception by the public other. Both are important and involve huge debates, too. We must understand how they are working. When we talk about poetry being an instrument,

I think yes. But it needs a real connection of the poet with his world/ its realities, and with... proper words.

RAYAMAJHI: In what ways do you believe poetry can foster cross-cultural understanding?

CHELARU: It always has, in one way or another. Now, we have many tools to help with this kind of understanding, but poetry is very important. I translated some poets from Nepal, working with our friend Keshab Sigdel, and I felt closer to Nepal.

RAYAMAJHI: With over 40 published books encompassing novels, poetry, literary criticism, and essays, how do you handle the challenges of writing across such diverse genres?

CHELARU: I launched myself as a poet, but working with publishing houses, magazines, etc., I come in situations to write criticism, to translate, etc. I didn't feel exactly a gap. Prose, on the other hand, is, in a way, like poetry. I must be in the mood to write it.

RAYAMAJHI: What motivated you to co-found the 'Carmina Balcanica' and to establish 'Kadō, The Way of Poetry'?

CHELARU: I work for notable literary magazines in my country. First is one of the oldest from this part of the world, founded in 1867, "Convorbiri literare"/"Literary conversations", then "Poezia"/ Poetry. I want to understand the world through culture/ poetry. "Carmina Balcanica" is about southeastern Europe, "Kadō" - the connection between Romania, Europa, and Asia, and "Doina" – a francophone space. ("Kadō" and "Doina" no longer exist.) My motivation is to have my poetic/ literary/ cultural "circle."

RAYAMAJHI: You are involved in various literary and journalistic associations. Why do you think such networks are important?

CHELARU: First, it's the connection with people who are thinking and dedicating time in a way like you. Then could be a better understanding

of the world, why/ how are changing visions from one place to another, and not at all at last, to know dedicated/ gifted people/ writers, etc.

RAYAMAJHI: As a prolific writer and editor, how do you balance creating and curating literature? Does your editorial work influence your writing, and vice versa?

CHELARU: Editorial work eats a lot of time. But keeps me in contact with the literature from my country and abroad. And sometimes, reading about so many sorrows and good things in the world, I emphasize these. Influences? No.

RAYAMAJHI: Can you briefly describe the current literary scene in Romania? Are there particular themes, styles, or voices from Romania that you believe stand out on the international stage?

CHELARU: Romanian literature is integrated into the World circuit of literature but kept specific. We had/ have so many names that it will be difficult to name only some, and themes are extremely varied, from very actual to "rethinking," literary, the past.

RAYAMAJHI: How would you characterize today's Romanian literary community in terms of its diversity, innovation, and public engagement?

CHELARU: Very active and innovative, with many things to show to the world.



JAIME OSCAR M. SALAZAR (Philippines)

Community Relations

At around midnight on 1 August 2012, a breach occurred in Padcal mine's tailings pond. This led to the spillage of a large volume of tailings – the waste materials left over from ore extraction – into Balog River, a tributary of Agno River. Four other incidents of discharge, from August to September, were reported. By mid-September, a government bureau estimated that over 20 million metric tons of tailings in total had flowed out from the tailings pond. Philex Mining Corporation blamed the succession of two tropical cyclones in late July for weakening the structure of the pond.

tilapia wade
through grey water, feeding their
copepods copper

Padcal is the site of the mine operated by Philex Mining Corporation, initially using the open-pit method, and, thereafter, block caving. It is found in the municipality of Tuba, in the south of Benguet. Padcal is a ridge with terrain characterized by steep slopes and deep gullies. Its name has been said to come from "pakshal," short for "nai-pakshal," an Ibaloy term that means, "outstretched" or "protruding." Padcal was an uninhabited hunting ground for wild boar and deer until the early 1950s. Large sections of the surrounding areas used to serve as grazing land for cattle.

corporate redress—
rises now rich with birch and
pine, old springs still dry

Benguet is a landlocked province on the Cordillera Central mountain range on the island of Luzon. Clockwise from the south, it borders Pangasinan, La Union, Ilocos Sur, Mountain Province, Ifugao, and Nueva Vizcaya. Its population – the largest within its administrative region, as of 2020 – consists of indigenous peoples, notably the Ibaloy, the Kankanaey, and the Kalanguya, and various other ethnic groups, such as the Ilocanos. Alongside agriculture and tourism, mining is a major industry in Benguet, which is a leading producer of gold in the country. Other known mineral deposits include copper, silver, limestone, and pyrite.

over lands riven
and claimed with ink, the brass bell
of the bourse singing

SALAZAR is a writer who lives in Pasig City, Philippines.



JOE KIDD (USA)

October Rose

In the night, while recalling the October Rose
Upon My Knees, I entered a room
To touch the thorn from which it flowered
Two eyes now shut to view this face
A glorious body now consumed
I set aside my recollection
To anoint with chrism these memories
The endeavor to hire the arsonist
To set ablaze this mortal temple
No more to pray or meditate
Nor visit a possibility
God-given humanity now at work
Has chosen between two parallels
Mercy and Justice the extremes
Which do we claim from this day forward?
I allow the creator to look upon my efforts
As the landscape burns beyond my gaze
Paralyzed, and speaking not
The transfer of love's telepathy
With that, redemption makes way at last
A suffering, endless in its wake
A silence, where sweet music once played
And yet the Rose bloomed in October

Seen clearly from the highest peak
And on that summit, the seed is planted
The ending that all must seek
And yet the Rose bloomed in October
A final kiss on the cheek

KIDD is a published poet, songwriter, and artist. In 2020, he published *The Invisible Waterhole*, a collection of spiritual and sensual verses. The Michigan Governor's Office and the US House of Representatives have awarded him for his work to advance peace, social justice, and cultural diversity. Joe was Beat Poet Laureate of the State of Michigan from 2022 to 2024 and Official Poet of the Government of Birland North Africa. He was inducted into the Michigan Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2017.



JOHN CURL (USA)

Forbidden Thoughts

People want to hear only the proper lie,
the acceptable lie, the comfortable lie.

If I had the courage to say
exactly what I mean,
if I were to speak nothing but
the plain, unvarnished truth
to you, what would I say?

We all know that secret place,
we've all been there: the forbidden thought
rising suddenly as if out of nowhere.

The forbidden truth,
the thought you are not allowed to think,
much less say or write or publish,
the forbidden truth always lurking
somewhere out of sight
no matter how hard you work
to keep it down far down, safe in the dark.

Suddenly seeking light,
when you least expect it,

threatening to jump out and
sing its truth to the world.

I didn't really say that.
That isn't what I meant.

It might slip out in casual conversation
in a cafe, over the phone, or at work,
just when you thought it was safely hidden
in the ambiguity of a joke or in the subtle
wording of a letter to the editor or in
the assonance and rhyme of a few lines in a poem.

I hope they don't report me.

If I were to say
exactly what I mean,
if I were to speak the plain unvarnished
truth to you, what would I say?
And what
would you reply?

CURL is the author of twelve poetry collections, including *Rainbow Weather* (Vagabond Books, 2023). His translations of ancient Inca, Maya, and Aztec poets are collected in *Ancient American Poets* (Bilingual Press). He represented the USA at the World Poetry Festival in Venezuela in 2010. He is the author of two novels and a memoir of the 1960s, *Memories of Drop City*. His historical writings include a history of worker cooperatives, *For All The People* (PM Press), and *Indigenous Peoples Day* (2017), a documentary history and memoir of how the new holiday replaced Columbus Day. He is a member of the Revolutionary Poets Brigade of San Francisco and a long-time co-editor of their annual poetry anthologies.



JOSÉ MUCHNIK (France/Argentina)
Translated from Argentine Spanish by **Gerry Loose**

Amazon, I Have Seen You

I have seen

the forest throbbing
like a blood drum

the forest opening
like an unexpected love

the forest weeping
like a blinded river

a river with burst banks
like maddened horses

running scared
toward other realms

I have seen

brows moist
with ancient sweat

nights lighting
green melodies

and the depth of dreams
in the ripped fields

I have seen children playing
the way children play

I have seen children smiling
the way children smile

I have seen children working
the way children work

playing like the bigger ones
their lives in their hands

I have seen trees

trees felled
like ancient grandfathers

trees fleshed alive
like lonely kings

trees begging
for other skies to come

I have seen the earth

the earth in ashes
wrecked as far as the horizon

mother earth
our sweetheart
creator of song
and the bones

of voices
and of fish

a shamed earth
with no face for flowers

I have seen parrots crying
the absence of their loves

I have seen tourists buying
exotic feathers

I have seen cows
one cow
two cows
three cows

highways of cattle
nose to tail towards the market

my kingdom
for a cow

one cow
for seven forests

one forest
half a hamburger
(a few dribbles of ketchup
as a tribute to the tomato
a few grams of mustard
in the innards of bread)

I have seen

a wise grandfather
whispering lullabies
to age-old plants
for their peaceful sleep.

[...]

MUCHNIK is a poet and anthropologist. He was born in 1945 in Boedo, a district of Buenos Aires, Argentina, where his parents had settled as Russian immigrants. Thirty years later, with the arrival of the military dictatorship, he too emigrated and has been living in France since 1976. He has published numerous books of poetry, fiction, and anthropological works. He is the founding member of the Franco-Argentinean group “Traversées poétiques,” “Collectif effraction” and the “Crue Poétique.”



JULIJANA VELICHKOVSKA (Macedonia)

Africa

Some new birds arrived
in the park
they say they are from Africa
I don't understand their language
they haven't spoken to me yet.

They brought heat with them
African heat
and sand
from the newly formed desert
the one
that used to be a river
the one
in whose mud
the zebra turns into an ordinary foal
and lonely follows the dazzle
waiting for months
for the rain
or for its own tears to wash
its stripes
so that its mother can recognise them.

There are some new birds in the park

the meteorologists have predicted that
they have announced animals from Africa coming
I am expecting lions.

VELICHKOVSKA (1982) is a writer, editor, translator, and poetry festival organizer. She is the founder of the publishing house PNV Publikacii in Skopje, a co-founder and director of the Skopje Poetry Festival, and the program director of the Velestovo Poetry Night Festival in Ohrid. She is a member of the Macedonian Writers' Association. She is the author of two poetry books: *Комарци* (*Mosquitoes*, 2010) and *Отворена книга* (*Open Book*, 2017); a novel, *Годишни времиња* (*Seasons*, 2014); and a children's book, *Ведра* (*Vedra*, 2022).



