

25th Anniversary Issue



Poets from Twenty-Five Countries

I could let you live as you needed to live—Louise Glück

Editor: Hassanal Abdullah

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This Issue Represents
Poets from Twenty-Five Countries

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

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This issue featured poets from the following countries:

Australia, Bangladesh, China, Croatia, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary,
 India, Iraq, Ireland, Israel, Kenya, Macedonia, Mexico, Netherlands, New
 Zealand, Palestine, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Syria, USA, and
 Zimbabwe.

Joan Digby**25 YEARS OF SHABDAGUCHHA**

The twenty-fifth anniversary of *Shabdaguchha* is a hallmark occasion that deserves great celebration. We owe the journal's persistence to the passionate engagement of its editor and publisher, Hassanal Abdullah, whose belief in poetry as a vital force gave him the energy to carry his vision forward into a new age.

During these twenty-five years, the world has undergone monumental change. Nearly at midpoint was a great millennium. Everything we thought of as "modern" in the 20th century became historic remnants of an old order by contrast with the digital environment that in which we now live, learn, explore, and create. Books have certainly felt the impact as libraries and publishers have expanded to books and magazines online and in audio format. How many magazines have come and gone during the years that *Shabdaguchha* has continued to thrive and grow as an inclusive print journal of international poetry? Its success is responsive to this age of expanding poetry authorship (despite decreasing general printed book readership) in a climate more focused more on business and computer models than on poetic forms.

As a poet and mathematician who writes and thinks in two languages and is drawn to cosmological imagery, Abdullah sees clearly the importance of poetry in conveying ideas that are critical to the new global environment. In this respect his belief in poetry shares much with the English Romantic poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley, who considered the poet to be "the unacknowledged legislator of the world." In the same way, Abdullah directly addresses issues of war, racism, climate change, and political corruption that must become the matter of poetry if humanity is to survive. In this spirit, he has given *Shabdaguchha* the purpose of spreading critical ideas through world embracing poetry.

In maintaining print format, the journal makes another statement: that words printed on paper still have meaning and power. In his own poetry, he embraces epic and sonnet form, lyrics and rhyme, which in many cultures still have currency. Thus, the journal is open to poets who write in many verse forms, sometimes transforming them into contemporary expressions. From an anthropological perspective,

বাতাসের সম্রাট

অগ্রসীমাই আমার মানদণ্ড—অন্য কারো মতো নয়,
কাউকে রাখে না কাছাকাছি।
অগ্রসীমাই আমার গান।

আমি ফুলকে চঞ্চল করি
গাছকে নিয়োগ দেই কাজে
আকাশকে টেনে লম্বা করি বৃহৎ বনের মতো,
আমি বাঁচি, ভালবাসি, জন্ম নেই আমারই শব্দের ভেতরে।

আমি প্রজাপতিগুলো একত্রিত করি
সকালের পতাকার নিচে,
ফল চাষ করি,
রাত কাটাই বৃষ্টির সাথে,
মেঘের ভেতরে, তার ধ্বনিময়তায়, আর
সাগরে সাগরে।

আমি নক্ষত্রগুলোকে টেনে আনি,
বেঁধে রেখে দেই,
আর নিজেকে প্রতিষ্ঠা করি
বাতাসের সম্রাট হিসেবে।

Translated into Bengali by Hassanal Abdullah

Syria

Louise Glück

EROS

I had drawn my chair to the hotel window, to watch the rain.

I was in a kind of dream or trance—
in love, and yet
I wanted nothing.

It seemed unnecessary to touch you, to see you again.
I wanted only this:
the room, the chair, the sound of the rain falling,
hour after hour, in the warmth of the spring night.

I needed nothing more; I was utterly sated.
My heart had become small; it took very little to fill it.
I watched the rain falling in heavy sheets over the darkened city—

You were not concerned; I could let you
live as you needed to live.

At dawn the rain abated. I did the things
one does in daylight, I acquitted myself,
but I moved like a sleepwalker.

It was enough and it no longer involved you.
A few days in a strange city.
A conversation, the touch of a hand.
And afterward, I took off my wedding ring.

That was what I wanted: to be naked.