JULIO CESAR PAVANETTI (Uruguay)

Unfinished Voices

We are unfinished voices,
multiples of those wombs
forced to accompany seagulls,
to a border of fogs
already without return.

We are unfinished voices
born of ancient hunger,
consequence of that fear
repeated years later
in the nights of running over.

We are unfinished voices,
final destination of a journey
that ended up incubating accents
on the shore of other seas,
and far from our birds.

We are unfinished voices
of songs of solidarity,
and now, autumn trees,
we dig impermeable caves,
to rearm our scattered scraps

(the restart at open street)
and to shelter our memories
so, to safeguard them
from water, wind... and men.

PAVANETTI (1954) was born in Montevideo. He is the founder and current President of the "Benidorm Poetic Lyceum." He is the Coordinator in the Province of Alicante (Spain) of the Association of Poets of the Earth and Friends of Poetry. His works are anthologized in *Presentation Poetry Book of the Liceo Poético de Benidorm* (2003), *Letters of the World* (2005), and *Opening Doors... for the Love of Art* (2006), among others.



KAMA SYWOR KAMANDA (Congo)

Translated by **Charitha Liyanage**

Sensuality

I look at the morning sky,
And I inhale the scent of nature
Exquisitely;
Tenderness like an ecstasy
That a woman expresses in desire;
When eyes closed,
She bonds to her lover in an absolute dream,
In a pleasure that overflows the senses
In an embrace that makes the world forget,
Despair, fear, and suffering.
The horizon is a fountain
Colorful and elusive.
The Sun, as a hope, rouses my blood.
I'd like to climb every hill of life,
And conquer all the mountains
Built with my sufferings and my destiny!

KAMANDA was born in 1952 in Congo. He is a poet, novelist, playwright, and storyteller who has published over eighty books of poetry, plays, essays, short stories, and translations. He has been honored with prestigious awards, such as the Grand Prix Littéraire de l'Afrique noire.



KEMADJOU NJANKE MARCEL (Cameroon)

5h39

From above I look like branches
of a toolkit like a star

From a crossing view, I look like
a mountain, some say
a pyramid temple, and what else

To move forward from behind
I've the irregular shape of a
path that sacrifices it-self

And when the mischievous goblins
constantly turning over the soil
decide to get close to the mistake
this form for a river that calls
the distant and endless ocean

Once again, when winds pass through
my night I'm there like
a needle having a nap

But tell me why these blue blazes of
light dancing so close to my arms

mistake me for a *translucent*
string hanging between
a cloud and the path dust

MARCEL is a poet, photographer and supply chain trainer, living in Douala, Cameroon. He collaborates with GDI Cameroon and Tila France in the fields of translation and copywriting. He is the author of twenty books of poetry, stories and hundreds of chronicles and travelogues in French, English, Spanish and Medumba. His recent publications are *Roasted Poems*, a poetry book, and *Le manuel des racontages*, a conversations book.



KONSTANTINOS BOURAS (Greece)

Melting ice, melting eyes

As the Sun explodes
the temperature arises,
our agony also...
What brings the future?
Which future?
Disaster? Catastrophe? Nemesis?
We are obliged to pay for our ignorance,
Your choices,
Their indifference.
Everything has a price.
Abundance is a luxury.
We cannot afford our arrogance,
Our ingratitude,
Our lust to consume Everything
As local, individual "black holes."
Evolving and revolving
Around their insatiable Ego.
"We" is our future, not "I."
Like immigrating birds
We should communicate
Harmonically
According to the Unwritten
Universal Laws.

If not,
Melting ice, melting eyes
Are inevitable.
We should re-invent Humanity
To respect Nature
To Love our Mother Gaia
To re-ritualize our spiritual needs.
The indigenous know better.
Our progress tends to be the darkest
Technological Middle Ages...
Nemesis (the great ancient Greek Goddess)
Calls for environmental justice.
Artists, Writers, Philosophers
We Have to re-invent the Spirit
If we choose to re-establish the Pan-Human
Civilization
Of a Brighter Future.
If not, “La Tour de Babel”
Will become our permanent entire cosmos.

BOURAS (1962) was born in Kalamata, a town in the Peloponnese region of Greece. He is the author of 45 volumes of poetry and a novel. He was a mechanical engineer but later shifted to language and literature studies, obtaining a PhD in literature from the University of Corfu. He is a visiting professor at the University of Athens.



LAWDENMARC DECAMORA (Philippines)

Ode to a Mah Meri Mask

I love all things that go unnoticed,
as suddenly, one of your tribal spirits
imitates the busy hands of the clock:
hour, minute, second.

Tropical, turquoise, Carey Island.
Those hands become frozen vegetables
paying no heed to your saddest
story of the day. I said I love
the things that are being overlooked,
not because your charm is cloaked
in stark presentiments of *Hari Moyang*¹
but because it remains still,
poised as a loaf of bread,
reminiscent of the pearl earrings
tingling elegantly
in a Vermeer painting.

Your spirit becomes the protagonist
of your story. And I listen with a kind
of attention that radiates
berylliums and some fine words.
This ode sings to your talcum face
one more time; you know

healing happens for a reason,
a reminder that village life's a blessing
and Kampung Sungai Bumbun's
tradition, like your energy,
is coastal yellow.

¹ *It is a revered tribal spirit that watches over the Mah Meri villages of Carey Island in Selangor, Malaysia.*

DECAMORA is an Anglophone Filipino poet, academic, and travel backpacker with work published in *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Pleiades*, *The Common*, *South Dakota Review*, *Peripheries* (Harvard U), *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* (Routledge), and *The Best Asian Poetry 2021-2022 Anthology*. He teaches creative writing at the University of Santo Tomas in Manila.



LAXMI BARDEWA (Nepal)

Translated by **Jeebesh Rayamajhi**

Prisoned Birds

Prisoned birds hover in the sky,
A flock of wings suffocates in their own nest.

Often, my own image appears strange in the mirror—
Like the days and nights I live.

I would look for myself if I could find what I seek.
"Are you alright?" I would ask myself,
If asking alone could resolve the problem.

The sorrow one sobs out is met with laughter.
Sorrows are deep only for the sufferer.
The meaningless life awaits
A metamorphosis!
It might sound strange,
But, after long, she is trying to look into herself.

Nowadays, I fear not only the nights but also the days.
I fear the ones I call my own.
I fear even myself—
What if I grow tired?
What if I lose?
Who would complete my journey?
Who would reach my destination?

What if time repeats its cycle?
What if I am reborn as myself in the new cycle?
What if I start living merely for others
That even the puppets would despise me?

Now, I need to build a bridge to cross the river.
Now, I should migrate, leaving behind my nest.
Now, I must search for myself to meet myself.
Then, I must dig a well and quench my thirst.

The monal in the Himalayas looks at the crimson rhododendron—
She is carefree about shelter or attire.
She only longs to fly far and wide.
But does she covet the entire sky?

BARDEWA is a prominent Nepali actress known for her powerful performances on both stage and film. *Bulbul*, *Selfie King*, and *Ghampaani* are notable films in which she has a strong presence. With a deep passion for storytelling, she continues to make a significant impact in Nepali cinema, theatre, and literature.



LENG GUAN (China/USA)

Translated by **Christine Chen**

Thunder Fire

The dragon horse's angry snort
Disturbs the lazy bulk of the earth mother
White hoof prints
Flinging a bright, long whip, whipping
The fire running wild across the wasteland

Spraying the crimson clouds
With withered shapes and shadowy forms appearing and disappearing
Like black-clad ballet dancers
Performing the farewell of the dying swan

Glimpsing at the ocean hung upside down
The whirlpools of the predatory tribe are driven away by the hurricane
The calm waves of the herbivore tribe rise into terrifying waves
The escape of birds and beasts
Mocked by time and abandoned like worn-out shoes, with bitter faces

GUAN is a Chinese-American poet. With a doctorate in engineering, he has worked for several multinational companies in Europe and the United States, serving as General Manager and President of China operations. He is the Deputy Editor-in-Chief of *Voice of America Culture* and the Vice President of the Hawaii International Federation of Writers and Recitation Arts Association. His poems have been widely published in the USA, China, and Europe.



LI SHANGCHAO (China)

Translated by **Prof. Shi Yonghao**

A Stone Says to another Stone

A Stone says to another stone
Don't be colorful because of the flowers
Don't try to grow because of the grasses
Don't be boisterous because of those people
Let's serenely
Bask in the sunlight and the moonlight under the sky
And brave winds and rains in the rotating seasons
As long as we maintain our character of stone
We will remain stone even after the millennium
But all those things we have seen
Will have been gone with the wind

SHANGCHAO (1969) is a contemporary Chinese poet, calligrapher, and musician. He was born in Wushan County, Chongqing. He is a member of the Chinese Writers Association, director of the Literary Federation of the Ministry of Public Security, and vice-chairman of the Popular Music Society of Chongqing Municipality. He has published ten monographs on literature and calligraphy.



LOTFI EL SHABI (Tunisia)

The Ascension of the Heir

If you walk alone after the winds of their presence have died,
And the souls whose light once deceived you have faded,
If you walk alone, filling your soul with resolve,
and conquer your yearning for the mirage and betray it,
If you walk, enchanted by the memory of the first rose,
while the blade of the last roses stirs in your blood,
Then gather all your clouds,
and strip your words from gardens that do not see you,
whose hills are salt, and whose shores are fire.

A land betrayed you once before,
surrendering its wealth and fruits to strangers.
It abandoned your hands and cast you adrift.
In it, factions betrayed you,
they killed you when they turned away from the spring
that you had opened to bring them their dawn.
They slaughtered the nightingales singing in your hands,
and went on sharpening their fangs and dancing.

I still remember how they clamored around my shadow
as it rose in the blood,
They shouted, encircling the light of my shadow
emerging from my veins.
They danced in madness like frogs, and I awoke,
they were all those I'd known along the way and those I'd led.

They smoke in my morning,
I called to them... and sought the scent of clouds on the road,
but the winds returned only death:
These, and those, and these... and you,
and those who rush blindly in ashes and mud,
present yet absent, speaking yet silent, running yet still,
and crouching like spiders in the pupils of the eye.
They, and them... the bewildered,
and all whom the journey devoured,
 and the winds of the road sifted from mirages of clouds,
and daggers in embraces.