ইরোস

হোটলে সেদিন জানলার কাছাকাছি
চেয়ার টেনে নিয়েছিলাম বৃষ্টি দেখবো বলে।

আমি ছিলাম কিছুটা স্বপ্নাবিষ্ট
কিন্মা মোহগ্রস্থ, ভালবাসায়, তবুও
আমি আশা করিনি কিছুই।

তোমার স্পর্শও অপ্রয়োজনীয়
মনে হয়েছিলো, আবার তোমার সাথে
দেখা হওয়াকেও। কেবল চেয়েছিলাম: একটা কামরা, একটা চেয়ার,
বৃষ্টির শব্দ ঘণ্টার পর ঘণ্টা, উষ্ণ সেই বসন্তের রাতে।

আর কিছুই আমার দরকার ছিলো না:
আমি ছিলাম চূড়ান্তভাবে পরিতৃপ্ত।
আমার হৃদয় ছোটো হয়ে গিয়েছিলো;
অতিসামান্যতেই যাকে পূর্ণ করা যেতো।
আমি দেখছিলাম, বৃষ্টির ভারি ধারাগুলো
অন্ধকার শহরে পড়ছে অবিরাম।
তুমি আমাকে এতোটুকুও পান্ডা দিচ্ছিলে না।
অতএব তোমার মতো করেই আমি তোমাকে থাকতে দিয়েছিলাম।

সকালে বৃষ্টি ধরলো। আমি তাই করেছিলাম, ভোরের আলো ফুটলে
যা যা করতে হয়। ভারমুক্ত হয়েছিলাম,
তবে আমি স্বপ্নাবিষ্ট ঘুমঘোরে হাঁটছিলাম যেনো।

সব কিছুই ঠিকঠাক ছিলো, তোমার অসম্পৃক্ততা ছাড়া।
অচেনা শহরে ক'টা দিন।
একটু আধটু কথাবার্তা, সামান্য হাতের স্পর্শ।
অতঃপর আমি বিয়ের আংটি খুলে ফেলেছিলাম।

চেয়েছিলাম আংটিহীন আঙুলের মতো নগ্ন হতে।

Translated into Bengali by Hassanal Abdullah

USA

Kazimierz Burnat**IGNITE SENSE**

It is not enough to reverse thinking
in another direction
towel wrap dreams
relieved heat
her body
moistened in the clash
with just sketched stimulus

you need to determine nonsense
to later
luminous tentacles forearms
excite the sense of
the arms of Morpheus

চিত্তার প্রজ্জ্বলন

উল্টো করে চিন্তা করাই যথেষ্ট নয়;
দিকের পরিবর্তন—
তোয়ালে পেঁচানো স্বপ্ন
তার দেহে যেমন উত্তাপ
ধরে রাখে, স্পর্শে
জল চুষে নিয়ে;
আরিত উদ্দীপনায়
যার মাঝে তোমাকে অর্থহীনতা
খুঁজে নিতে হয়
পরে কখনও;
আলোকিত আঁকশি জড়ানো হাত
উত্তেজনাকর অনুভূতি এনে দেয়
মর্ফিয়াসের বাহুতে।

Translated into Bengali by Hassanal Abdullah

Poland

Amir Or

IN THE DARKROOM

1
In a darkroom I play hide and seek with shadows,
sink into secret places in the stairs,
turn into shadow.

2
In the darkroom three witches sit on the wardrobe.
I turn on the light, and they become transparent.
Years pass.
They're still there, waiting.

3
In the darkroom I develop a picture
of a naked girl.
Slowly she emerges on paper.
I draw her out,
dry her of developer,
cover her with a coat.

4
In the darkroom, in a Japanese séance,
I conjure the spirit of the she-fox.
“Are you married?” I ask.
“Not at the moment,” she replies.
Interlacing our tails, we walk
into the mirror.

5
In the darkroom I discover
a door leading to
a darkroom.

6
In the darkroom, by dim candlelight
I bless my devotees.
Cross-legged, they're crowded on the floor,

heads bent.
Who among you will hand me over?

7

In the darkroom wild knockings
rise from the page.
The words “door” and “locked” are shaken, torn.
Another Amir bursts into the room, chasing me away
to another darkroom.

8

In the darkroom I shoot
the man in the mirror.
To his shattered face I say:
“there’s not enough room for both of us in this window.”

9

In the darkroom, behind a locked door,
already three days without sleep,
drinking black coffee from a black cup,
I’m writing in a black notebook:
“In the darkroom, behind a locked door,
already three days without sleep...”

10

In the darkroom I separate from my image,
dream my face inwards.
In a mirror of darkness, I reveal light–
and see.

She-fox spirit: In Japanese folklore the female fox spirit takes the form of a beautiful girl and tempts men in order to take over their body or soul.