The howling ceased...
The neighborhood wolves slept, drunk, upon your shadow,
and the hordes you'd awaited to rise were silent,
a land fell silent, and you recoiled at the obscenity of its silence,
and walked alone in your height without shadows, light, or sky.
Here you are alone... but for that bird whispering in the distance,
 telling you:
How hidden and bare you are, like the truth.
No sound shatters the dignity you have earned,
and no treachery in the echo,
how full and empty you are,
no absence and no presence,
since you became a memory in words,
since you became a plural in singular.

SHABI is a poet, novelist, and critic. He was born in the city of Ksar Hellal, located in the Tunisian Sahel region. He has written both novels and poetry. Some of his poetry books include *Standing Here as the Horizon Stands Still* (2011) and *Half a Moon over the Night of the Garden* (2016). He is a member of the Tunisian Writers' Union and serves as the president of its Nabeul branch. He is a founding member and editor-in-chief of *Roya Al-Adab*, a quarterly magazine published by Dar Roya for Publishing in Tunisia since 2020.



MA DI'ER (China)

Translated by **Prof. Ding Lique**

Candlelight in the Black Night

Beneath the huge boulders
Lies Nalan Temple, small and exquisite
The candlelight in the black night
Becomes the transition from my getting lost
Tonight, I'll entrust it with my weariness, confusion
And my body and soul

The candlelight slides along the windowsill
Blown crisp by the cool wind
Fortunately, there's no shattering
A wooden fish is speaking of the cold
I do not know whose fate is colder
Every blade of grass and every flower
Covers the night of Nalan Temple

The night deepens in the clothing
I can hear fallen flowers seeing the flowing water off
Tinkling, tinkling, tinkling
As if this candlelight in the night
Brings both surprise and sorrow
Emptiness and nothingness
This unexpected gift is so heavy
As heavy as tiny ordination scars and incense ashes

MA DI'ER (1966) is the penname of Ma Yong born in Fuqing, Fujian Province. He is the chairman of the Writers' Association in Fuqing and the deputy editor-in-chief of *Rendition of International Poetry*. He has been awarded The Rising Star Award, the International Original Literature Prize of Russia (2022), and the Sahitto International Award for Literature (2023). He has published two poetry books, *Rain Falls on Tomb-sweeping Day* and *Scholar in the Snow*, and a collection of essays and skits titled *On the Mountain: the Hidden or the Bright*.



MAHNAZ BADIHIAN (USA/Iran)

Kurdistan Mountains

Beloved Mahsa,* your blood
Turned into red puppies
in our heart
You landed on the distant stars.
You were looking for a convoy of
Heroes in your short life.
You're gone,
And the heart of a nation
Became your Cradle
Asking ourselves where were we
When the hands of barbarians snatched you
Now you're gone and
each strand of your hair became a freedom flag.
How can one see your red blood
Seeping through your ears
And not tie it to the eternity of the roses
But you haven't left
Your name is magic of endurance.

You're the beginning,
And criminals are the end!
You're cascading waterfall
in the heart of the

Kurdistan mountains.
And you're roaring cypress.
On the streets of the motherland
Mahsa, daughter of Iran,
Your innocent name is eternal!

* *Mahsa Amini is a 21 years old girl who died at the hands of the Iranian government of a few of her hair strands being exposed.*

BADIHIAN is an Iranian/American poet, painter, and translator whose work has been published in several languages. She is a member of the Revolutionary Poet Brigade San Francisco. She is the author of a poetry collection, *Ask the Wind*, and is working on her novel *A Girl from Pomegranate Garden*. She runs the literary magazine MahMag.org



MAMAN TOUKOUR LAWALI (Niger Republic)

The Storks in the Sahel

In the Womb of Mother Earth
noodles mixed with a tip.
At the west-north,
near the navel and the hip,
a matured fetus
glows under the gloomy ground.
Through local trees
no fruits nor leaves spread.

Strange harvesting moments,
When rainwater drains from the surface of the soil
to the roots of plants

Sahelians failing to gauge the worth of their lands
below a blue sky empty of clouds
and a shining sun,
carelessly watch the arrival of the storks
on the soil of the desert sands

Gloomy films of the storks on the sacred land,
little memory about the stain on the mammoth sand.
But the storks reminisce that sacred land,
their long feet digging every parcel of the ground.

Pecking any valuable livelihood
skinny and cloyed
grains in their gizzards perish
scarcely excreting to fortify the ground.
Abashed farmers worried
about this irksome practice,
call on scarecrows to chase
the storks from the land.

LAWALI (1983) was born in Gazabi, Magaria in Niger. He received his PhD in African Oral Literature from Abdou Moumouni University of Niamey. He is the lecturer at the English Department of Université André Salifou of Zinder.



MÁRCIA PFLEGER (Brazil)

Translated by **Letícia Ferreira**

The woman at the edge of the world

there is something within her
unfolding like silence
(is not just anything).
behind the counter, her breasts
point toward the street.
what would it feel like to throw her shoes far away
the soles of her feet scratching the asphalt?
in the morning
she will long for fencing with her knitting needles.
to be the insurgent clogging the valve
of the pressure cookers
sometimes, within her
something enormous snaps...
but she knows that in Ushuaia
the glaciers tear themselves apart
without waking the seagulls that sleep
lulled by a whispering arm of the sea

PFLEGER is a writer and journalist from Curitiba. Her published works are *Caneca de Café com Versos* (2015) and *Camélias Afônicas* (e-book edition, 2020). In 2021, she was a finalist for the Off Flip Award, at the Paraty International Literature Festival, in the Poetry category. Her poems are anthologized in *Women Poets in Brazilian Literature* published by the São Paulo publisher Arriboçã.



MARÍA ÁNGELES PÉREZ LÓPEZ (Spain)

Translated by **Cristina Moricete** and **Nancy Martínez**

The Desert

The desert follows you like a dog
and barks its abruptness at you,
but you never look it in the eye.
that's why it fails to claim you.

It has in it the scorpion's harshness,
the rugged and warmth of its abdomen
against the restless, colloquial dune.
It has in it the bitterness of the stubble in him,
the snake that burns the throat.

How would it settle in your skin
if you were already a desert?
If you tamed that dog and licked it.
If within you already existed
the cactus ravaged by the light,
the sand in love with the cobalt,
the raw,
the viscera
in its truth
and its coloratura.

Between the language and you, all the sand.
Between the desert and you, only your body.

LÓPEZ (1967) is a poet and professor at the University of Salamanca. Her poems have been published in Caracas, Mexico City, Quito, New York, Monterrey, Bogota, Lima, Buenos Aires, and Honduras. Her book *Carnalidad del frío* was published in bilingual editions in Brazil and the US. *The carnality of Cold* won Honorable Mention in the International Latino Book Awards 2023. *Incendio mineral* (2021) won National Critics Award and *Libro mediterráneo de los muertos* (2023).



MARIA DO SAMEIRO BARROSO (Portugal)

Utopia

I dream of a rose, a red rose of life,
Spring and vitality.

And I lean on my utopia.

But insidious damaged roses
creep into my mind,
still claiming the bright skies
hidden of their yearning,
My brain carried their grief,
their anguish, the despair
of their bodies sacrificed
in shameful shrines.

I would like to bring them
the solace, the balance of wings,
the armours of love,
the gentle tools
of the warriors of peace.
Butterflies keep dying
cruelly.

Yet, my dreams do not perish,
my roses never die.

Butterflies keep flying
in the distance.

Red roses, my dead roses,

are still carrying a torch,
a gleaming light,
among pomegranates,
blueberries and starry skies,
drifting old nightmares away,
keeping my roses of utopia alive.

BARROSO is a medical doctor, multilingual poet, translator, essayist, and researcher. She is the Intercontinental President of the Portuguese-speaking Countries of the Unión Hispanomundial de Escritores and the Honourable Adviser of the Poetry and Literature World Vision. She has published over 40 books of poetry and authored translations and books of essays.



MARIA MIRAGLIA (Italy)

The Moon

I get close to the window
of my lonely room and
with my hand
I shape a circle
on the fogged glass
to see outside
some lampposts dimly enlighten
the deserted avenue where
a stray cat is in search of a shelter
and the leaves of the alders
seem to tremble
in the wind
faintly come from afar
the noises of the cars
still coming and going
The moon and her flickering maidens
framed in the grand canvas
spread their white light
while watching over the men's dreams
how many secrets do they keep
of us on earth, and
our troubled lives
night after night

with synchronous rotation
never tired
never complaining
to follow the celestial order
over and over again

MIRAGLIA is a bilingual poet, essayist, and translator. She is a member of the European Academy of Science and Art—Salsburg, the literary director of the Cultural Association Pablo Neruda, and the founder and President of the World Foundation for Peace. She has authored twenty-one books and received several awards and recognitions. Her most recent book is *Echi Nell' Aria*, published by CTL-Livorno.



MAYSARA SALAH EL-DIN (Egypt)

Translated by **Yasmine Hussein**

Window of Shyness

The icy void in between is ablaze
With poetry
Describing your lovely eyes
Shyness is a glass window
Behind which I watch you
We're still two steps apart
Do you feel the heat of emotions
The innocence of desire
The new-born passion?
We're still two steps apart
Pearls of feeling run wild
And the raging perfumes divulge tales
Of the rosy lips and dewy cheeks
The expanse catches fire
And the distances between us are coloured
With chirping
Can you taste all in my eyes when I hold you?
I hold the flaming sun
And fertile rain
The body of the moon shudders
All windows between us open
To rainbows

A waterfall tasting of yearning
And glowing with joy
Your heart yields
Sweet grapes
That I savour
And make experience
Possible happiness
The silence of places shakes
And I weave a sanctuary of your skin.

EL-DIN is a poet, playwright and translator. His first poetry collection was published in 2002, and his third collection *Secret Numbers* (2010) was translated into Spanish and published in 2023. A number of his poems are translated into English, Italian and Spanish, and many of his plays were performed on stage. His translated works are *Kokoro*, *Barbara*, *Shuggie Bain* and *The Bell Jar*.



MIGUEL ÁNGEL VÁZQUEZ (Spain)

Earth

Sing your achievements to the mountain
In the valleys shout your goal and desire
Explain to a bird your victories.

Stop now.

Stay under the sky.
Listen to the grass.
Be silent with the river.

Look at life.
You are small.

Go into the earth.

VÁZQUEZ is an editor, bookseller, and cultural manager in the associative project La Imprenta. He is the author of an essay book *Kosmótica. Global challenges of the new politics after the long year of change* (2016) and two poetry collections, *Avocado for Four* (2020) and *Beyond Good and the Sea (Caniculares)* (2023). His poems are anthologized in *Voces del viento Sur* (2016), *Voces del Extremo. Anthology 2012/2016* (2017) and *Voces del Extremo. Poesía y Techo* (2023). He also coordinated the most comprehensive anthology of ecopoetry in Spanish, *Naturaleza poética* (La Imprenta, 2022).



MIKE AGUZIN (USA)

Plants & Dreams

Quiet self...world for a brief
moment, this is near-enough to downtown.
The Blue Angels are to fly over soon, or at least
 this afternoon—I taking a
 day from work,
not quite feeling my
 best,
 best,
 better now...

This brief oasis of camel's milk
 drenching our faces and mouths with
wet kisses, she enticing inviting...
I playfully advancing –
 my cornball humor continues, like
a mid-Western Canadian, like my stepdad Stearne's
 Canadian cornfield...
The leaves dripping, the primeval
 forest of hunter, the hunted, the fittest prevail.
The dogs absconded with
 meat for their chops, where
hearth and home give delight
 to a suffering world, to a Buddhist

endeavoring for what enlightenment screams
while rain comes down on
our machines
our gods
our plants
& dreams.

AGUZIN was a Catholic till 15 and later studied Eastern Religions. He was a star athlete in High School. He did have multiple parents, including three stepmoms with a dad likely having PTSD. Along the way, he has had depression and anxiety that he does manage. He graduated from UC Berkeley, did two postgrad years of work, and was a counselor and mental health worker.



MING DI (China)

At Mt. Galičica

Suddenly I felt tall, towering above Lake Ohrid.
I felt as ancient as the mountain and water,
three to five million years old,
summer flowers slightly swaying
in the August breeze
on the barren land that used to be
green meadows as in the postcards,
yellow, white, and purple, directly growing
from the rocks.

Above, I saw forest fires
inextinguishable.

I stood at the barren pullout, feeling small
and guilty, everything around me
over-consumed: the trees, fish and lakes,
the shores and beaches,
even the sunset, even the light,
as it's a human business from the ancient time
to exploit what's around us, reachable or not.

MING DI is a poet and translator born in Wuhan by the Yangtze River, currently living between China and California, USA. She attended Boston College and Boston University and taught Chinese at BU before

moving to California to pursue a career in law. She has published thirty books, including seven collections of poetry in Chinese. She has been a coordinator for the Lyrikline (Berlin), editor of the China domain of Poetry International (Rotterdam), and co-organizer of International Translation Workshops (Beijing). She has edited or co-edited eight anthologies of Chinese poetry, published in several countries.



MOULDI FARROUJ (Tunisia)

Translated by **Adel Jrad**

You Discovered Fire

The Earth must select
A language from stone
And restore our right to speech
And be covered with the feathers of sin
And make wings for humans.
Dates fly me backward
I see the face of that primitive
Designing a tank out of rocks
And inventing flames
by striking the cheeks of a stone
That was fire kindled from stone
The primitive was building civilization
For fear of the jungle
He was struggling with the treachery of wolves
And walking with the sun
Worshipping it
He would die because of his love for the moon
It is a war of hit-and-run
Don't be sad, my love
Rockets fly when those who are fond of their slingshot
Play with stone

And the Castles that
were uprooted by missiles, flew stone
And the palaces built by history
have become stone
And the hearts that fought you...are stone
And the graves...are stone
the war is built on a tune set in stone
they want to demolish Al-Aqsa mosque
And build a new weeping wall
And another one between you
And Al-maqdisi Sigh as you wish
Empty your tears into the sea
in the West Bank or in the Gaza Strip
It is the Earth that has set up
A wall ...to cry
Your mother didn't teach you to cry
And walk
So that the hook can return to your palms
You must win
It's a war of hit and hit and run
Ebb and flow intertwined between us
Until hatred and love became equal among us
You came alone to draw a map of the country
And another to build bridges
And you have no limit
How often do words fly to you
This sound doesn't reach
Oh, my soul mate
Take whatever stone you want
From your mother's necklace
And wear death
You are good at cutting distances
Until my homeland was leveled with a shroud

Go ahead and come back with the nation
with the shroud
And you choose the death of birth
I see you When your heart reposes
The vein runs through the country
War is made for extermination
But your war is distinguished from every war
By the taste of martyrdom
I'm here where the sun of Arabism sets
I walk as paths lead me astray
My palm fights against me
My grandfather chronicles an epic
Out of the bleating of peoples
May God have mercy on you
May god have mercy on you my grandfather
How are the years that produced us
A lie that people inherit like the caliphate
Oh my grandmother
What led us to six defeats in half a century
Take your time, my love
The Earth is lying
When she takes birds to the place of hunters
The river lies
And the water and the wind lie
Because the crops became thirsty
The rain clouds withdraw
And leave my country thirsty
In the heat of the day
It's very hot here
And there...a Bedouin caravan
A long time ago
Moving for more than half a century
And the men were honoring their first

He raises the tip of the stick
To point to the water
No.... passers-by didn't see the drink
Oh! The lies of the poets
Why does leadership pass
In the princes' tent
A mirage is born in every palace
and in every era
I'm tired, and I have lost my mind
How hard the heart tried
to encompass the two banks
I calmed down my poetry
May my mind be at peace
It's nice as you compose
Jihad and love for the homeland
How did you absorb the glow of the left
and the snow of the right?
And gathered us in the moonlight
War is hit on a tune set in stone
We wrote some love lines for you
As well as the sweetest phrase
(In brackets)
With torture and humiliation
You see between the lines
How betrayal passes surrounded by perfumes
And you are struggling
(in Brackets)... with torture and humiliation
I wish I didn't see you
And every time my feelings stumble upon you
And you are howling between a throne
and a coffin
And dig in rocks what people didn't say
It's war hit-and-run

Peace be upon our poems as they pass by
as well as speech
Peace be upon him
He who boasts of the spectrum of peace
Peace
be upon a homeland that awakens from death
in your palms
In your palms there's stone
Peace be upon war
If war comes... to win

FARROUJ (1955) is a poet and a retired doctor. He is a member of the Tunisian Writers Union since 1981. He is the managing editor of *Al Masar* and has held editorial positions in several media outlets. He has dozens of books of poetry, fiction, plays, and translations. He has translated Arabic books into French. He has also received different awards, including State Encouragement Award in 1990 and 1995.



MUHAMMAD GADDAFI MASOUD (Libya)

Translated from Arabic by **Suzan Ibrahim**

Childhood

Childhood

Immersed in the childhood of my mistakes

I cannot distinguish an earthworm

From its mole.

I told the tree; my beloved

Then it bent to the wind

*

I thought the bird was a bullet

I threw myself on the ground

When it flew away.

*

I slept with the clock

So orgasm arrived late

At the Viagra time.

*

I tried to hide behind my shoes

But it betrayed me

Moving aside.

*

I walked crookedly
Throwing shadows with a stone
It bounced back as bullets and bleeding wane moons.

MASOUD (1978) graduated in Theater in 2000. His poems are published in different Arab magazines and newspapers. His first collection of poetry was published in 2007 in Libya. Some of his poems have been translated into English, Spanish, Italian, Albanian, and Chinese.



NATALIE CELIO (Perú)

Poem in Spanish language

Orquídea Negra

En mí vive una orquídea
en la copa del árbol
de mi *locus amoenus*
donde me quedaría
hasta que la muerte decida trepar
y cansarse de mí.
Soy una orquídea que rompe veredas
versos
sustantivos
calles
amores
tu amor
mi sentido de muerte
una pistola en la boca
una puerta que se cierra
mientras lágrimas
mojan la calle.

Así cómo hay una dalia negra
hay una orquídea,
esa que

intensamente
trepa,
que sigue su vida a las 3 a.m.
que aparenta un disfraz
de abeja reina
que se le acaba la vida
a la velocidad de su poesía.
Hay una orquídea
que tengo en mí,
que me despierta cada noche
dándome de beber su insomnio
y los dibujos en el techo de mi cuarto,
que a veces me habla de suicidio,
del mar, de tornamesas
y libros pendientes,
que me sostiene, me impide leer.

Tengo una orquídea atrapada en mis palabras
que me asfixia la garganta.
Por eso canto
buscando coherencia
mientras mis pétalos
no guardan sensatez.
Sí, soy una orquídea negra,
sola,
trepando arriba,
parásito de los árboles
y dueña de los bosques,
esperando que se vayan
las aves migratorias
para jugar con los verbos
o alguna canción olvidada
que me guíe

que me seduzca
que me desnude
dentro de este tenue invierno
en la neblina que me apaga la vida
en el mundo en que duelen
las costumbres,
la tradición, el ser y no ser
donde algunas golondrinas mueren
volviéndose flores.

Jueves o viernes
entre la cama o el sofá
primaveras muertas,
versos mezclados con vodka
televisión en líneas de color
40 años divagando
a saltos
con el sucio juego del mar y la tierra
para ganarle a la vida
con mi vida.

CELIO es poeta, activista cultural, performer y vocalista de la banda de rock limeña Circo Terror. Ha sido fundadora y codirectora de los colectivos de poesía contracultural Los poetas del asfalto, Poética y Funeral poesía. Edita fanzines contraculturales y reseña libros de poesía en varios blogs en línea. Su libro de poesía se publicará próximamente.

Poetry Awakens People against the Abusive Regimes

Rethabile Masilo, in conversation with Sipiwe Nzima

Rethabile Masilo is a Mosotho poet born in Lesotho in 1961. He has gained recognition for his evocative poetry and has published several notable works. Masilo fled Lesotho as a refugee in 1981 and initially moved to the USA, where he continued his studies in biology. In 1987, he relocated to France, where he has lived for over 30 years. Masilo's poetry often explores themes of exile, identity, and memory. He has published four poetry collections: Things that are Silent (2012), Waslap (2015), Letter to Country (2016), and Qualing (2018). His work Waslap received the Glenna Luschei Prize for African Poetry in 2016, and his



poem "Swimming" from this collection won both the Dalro First Prize and the Thomas Pringle Award for Poetry in South African periodicals. In addition to his poetry collections, Masilo has edited anthologies such as To Kingdom Come: Voices against Political Violence and For the Children of Gaza. He remains actively involved in the literary community, frequently participating in international poetry festivals and continuing to write and edit new works.