Israel

Serge Pey

TIME FOR ASSASSINS

When a poem
cannot even
save death
it’s time for assassins

Death is dead
We no longer find it
in the tombs
upturned
of the bistros

Some
dedicate themselves
to find
it by dying twice
and confuse
this effort
with resurrection

The café is dead
The table is dead
The bread is dead
The telefilm of the dead
applauds other death
who run behind balls

We know it
the dead vote
for the dead

When death has had enough
of death we must console it
by giving it black sugar
as we do it to a dog

We bark

By living
we only find
the dead who no longer attend us
& that's what we call death

The tombs are cradles
constructed by babies
in cement

Our only way of being
is killing
It's time for assassins
The unique virtue of man
is that he knows
that a sack doesn't stand up straight
when empty

WATER AND FIRE

And besides
even if we admit
that spurting water on fire
is a crime against fire
and that an overflowing torrent
is as guilty
as a river
that invades the sea
and even that a drop of water
is as guilty
as a flood
Even if we admit
that all of this is true
the fact remains that we can
never know what
happened exactly
and that this is neither failure
nor error of the system of water
against fire
for the search

of truth is just
simply not the ends of water
against fire
even if the drop
makes a bee drink
next to fire

Translated from French by Yasser Elhariry

France

Hatif Janabi

NATALIA'S HOUSE

Do we meet at the mountain's top
or the bottom of the valley in the swamp, flooded with rotteness,
where the Cross has been bleeding for centuries?

The fear quarrels with us, endless voids
of dreams, suspicions, the thick trees, and the vague visions.

Is your dwelling of wood or a mute stone?
It doesn't hear us today
though it is of the forehead-sweat, bleeding over the ceramics,
the windows, and the doors which you used to sweep.
What a hell of a drag invading the memory,
where the dark intentions prevail,
and the brain bleeds!

Natalia: Behold your ancient neighbor,
holding the birds from its wings under a burning sky!

The hopeless say that God had closed His eyes, ambivalent,
can't see the bats of darkness, leaving their caves to light.
But they came out of the people's pockets.
Bewep the Deity's impotency,
perhaps you will abandon their feats.

Natalia:
You still invoke the joy in the spirits,
restoring the essence of the truth to man,
the kind glance to the cricket, the nightingale,
and to your home guarded by the winds.
How wide were the dreams when Cergy and Vasil
longed to see you, at the outskirts of old Europe,
with the yearning of a weaned infant for the breast!

How often we reminded you of the troubled country.
This is the Iraq that was, and it is still,
tattered, bare headed, with its hanging tongue,

seeking the angels of mercy, like you vainly did,
in their prisons between the earth and the sky.

Neither MacDonald nor the Gas can nourish the breastfeeding.
They don't eat meet or suckle gas.

Natalia: Don't despair.
We are all tangled in the barbarians' trash,
about whom the East and the West had repeatedly informed us
in languages known only to the dead.
They don't look at us, their guns glower at our eyes.
We will fill their muzzles with roses and extinguish the fire with tears.
You will grasp salvation's redolence only after a while.

Remember what Schevchenko said:
"When I die, put my ashes on the tomb,
among the vast prairies of pretty Ukraine?"

Natalia: I am still unaware of my parents' remains
or the ruins of Babylon?
Every second I drown in the swamp of desertion,
while you are closer than the coronary artery to the roots.

The Dnieper and the Euphrates will go on bleeding.

No matter how much we differ in vision and the horror's source,
we are twins in carrying the torch of life and love.
It is the same if we meet at the top of the mountain
or the valley's base.

Translated from Arabic by Kahtan Mandwee

Iraq

Diti Ronen**TOO MUCH TO ASK**

To wake up at dawn in my own bed
 not a prison cot
 to the sound of birds tweeting
 not the sound of sirens
 to brush my teeth
 without hearing the news
 to open the window
 without seeing men in uniforms
 to let the light of day enter the room
 and not soldiers pounding on my door
 to shower
 without anyone taking all the water
 to eat a crust of bread and fig
 without being starved
 to go to work
 without standing at checkpoints or turnstiles
 to work in my field
 without having my father's land stolen from me
 to return home at the end of the day
 without fear of insult or humiliation
 to sit down with my family
 without worrying about curfew or darkness
 and to sleep an entire night
 without having to protect my kids with my own body
 from bullets or missiles
 I long for a simple life.

THEN THERE WAS A WAR

And letters arrived
 or not.
 I stood in the doorway and waited.
 It was the longest winter ever
 it was the coldest winter ever
 and no letters arrived.

I stood in the doorway and waited
 And you did not come back.
 Then you came back as if
 You had not come back.
 I stood in the doorway and waited.