***Siphiwe Nzima** was born in Zimbabwe but is now a naturalized Mosotho who has lived in Lesotho for over twenty years. She is an activist who uses her poetry and songs to promote change. Her work is an infusion of spoken word, African melodies, and traditional drumbeats and is inspired by contemporary Afro-pop artists.*

In his conversation with Nzima, Masilo reflects on three key questions related to poetry and society.

NZIMA: How is poetry relevant to society?

MASILO: Poetry embraces various artistic expressions, including music, writing, and rap. Although they all fall into the same general category, they are distinct in more ways than one. Poetry in Lesotho, and more specifically praise poetry, is a form of expression that allows the poet to use sound and images to paint the picture of a chief, king, relative, or ancestral figure, often recounting their heroic and/or noble deeds. Sometimes the poem is used to eulogize oneself, the way Lepoqo, or King Moshoeshoe the First, praised his fighting skills and cattle rustling in neighboring chiefdoms. In other words, praise poetry and poetry, in general, are powerful vehicles for storytelling, cultural preservation, and personal expression.

Praise poetry, like other forms of poetry, uses rhythm, metaphor, and symbolism to convey important sentiments and messages. It not only celebrates individuals and their actions but also reinforces social values and historical narratives. It brings people together in the same way that family or totemic poetry serves as a link between the members of a totem

(or seboko). By using poetic devices, poets evoke strong emotional responses, create unforgettable impressions, and inspire their audiences.

Moreover, the poet's voice is often the first to rise from the depths of a prison cell to awaken and inform fellow citizens of the abuses of a particular regime: poetry can be a very effective political bellwether. Its relevance lies in its ability to connect with people personally, transcending time and place. It offers a unique perspective through which we can see and understand the world, providing a glimpse into the human experience. Whether it be the traditional poetry of Lesotho or contemporary forms of poetry found worldwide, poetry remains a timeless art form that continues to evolve and resonate with audiences, demonstrating its enduring importance in human culture.



Poetry is relevant to society because it continually renews itself, reflecting and shaping the culture from which it comes. It mirrors and creates cultural identity, personal expression, and historical continuity, making it an indispensable element of human expression.

NZIMA: *What are your achievements and challenges with your journey with poetry?*

MASILO: I've been lucky enough to write several poetry books and scoop several prizes. We were already writing poetry in high school but rarely read it outside of literature classes. "Letters to Martha" was the first real book of poetry I bought and read from cover to cover several times. It was intoxicating. When, a few years later, my family was attacked by the party in power at the time, and the rebellious elements of that party went wild, killing opponents all over the country, it was poetry that I turned to. It calmed me down. I read it and tried to write it.

At Maryville College in the United States, I submitted a few poems to the school's literary magazine and got my first taste of publishing. I moved to France in 1987, and the Internet quickly flourished. Blogs started to appear, and I decided to run my blog, which I called Poéfrika. It was a big step forward because it allowed me to read and write regularly: read the poems I published and write my own, which I also sometimes featured. That's how my first book, "Things that are silent" came about. I read and wrote poetry whenever I had the opportunity.

Then, I was invited to Poetry Africa, South Africa's poetry festival, where I met, spoke to, and listened to poets from around the world. A few years later, I was invited to the Medellin International Poetry Festival in Colombia. More poets and more poetry reading. I shared the stage with some of my poetry idols. I have so far written five books of poetry and edited numerous anthologies. I am looking forward to publishing a collection of selected poems soon.

NZIMA: *How do you foresee poetry in the future for yourself, your community/country, and internationally?*

MASILO: One of my great hopes is to see poetry revived in Lesotho, from primary school to university. I'd like to see two things happen: weekly reading sessions with a guest poet each time and an annual poetry festival centered on Maseru. By bringing in local and international poets and sending them into schools and villages to interact with the population, the festivals encourage young people to immerse themselves in reading and writing.

I would also be delighted to see the Lesotho government sponsor poetry and organize readings and competitions. I would also like to see the University of Lesotho offer an MFA program in poetry and other art forms. Now that I'm ready to retire, it would be wonderful if I could find a way to be part of the poetry scene in Lesotho, whether teaching or organizing readings and a festival.



NEDELJKO TERZIĆ (Republic of Serbia)

Translated by **Zorica M. Petrović**

Tragic Play of Words

The sky in a nest
The nest in the sky
A hole in the nest
A cloud beside the nest
The nest in the wind
A bird without a nest

TERZIC (1949) was born in Sremska Mitrovica city in Serbia. He is the author of fifty-five books. He published his first book, *Silence with the plains*, in 1975. He has been published in magazines and anthologies in different languages.



OBEDIAH MICHAEL SMITH (Bahamas)

Look Out Mountain

(For M.L.K.)

those fuckers silenced him

who pulled the trigger
of that assassin's rifle there in Memphis

oh, with what force he had begun to preach,
to testify, to sermonize

oh, like so few are able to,
with what force and with what boldness

like when a wave from the deep ocean,
with all its force, reaches the shore,

crashes against a rocky cliff, and splashes, and whitens

Martin Luther King Jr. had broken free,
not just from slavery but from so much else
that militate against the human spirit,
against the humanity in all mankind

he had risen up, was raging against the dying of the light,
against the sun going down

when that bullet pierced his neck, shattered what was whole,
left a gaping hole within his precious life

I was 14 when he died, when he was killed, in Memphis, in 1968

now I am approaching 70 and find it difficult to believe
that after doing all that, after having such an unimaginable impact,
he was just 39, when his ministry, his life was ended

SMITH is the author of 32 books and lives on the island of New Providence in the Bahamas. He has participated in writers' workshops with Lorna Goodison, Earl Lovelace, Grace Nichols, Merle Collins, and Mervyn Morris and in poetry festivals in Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Kenya, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Romania.



OUMAR FAROUK SESAY (Sierra Leone)

I Hope the Waters of the Jordan Remember

I hope the waters of the Jordan remember
When the land was neither Palestine nor Canaan,
When it was just a river, nameless and wild.
Would the waters recall the first lips that kissed her,
The first hands that plunged to wash away
The weariness of herding cattle,
Ploughing fields, tending olive and date trees?

Would the waters remember her birthplace, the southern Levant,
Where she flowed through the West Bank, Gaza, Israel, Jordan,
Syria, Lebanon, before these names had breath?
Would the Jordan recall cleansing the dust from farmers' hands,
Not the blood of brothers, stained by brothers' hands?

I hope the waters remember who named her Jordan—
The Aulon, Ha-Yarden, Ash Shari'ah—
And who first crossed her with barrels of olive oil.
Who waded through her before Elijah, Elisha,
and Joshua reached her banks.

I hope the river recalls the first song sung to celebrate her,
When from river to sea was a beacon,
Going from the Nile to the Euphrates was an untainted dream.

I hope the river remembers her glory days,
When her waters baptized the Savior, Jesus Christ,
When fish from her depths fed Shem, Ham, and Japheth,
When her currents flowed like Abrahamic blood
In the veins of those who now spill blood for land
That once wove cultures and peoples before the trauma of discord—
Dividing siblings of the same womb, filling tombs,
and stealing her memory.

I hope the Jordan remembers before entering the witness box,
Swearing on Torah, Injil, and Quran,
To testify whose land it is, whose fields she watered,
Before they turn her into the Red Sea with the blood of the innocent

SESAY is a Sierra Leonean poet, playwright, and novelist. His work has been featured in numerous anthologies of poetry, including *Lice in the Lion's Mane*, *Songs That Pour the Heart*, *Kalashnikov in the Sun*, and *Afrika Im Gedicht*. His first volume of poems, *Salute to the Remains of a Peasant*, was published in the United States in 2007. He has since published four more collections of poetry: *The Edge of a Cry*, *Broken Metaphor*, *Before the Twisted Rib*, and *400 Years of Servitude*.



PILAR RODRÍGUEZ ARANDA (Mexico)

Decolonizing a Dream

(For Claudia and Toño)

This blue sky, which tastes like immensity
moves away from the clouds extended
like a carpet of cottony foam

I fly in the direction of that place called home
knowing that such an appointment belongs
only to the imagination, appropriating
a geography that is never ours

This blue sky alludes always to one or another
optical illusion of the terrestrial mor(t)al
who requires bursts, lights, and cymbals
to interpret their daily abyss

I look down, and the Earth is absent
There is no sea or mountain in sight
There is no place to call it mine

I do not perceive boundaries which release or contain me
Home then, is what has always been
below coloured skies which smell of intensity
A place where my temporal temple body may float

The blue sky travels while we remain
static, so stubbornly human
Such is the weight that sinks without caring
how light our yearnings are

No sky has a name or owner
The mornings are for birds and afternoons for dogs
Exclamations without signs, without claims of love

From wherever I look at it
From above in flight or lying on the ground
There is my home right there
What I am today in this body

I breath. I breath. I breathe deep and savour
and everything feels intense and immense
Blue sky which tastes and smells
of you and me.

ARANDA is a Mexican writer, video artist, and translator. Her videos have received awards and have been shown at several festivals and museums in Europe and America. In 2021, she was recognized as International Beat Poet and Artist Laureate by the NBPF. An activist, she is a member of the Writing for Peace Advisory Panel and a founding member of 100 TPC in Mexico.



PROLLAS SINDHULIYA (Nepal)

Translated by **Hem Raj Kafle**

The Hermit Planet

The planets do not have roots,
Yet they survive
Standing on the roots of the sky

The roots sprout
Piercing the earth's bosom
Cracking the sky's chest;
They enter the earth and the sky
Wading through
The warmth of the human heart

In the sky's chest
Sprout the roots of the earth,
Into the earth's breast
Sneak the roots of the sky;
And the humans, those who are humans
Carefreely boost the roots' faces
In their faces.

Just that
Planets do not own roots,
Yet they survive
Standing on the roots of the sky.

Roots enter the land
Through water,
Roots commune with the water
Through land;
Planets do not own paths,
Yet they do walk
Treading the path of the sky.

Situating themselves beyond the sky
The planets reign
Over the sky,
Upon the earth,
Over the roots,
And finally, growing overwhelmed,
The planets declare renunciation.

The planets die
The very evening they break their connection
With the roots.

SINDHULIYA has about a dozen works to his credit, including poetry, essays, and novels. He also edits *Kathalika*, a tri-monthly fiction magazine. His poem “Old-age Home in the Countryside” earned a gold medal at the national poetry festival organized by Nepal Academy. His poetry collections include *Janmajaat bahun ko bigyapti* (2074 BS), *Jhanda lai dv paryo vane k hunchha?* (2069 BS), *Chupchap ko antya* (2061 BS), and *Bahira ek muthi tusaro chha* (2053 BS).



RABİA ÇELİK ÇADIRCI (Türkiye)

Translated by **Metin Cengiz**

Copy

In the dark, nothing but darkness is visible
Let that mirror be broken
How can the truth of life be lived?
Like this!
Anger in my bones
Curse in my bones
And tobacco with its smoke
An otherness and loneliness
Reflected in myself
I write poetry
I write poetry in a spirit you don't know
to touch your heart
I'm afraid,
But I'm afraid!
If the touch dismantles the heart?

ÇADIRCI was born in the Bozova district of Şanlı Urfa. She is the author of two poetry books: *Zehrimar* (2019) and *I am Writing to the Sky with a blind letter* (2022), and a short story collection *Night Haired Swallows* (2017). She is a member of the Writers Syndicate of Turkey.



RADHOUANE AJROUDI (Tunisia)

Translated by **Emna Ajroudi**

Luck Curse

We're lucky we were not there
We don't have tear ducts that can this magnificent
 flow of tears and horrors
It's natural that people under war are born with
 wider eyes for joy, suffocation, and weeping
With thicker vocal cords that can bear stronger sound vibrations
And that their outcries can come from under wreckage
That's why the aggressor always starts by burying tears reservoirs
Attacks the vocal cords with incendiary ammunition
And fires its bullets towards mothers' chests and fathers' foreheads
We're lucky we were not there
Born in a UN hospital
Growing up in a temporary refugee camp
In a UN tent
Fed with powdered milk distributed by the UN
Receiving education in a UN school
That, then, puts your name on the UN joblessness list
Until they announce your death on TV
You die alone
With tinges of UN on you
We were not there
We've been here, hardly survived genetic disorders,
 an infection and a dog bite

We're also not comfortable about displaying our pictures
 half-naked in world museums
And dresses embroidered with the flag and name of our country
 strutting in a party,
Where the sound of popping a champagne bottle is like firing a bullet
We also don't want them in our place out of mercy towards them
Just seeing politicians mentioning our suffering in their hustings
Is enough to label us as war hostages
They only have one last request:
A moment of silence for each casualty
We would like to hear the names of the upcoming
 deads recited in the skies.

AJROUDI is a Tunisian poet.



RANDY BARNES (USA)

Day-Glo Disasters from the Torture Pit

He told the truth then suffered a slow demise
in the graveyard museum, a fevered competition
schooled in remnants codes and entanglements
the embassy promised tea while scanning the charts
rendition blowback with denials and accusations
the living hunt for oxygen as the year thins
privacy hustle starved and deterred
no immunity from imagination's down-the-road harm factor
hill country nightmare's bargains for the deprived
object reflex version breaking brains and barriers
origin returns to slack the kinks
fishing for alibis themeless with limps
tightrope dancing big trouble in scattered space
nutritional tweet's stark tales of redemption and revenge
hide your muff. The tendency is taut magic with fur
a counter-world buckled with bankruptcy have you heard
lucky the paradise seekers breed for organs only
anyway you blow it it's sucking a plot hole
Buddha beat seance to raise the dead with bongos banners and beards
a sampling of ambient nectar will ease the pain of your sinking legacy.

BARNES has been writing and publishing for over five decades with both national and international publications. His most recent book, *Tactical Subterfuge: Dispatches 2023*, was released in July 2024 by NewGen Publishers/Human Error Publishing. *Material Evidence: Dispatches 2020 - 2022* will be published in a hardbound, bilingual edition by Independent Literature, Italy.



RANJANA NIRAULA (Nepal)

A Hangover in the Platform

What is that in my evening journey?

I have a hangover—

Nostalgic melancholy,

Unspoken, unknown,

Addicted to endless journeys and never-ending passion.

I have no idea whether

The platform is composed of the crowd, or

The platform is crowded.

I travel a lot

From here to there, and back here;

The platform doesn't move,

But makes the passengers continue running.

Travel and platform!

Maybe life is made up of these nodes.

It keeps moving even if you don't move,

It keeps running even if you don't run.

It's crowded!

The fog is visible in its vicinity,

The sun rises from its head.

Life's engine continues the journey to generations—

There are footsteps of countless travelers.

Should I go or stay back?

It makes no difference to the train.
Even if I never come back again,
The platform is unconcerned.
There are many last passengers,
And, many first travelers.

This passage between fixity and momentum
Make me suffused.
I often think when I travel:
Who will be the last passenger on this platform?
It's not me!
The eternal journey of life has been going on for ages.
Countless travelers have been traveling since ages
On this platform called Earth.

NIRAULA is a poet, essayist and literary organizer. She is the author of a poetry book *The Rhythm of Pain* and an essay collection in Nepali titled *Anubhutiko Abataran*. She is the editor of a news portal www.himalayadiary.com and the Founder of Yashshwi Foundation.



REGINA RAMOS (Uruguay)

Skeleton

Incisive presence in my senses
like an obsession between the green and the green Lorca
although majestic for the undeniable
always fossil
pretending to be far away or foreign
land
air
field and mystery.
The inside and the outside fused into an object.
Ridiculous like censorship
authentic.

Forgotten root of the day's sustain
So many equals with the same possibilities.
A day to live or die.

I always assumed you were
part of everything.
Between colors and perfumes
textures and harvests

people and dilapidated houses
a toss into the corner of time
humble
happy with being the last period of the story.

RAMOS is a poet and professor of Literature. Her three published books, *23 Times Out* (2017), *Señuelo* (2020), *Gastronomía de Olvido* (2022), have received literary awards. She is part of various national and international anthologies of contemporary poetry. She has organized literary workshops, recitals, and festivals.



RITA GUSTAVA PULLI (Finland)

Translated by the poet

Höglint I

A pine tree climbs up a rock ledge,
bending backward at the hit of the wind,
keeps persisting, clings with all his force to the rock.

I sit under the rock ledge on a rocky shore
with an orange-coloured round stone in my hand
and I am looking at a fishing boat.

A fisherman unravels his tangled nets
in front of a red cabin
After he pulled his boat on the shore,

The wind draws furrows on the face,
on the rocks which have lied centuries on the shore.
The swans bend their necks under the water, hoping for the prey;
even in the teeth of the waves, they do not stop hunting.

Among the stony crowd, I look for the traces of Vikings.
An instinct to walk down the rocky shore among trilobites is everlasting.
The boats pass on the border of the water slowly.

PULLI (1971) is a Finnish writer and freelance journalist. She was the vice president and chair of the committee of women writers of Finnish PEN from 2006-2009. She has published twenty books of poetry and fiction. She was editor-in-chief of the poetry magazine *Tuli & Savu* in 2001 and edited an anthology by women writers called *The Insatiable Furnace: Women Writers and Censorship* (2007). Her poetry collection *Life in Lagos* (2009) was published in Russian by Iskender.



ROBERT MADDOX-HARLE (Australia)

Tears of Healing

she walks in the light
shining with enticing serenity
in a place between obscurity and transparency
challenging deceptions and prejudices
restoring cultural memories and histories,
histories ignored
histories deliberately obliterated,
the toxicity of colonialism lingers on.

traveling softly in an ancient land
passing yellow-red sandstone
the warm gibbers hold secrets
secrets unknowable to the ignorant,
sites of conception and creation,
sites of initiation,
sites for tjukurpa connections,
communication portals to wise ancestors.

gubba - gubba
dig it up – cut it down,
the mindless arrogance
defaced our sacred land,
a harsh though gentle land,
now the winds of change are blowing

her tears fill the water holes
billimari – billimari,
reinvigorating the dying earth
washing away the senseless killing,
years of European dominance
gradually exposed and cleansed -
soon the Rainbow Serpent will return.

Notes:

1 – *gubba*: non-Aboriginal person

2 – *Billimari*: plenty water

3 – *gibber*: boulder

4 – *tjukurpa*: Dreamtime, Ancestral Law

MADDOX-HARLE (aka Rob Harle) is an artist, poet, and reviewer. His work is published in journals, anthologies, online reviews, and books, and he has four volumes of his own poetry published: *Scratches & Deeper Wounds* (1996), *Mechanisms of Desire* (2012), *Winds of Infinity* (2016), and *The Blazing Furnace* (2022). He has received the Lifetime Literary Achievement Award 2021 (GIEWEC).



ROZALIA ALEKSANDROVA (Bulgaria)

To Build Eternity

Even if summer does not admit
(and summer is my white shirt).
I dress with the season of hugs.
And a gust of blue sea.
I dress in my most beautiful clothes.
And I pacify Rosinant
like a woman.
I throw away vanity, sadness, and success.
I remain quiet inside.
And I'm whole

Life is an effort for two.
And a tangle of human steps
Fantasy. And moments.
Collected by the higher
delight of our spirit.
Life is
flying time
that has come from heaven.
and the earth
with hopes.

And we, the viewers,
sent here to build
eternity
with our faith.

ALEKSANDROVA is a senior lecturer of Bulgarian language for foreigners at the Medical University-Plovdiv. An author of 11 poetry books, she is the editor and compiler of over 35 literary almanacs, collections, and anthologies. In March 2006, she created a poetic-intellectual association, "Quantum and Friends," for the promotion of quantum poetry. She is also the founder and president of the International Festival of Poetry 'Spirituality Without Borders' which started in 2015.



SANDHYA PAHARI (Nepal)
Translated by **Saraswoti Lamichhane**

My Mother

Time has drawn
uncountable wrinkles on her face
where
among these lines
in her shiny eyes,
I see the most beautiful poem
about life

For me,
to shed some light,
I have watched her burning like a candle
dripping her own life
And sometimes,
drowned in struggles
figuring the way out

In the scarf of her motherhood
I have seen her collecting
the blues and colors of life
Silent joy of sacrifice
yet, lost in the sorrows

Forgetting herself, she lived in me
When I think about her journey
sometimes warming as the sun
and then soothing like the moon
from picks and the depths of her struggle
I find an eternal light emerging in me

Let me spread this light everywhere

PAHARI is a poet, literary presenter, script writer and editor. She has two poetry collections to her credit, *Mrigatrisna ra anya kavitaharu* (2053 BS), and *Gham ka akshyar* (2068 BS). An executive editor of *Loksanskriti*, she has received literary awards, including Devkota Kavya Puraskar, Bhanubhakta Kavya Puraskar, and Vyathit Kavya Puraskar. She is also the secretary of Gunjan, a literary organization of women writers in Nepal.



SARAH THILYKOU (Greece)

Fires

I am the primitive forest
the sigh of the wind in the leaves
a sword of rays
a bear with a heavy footstep
dry branches crackling when it passes
I am
the loneliness of the wolf
the glance of the deer
the pecking of the woodpecker
I am
also the fuse~
setting the forest on fire

THILYKOU was born in Thessaloniki, Greece. She has published five poetry books including *Duet of Islands* (with Maki Starfield), *The World in Three Acts*, *Their Name*, and *Woman in the Garden*. She is also an editor of the literary publication *Nadwah*. A founding member of PEN Greece, she has performed professionally as an actor and singer. Her recent book in Greek is *Antigone in Haiti*.



SLAVICA GADZOVA SVIDERSKA (North Macedonia)

Translated by **Mihajo Sviderski**

They Hurt You, World!

They hurt you, world
with bombs on your chest
with nuclear tests
in the heart of your oceans
with poisonous gases
in the alveoli of your forests
Who should put balm
on the burns from the fires
on your dinosaur skin
But
what are their dim glances
compared to your universe
what are their twenty-four hours
compared to your eras and centuries
what are their bones
for your geological mysteries
they'll return to you
they'll melt into you
but, anyway, they hurt you, world!

What are their demons
compared to your God,
world!

SVIDERSKA (1984) is a poet, literary translator, and university lecturer. She is an author of the poetry books *Infinity* (2001), *Letters* (2012), *Politics of Love* (2015), *Bodies* (2017), *Politics of Fear* (2021), and *Golgotha feminarum*, as well the monographs *Literature and the discourses of power* (2013), *Sense and Absurdity* (2016) and *Literature and political violence* (2018). She teaches Macedonian language at the Faculty of Foreign Languages at the University of Tirana, Albania.



SRINEVAS PRASAD YADAV (Nepal)

Grieving Nation

My heart quakes by the aggression in the border
Tears filled the eyes to see lives shatter
People at the move and the nature beyond all compare,
Now lay barren, blackened, gasping in despair.

The cries of the widows and orphans shook the heaven,
The cause being the greed of the rulers growing intense
Wars are brokered deceitfully by the corrupt politicians,
Self-imposed sins and the death tolls they claim as feats.

In god's name, they partisan to slaughter their kin,
My body is maimed, and my spirit torn.
Women and children lost their share of joy
In the appeasing roars of the foul ploy.

O defiled devils, cease tormenting our youths!
Remember — I once bloomed, serene and strong.
Now fouled and broken, I weep in shame;
Each tear I shed shall wipe your name.

My innocent children were threatened and slain —
The truth buried deep, cloaked in disdain.
Politicians create schemas only to fulfill their interest
But time will respond to it in ways deemed just.

In a new move, I wear Kali's grim disguise,
To end these soulless lives with willing cries.
I will endure no more, this wound runs deep;
I shall rise, rapturous, from this torturous sleep.

YADAV (1983) is an assistant professor of English at Thakur Ram Multiple Campus, Birgunj. He has written poems and plays which are still unpublished. He is pursuing his PhD at Banaras Hindu University on the comparative study of modern Nepali and Indian poetry.



STAN LAFLEUR (Germany)

Translated by **Nicholas Grindell**

Breakfast in Nha Trang

a labourer fell from the scaffold. her
eyes burst like hard-boiled eggs on
impact with the street. I was taking
a sip of coffee with my fruit salad
when I saw her falling like an idea
an unimportant headline that falls
through the entire newspaper. the
burst eyeballs revealed her hidden life:
poverty-shuttered hard work, dogged
belief in the hereafter, getting old with
no plan, like a docile, patient little animal
and now, surrounded by cries, passers-by
drizzled with the honey of the morning air
hefted onto a vehicle, bound for midday

LAFLEUR (1968) has worked as a cross-genre artist: author for stage, radio play and prose, blogger, collagist, poet, essayist, photographer, editor, cyclist, director, travel writer, spoken word performer, translator, illustrator are some of the more prominent keywords that describe his activities. His work currently comprises 17 individual titles, six co-productions, several stage plays, and radio plays, and has been widely published in anthologies and magazines.



SUMINA (Nepal)

Translated by **Keshab Sigdel**

Who Was That?

Of a thousand pains,
It was the resting place,
A confluence
Of seas of tears.

There, travelers would arrive,
Bearing stories of a thousand sorrows,
Upon whom the trust of the poor and downtrodden resided.
Who was that?

Where the victors would come each day,
Planning celebrations of enthusiasm,
Where the wealthy would gather,
Offering their excess wealth,
There, a few lovers would appear,
Seeking the longevity of love.
Who was that?

It never melted
By listening to stories of pain,
It did not grow emotional from expressions of love.
It was not moved, nor did it show any excitement.

It neither laughed nor cried.
It simply listened in silence.
Who was that?

It had no solution
For anyone's tears,
No end to pain,
No power to fulfill desires.
It was itself lifeless.

It had no consciousness,
No heart, no feeling, no perception.
It was just a stone,
A heartless stone.
People would say,
"That was God!"

SUMINA is the pen name of poet and literary writer Sumina Kunwar. Her debut poetry collection, *Bagi stri ko atma katha* (Autobiography of a Rebel Woman), was published in 2023. She regularly contributes poems and articles in national newspapers and magazines.



SU YUN (China)

Dwarf

The giant and dwarf traverse the tunnel
The giant bows his head
As does the dwarf
Though limited in vision
He fancies his stature immeasurable
Lofty beyond compare
Exiting the tunnel
The giant's destination is strikingly clear
Mere bends remain, he muses
The dwarf laments mountains ahead
Both fall into a river's grasp
The giant must raise his head
The dwarf follows suit
The giant seeks salvation
The dwarf gulps water greedily
The giant swims toward the discovered driftwood
While the dwarf...
Becomes forever the beast fed by his arrogance

YUN is a young poet and a member of the Chinese Poetry Society and has been published in different Chinese and foreign newspapers.



TAGHRID BOU MERHI (Lebanon/Brazil)

Poetry is the Language of the Soul

Poetry is the language of the soul,
A way to express what words can't hold.
It's a form of art that touches hearts,
And ignites emotions in every part.

Poets are the ones who weave magic,
With words that are both beautiful and transparent
They paint pictures with their pen,
And take us on journeys again and again.

They see beauty in the mundane,
And turn pain into something humane.
They capture moments that slip away,
And make them immortal in every way.

Poetry is a reflection of life,
A mirror that shows us our strife.
It's a reminder of our humanity,
And a celebration of our diversity.

Poets are the ones who speak the truth,
In a world where lies have become proof.
They challenge norms and break barriers,
And inspire us to be better warriors.

Their words are like a soothing balm,
That heal wounds and bring calm.
They remind us of our worth and power,
And their words are sublime and purposeful message

So let's celebrate poetry and poets today,
For they have so much to say.
Let's listen to their voices with an open heart,
And let their words guide us from the start.

MERHI is a multilingual poet, journalist, and translator living in Brazil. She is the author of two dozen titles and has had her writings published in various literary magazines and anthologies. She also teaches Arabic to non-native speakers.



TAMER ÖNCÜL (Cyprus)

Translated by **Zeki Ali**

(Fall of) The Unpolished Stone Age

As the gleamless CROWN
was rolling in the sky
all breathing came to a halt.
They say “A stone is heavy in its place”
Ours was lighter than a feather.

Noah’s ark got stuck
on the sharp nose of Quarantine.
The trap of fear
İs pulling the people into its cave
under the grunting hill.
The ship is burning with the wood
broken from its shattered spine.
The rest of it is getting gnawed
by the bedbugs
responsible for collapsing the history.

Faint sound of “kırt,” storm,
crackles, deluge,
defeated by the domino effect
the majestic body of the idols...

It was the Unpolished Corona age,
the colours were erased first
and then the tongue became dry...

All the Stones rolled down
from the foothill of the Qaf mountain.

The Corona fell over...

ÖNCÜL was born in 1960 in Nicosia, Cyprus. He was one of the initiators of the Cyprus Turkish Artists and Writers Union. His poems have been translated into several international languages.



TARO HOKKYO (Japan)

The Soul Book

The riverbed, which I can see from my legs down from the rock, keeps its bottom in the form of scales, as if the river itself were a fish, and does not stop changing, which is not immediately apparent when I am here. Yes, here is where change without limit is the norm. The spring sun is dazzling and gently fluttering on the surface of the river, and the thread of bright light sliding on the sand at the bottom of the water repeatedly releases my feelings.

I think of you here, my muse, as this moment in my time, this moment of your understanding, that always returns to you. The tip of a slanted stake touches the surface of the water, which is bobbing up and down in the river, and ripples are created that quickly fade into the current. There is no way that I will not turn to you.

Life is passed down from generation to generation. The flow of life. The stream flows down with momentum and expansiveness. I can comfortably listen to that flow in my ears as your movement, too. We certainly have words, but the life at the bottom of them is still there as it always is.

Between the two shadows of the rocks, fish are moving back and forth again. The fish is in the stream and knows how to follow, resist, and stay in the stream.

HOKKYO (1963) was born in Osaka, Japan. His poems have been published in different literary magazines in Japan, Albania, Bangladesh, Algeria, Greece, Spain, and India. He has received the Rekitei Shinei Award (Japan, 1998) and the Arab Golden Planet Award (2021).



THÓR STEFÁNSSON (Iceland)

Translated by the author and **Sigríður Helga Sverrisdóttir**

Relative Time

To Nikos Kazantzakis

The earth inhales profoundly
and exhales
800 years later
but we are rattling away
and do our tasks
in a hurry
eternally afraid
of missing
the next moment.

STEFÁNSSON (1949) is the author of 19 original poetry books and 19 translations, several of which are anthologies of poets from French-speaking countries. He has also translated Icelandic poetry into French. His books have been published in Arabic, Danish English, French, and Japanese translations, and separate poems in more than 30 languages. He is the redactor of French-Icelandic dictionaries and the author of French Grammar for Icelandic students.



TILSA OTTA (Perú/Mexico)

Poem in Spanish language

El Agua Será La Diosa Principal...

El agua será la diosa principal en el futuro
Y las fuentes serán los templos
Cuando sea muy escasa
Alzaremos nuestros ojos con devoción
Para adorar al Gran Chorro
Potente encarnación de la diosa
Que en su brote incesante nos recuerda
Esas duchas frescas que solíamos darnos en las mañanas
Pequeñas bendiciones que nos procuraba
Cuando de forma íntima y personalizada
Nos libraba unx por unx de toda suciedad
Rompiendo la fuente
Y siempre dentro de nosotrxs
Viva dentro de nosotrxs
Cautiva dentro de nosotrxs
Húmeda dentro de nosotrxs
Que somos
Aproximadamente
65% dios
35% nosotrxs

OTTA es autora de cinco libros de poesía, cuentos, un cómic con Rita Ponce de León, la novela "Los Niños Dorados de la Alquimia Sexual" y un experimento de escritura colectiva en el que 31 poetas comparten un mismo seudónimo. Realiza videos no narrativos y de ficción. Escribe sobre arte e imparte talleres creativos para adultos y niños. Reside en la Ciudad de México.



THAKUR BELBASE (Nepal)

Translated by **Keshab Sigdel**

Colour of the Fire

The night has not slept yet.
This road I walk, carrying the dark,
Is dug and uneven.

The head of Louis the 16th,
Is spinning,
Like the earth.

These mountains have always been
Sleeping nude,
Spinning and smiling, naked.

Leonardo and Picasso
Have, several times, painted
To cover these nudities,
But the sea
Wipes out those colours.

Inscribing the image of the private part,
Araniko's chisel
Has unveiled the nudity
Of bourgeois countenances.

They forced people to applaud them,
And lived nudity in an illusion of grace,
Until the entire world lost its shame.

These deities simply invite flies—
Once prayers are offered,
We take pleasure in making flies sting our wounds.
We died several times in these trivial battles.

These Prometheus
Are running with the fire of colours—
When will they paint this world
And cover the shame?
The sea is simultaneously splashing!

Dragging the sea with their legs—
Till when can they live,
These brushes?
And when can they give birth
To these pangs,
Invisible to human beings!

BELBASE is a Nepali poet and journalist. He has to his credit three anthologies of poems— *Sagarko oripari manharuko samaroha* (2001), *Achanak yo sanjh* (2011), and *Traas ma ishwor* (2013). He has received literary awards, including the Binaya Rawal Memorial Prize 2010, the Devkota Centenary Prize 2011, the National Youth Year Moti Prize 2013, and the Sajha Puraskar 2013. A television journalist based in Kathmandu, he is also an executive board member of the Press Council Nepal.



TONE ŠKRJANEC (Slovenia)

Translated by **Barbara Jurša**

Don't Know, Don't Know

Stay together. Learn the flowers. Go light.

Gary Snyder

I'm writing in lowercase out of sheer joy and laziness.
I'm reading a book of poems,
some kind of manual on sailing,
ropes and ancient skills.
Is it making me better? perhaps,
I don't know, but certainly, I breathe better,
it's easier for me to ride the bike up the slope in the morning.
I remember the days when we mentioned
spruces mostly in connection to slenderness and beauty,
and in this context, we shouldn't forget about
majestic ships with thick ropes
lowered into the sea, overgrown with moss and
families of shells and surrounded by
larger and smaller fish and multitudes of
very tiny things – I'm convincing myself
that this is plankton and not decomposed litter – and everything together
looks like outer space, as I am thus sitting on the edge of a pier,
swinging my legs and observing, between my knees,

this mini cosmos covered with the reflection of the sky.
the dance is, like always, extended into a carnival and
in the evenings, when the music stops,
the lights are turned on; the lights are turned on
and the doors are shut. there comes the time of
weaving infinite thresholds, babbling
about superbeautiful witches, a reflection on
first let yourself be seduced and then
being drawn back home. there's a lot of sea, on all ends,
and a lot of birds. no sails in sight. only the remains
of Eastern cuisine, exotic swinging of hips, a lava of words,
and a small heap of collapsed panna cotta.
become
immaterial, be light.
I'm thinking, but still, I don't know.

ŠKRJANEC (1953) is a poet and translator. His first poetry collection, *The Blues of Swing* (1997), was later followed by eleven books of poetry, the last one titled *Indigo* (2023), two books of selected poems, and in 2024, a book of his collected poems titled *Morning was not part of the plan*. Books of his poetry have been translated and published in Polish, French, English, Bulgarian, Spanish, Croatian, and German language. In 2017 he received the Velenjica Cup of Immortality Award for his outstanding ten-year poetry oeuvre, and in 2018 Jenko Award and Veronika Award for his poetry collection *Breathe*.



TRACIE LARK (Australia/ New Zealand)

Wild

Peer over nimbus-coloured rock ledges
into the blue-black forest at dusk.
See fern leaf jazz hands wave in the
wind that gushes from frosted lips.
Hear the coos and horns of bush birds
nesting in bark hammocks.
Ponder a wandering star
sprinkling across the night.
Feel nocturnal mammals crunch leaves
and snap twigs in their cumbersome waltz to find a feast.
Reach out to touch the wild;
smell the dirt in your hair,
the dank foliage between your toes,
and ancient, floury mountain scents.
Get a lick of untamed nature.
Taste your own filthy domesticity coating the wild.

LARK is an Australian writer, reader, and teacher living in Whangārei, New Zealand. She is studying for a Master in Writing at the University of New England (NSW). Tracie has an array of poetry and fiction published globally.



ÜLKÜ CENGİZ TAŞKIN (Türkiye)

Translated by Oğul Köseoğlu

Inside Me is a Mountain

Inside me is a mountain on which I lean.
In majesty, it's like my father.
Snowstorms never leave its peak;
on its slopes are many colored tulips and roses.
My butterfly, in love with a crocus with a joyful face,
flutters with elation,
flows on like my thoughts,
countless waterfalls.
Inside me remains a mountain, still in its right place,
like the pillaged mountains of my town, for now
downhearted,
a purple grief in their green.
My soul is tired of all I've climbed and seen.
The slopes are enough for me now.

TAŞKIN is an artist and poet from Muğla, Turkey. She produces artwork and poetry. Her first volume of poetry, *Suluk Sarı, Deli Mor*, was published in 2022. Her poems have appeared in Turkish periodicals such as *Üvercinka*, *Gökkuşığı*, *Devrim* daily newspaper, and *Aristoteles* Journal of Philosophy. Her several poems have been published in translation in Azerbaijani and Kyrgyz-language periodicals.



VIACHESLAV KUPRIYANOV (Russia)

Translated by **Francis R. Jones**

Drawing Lesson

A child cannot draw
all the sea
a child cannot draw
all the land
his meridians never converge
his parallels meet
he lets the round earth
slip from its net
of coordinates
and drift up into the sky
his distances
are out of step
frontiers
are beyond him
he believes
mountains should be
no higher than hope
the sea should be
no deeper than sorrow
happiness should be
no further than the earth
the earth

should be
no bigger than
a child's heart

KUPRIYANOV (1939) is a Russian poet. He has thirty-seven books of poetry and translations, including *In Anyone's Tongue* (1993), *Oasis of Time* (2000), *Zeitfernrohr* (2003), *Poetry* (2006), and *Poems for the Hazara* (2014). He was a translation faculty at the Department of Machine Translation and Mathematical Linguistics in 1967. His literary recognitions include the European Literary Prize (Yugoslavia, 1988), Branko Radicevic (Serbia, 2006), Moravian Letter (Serbia, 2008), and Bunin Prize (Moscow, 2010).



YANLAN YU (China/Canada)

The Moon

After such a long way
in the vast universe, they met.
He moved towards her,
and embraced her burning soul.

Only in an instant minute,
they were staring at each other
like never before.
He wanted all of her light in his arms
that left the rest of the world
in darkness.

Yet between them
there was a heaven,
for which he never stopped
rising and burning afterwards.

2024.04.08 (Solar eclipse)

YU was born in Shanghai, China, and currently lives in Canada. She has been featured in several poetry magazines and has received the World Chinese Poetry Outstanding Works Award and the 2023 New York Flushing Poetry Festival Outstanding Works Award.



YEŞİM AġAOĐLU (Turkiye)

Translated by **Nihal Yeđinobalı**

that house

you had a house
the loveliest of homes
sparkling like a diamond
as sun-filled as can be
a big smiling house
then you had flowers also
lovely blooming blossoming flowers
it was there we had loved one another
where we got the best of life
now that house is all messed up
an after_ disaster scene
smothered with plastic flowers everywhere
it can hardly breathe
flood water knee-deep
a wounded house
bleeding
it has become the refuge of birds and weird fish
all kinds of creatures in its rooms

where we had loved one another
mostly in that backroom
now our skeletons are there
just standing that's all

AĞAOĞLU (1966) is a multidisciplinary artist and poet who works with various mediums, especially concentrating on installation, photography, and video. Since 1995, Agaoglu has produced nine poetry books that have made her famous as a female poet in the literature scene of Turkey.



ZADE KUQI (Kosovo)

Night without a Soul

Nothing fills the emptiness of the nightly soul
the tired silence of the eyes
the blue sky
the wind consumes itself
on purple roofs
flowers of different sizes bloomed
the moon went mad for its light
on the water reflection
the nightly soul is looking to buy
a boat with a rower
in future sequences
there will be no reappearance of the past
nor will it rain
on the thoughts of purple roofs
only rodent faces will appear
from the future time of mankind

KUQI is the editor of the Pjeter Bogdani Publishing House. Her poems were published in the First Volume of STEAUA, a cultural magazine edited by the Union of Romanian Writers, and in *Madness: An Anthology of World Poetry* (RedPanda Books, 2023). She writes poetry and prose and has published 13 books. Some of her published books are *No Passsaran* (2017), *Trendafilii i Pasionit* (2017), *Perseveranter* (2019), and *Bima e Oshtimes* (2019).



ZHANG ZHI (China)

The Dark Sun

The scarlet spring water
Coldly flows out of the bamboo flute
Things have no action, but they have lives
Every sound has turned into stone
Which then has turned into the flow of light
The memory of the wind
The specters of trees
And the vacancy of crows

Lo, the powder of dream is dancing against the wind
All that had grown in my heart has died
And that which has not died is not flying before my eyes
I've got no finger-prints of the dead
The sad cry of lovely birds has been sealed up by mountains

The super of humans
Is still lies

ZHI (1965) is a poet, critic and translator. He has a Ph.D. in literature. He is the president of the International Poetry Translation and Research Centre, editor-in-chief of *Rendition of International Poetry Quarterly* (multilingual), and editor-in-chief of the English edition of *the World Poetry Yearbook*. He began to publish his literary and translation works in 1986. Some of his literary works have been translated into more than forty foreign languages.