IN WHICH THE HOUSE READIES ITSELF

The house is ready for battle.
 Its walls have widened and thickened
 to protect its occupants.
 It rises from its lair
 takes a breath
 hermetically seals the windows
 and through fictitious crenels
 loads the senses
 to protect its borders.
 One by one it gathers us up
 together with bottled water
 and canned food.
 It doesn't give up. Isn't scared.
 Does not hesitate or shirk.
 No one will get away.
 It dons a layer of steel
 mumbling words of prayer
 kissing amulets
 to ensure salvation.
 If a bomb falls on the house right now
 the house will protect those inside it.
 No one will get away; you will find us
 among the fractured ruins
 clutching each other
 our internal organs shattered
 our faces pulverized and very protected.

Translated from Hebrew by Joanna Chen

Israel

Marwan Makhoul

LOVE MEANS . . .

To love means chasing a feather
till your shadow's out of breath: take me with you
slowly as falling snow you chase her, unaware of yourself,
you forget who you were and your family.

To love means being a child
drawing a terracotta figurine in the dust.
Trees do not stand still before you; they raise you,
comb your hair towards the sunrise to parade you
as good tidings for the fruit.

To love means seeing the fingers of the butterfly
knitting your life anew at thirty
dancing for joy at you
midwife of luck.

To love means paying attention to tiny details
to know your heart that beats
on your chest with the concerto of beginnings
as you seek refuge in the crescendo.

To love means hanging without fuss
from tender mercies
as the dew flows over your cheeks and you wake
from night a lilac that makes the morning green.

To love means you're romantic: you persuade the wadi
that the sea had dried up
yet it will become a river if it flows through you.
You teach mountains reverence before your emotional
vastness
soaring akin to sublimity
and the impossible.

To love means growing younger
and the fear of death dying

you ride the wave, not to escape but to rock your body, to sniff
what others do not sniff: water's relationship with water,
the sugar grains of creation.

To love means there is a beloved
and that you are a fool:
she makes you jealous of herself, and fuming
if one of her lips touches the other, to become,
if you share her with her lips, a god without partner
in the firmament of kisses.

Palestine

Sudeep Sen

STILL LIFE, STILLED

Three fluorescent tube lights irregularly flutter, the fan static. The ceiling's wall paint, fading nonuniformly. The cabin is anaesthetic, its aroma chloroform-soaked. I feel like a beached platypus, pinned down by needles and spring-ended pins of varied sizes. A lit candle-end moxa infused in Chinese herbs fumigate and heats my spine. The sheets are white—their covering and upholstery, hospital-blue. Everything seems uneven, asymmetrical, dizzy and unstable. The centre of gravity has shifted, temporarily disappeared. When you spend long hours on your back, you can contemplate completing a PhD on a 'still life' canvas such as this. Blood is your paint, mucous its resin, skin-grafts its letters aggregating syntax to sense, the dim walls your tabula rasa and imagination. I stare at the ceiling endlessly; nothing changes for days and weeks on end. I feel weightless, buoyant as a rudderless craft, like a slow-descending frayed-feather in windless space. My canvas space too is unpredictable, uneven. Metaphors falteringly articulate breath-pauses that defy scansion. My body temperature rises to excessive heat-levels all of a sudden, and then shoots down to a freezing sea of sweat the next minute. Act of breathing is at a premium now. Even the purified air in this controlled space does not help. I check my phone's weather App, my city's AQI is at an alarmingly poisonous level—its thermal mapping on the retina display showing two charred lung-like patches amid a sea of bloated red. Climate change outside and inside compete in insidious ways. It's incarnadine intent, ruby like, glamorous, unreliable. Trust is an archaic word these days, only vacuous cosmetic affirmations on social media is valid currency—and even that fluctuates, undulating with stock-market's numeric indices. What is the definition of life, or a 'still life' now? Stillbirth? Still. Stilled.

India

Christopher Okemwa

THE AMAZING NIGHT

Sometimes I get so amazed when I watch the night
The way stars drop in on the dark bowl of the sky
And the moon clad in its burnished silver-streaked white
Peeps and hides behind sheep of clouds like a spy

I look at this one sheet of black—a mass of darkness
I find it a mystery that suffuses me with fear and horror
From its dark hollow space, its endless sea of emptiness
Could easily spring out a demon, an imp or a giant ogre

Or something simply wicked, malevolent and evil
That could devour me, consume or take away my soul
So I always peep thru the window to be sure no such devil
Spills into the room in its formidable amorphous prowl

I find it hard to imagine how the night comes to be:
The ominous silence that keeps vigil in every mini space
The opaque black that blinds eyes so that they don't see
Its black furs and grey paints that make an intricate maze

The night is like a churning sea, an agitating ocean
I always see it spilling through the window on the wall
Submerging me in my bedroom in its furious motion
Suffocating and choking me up, leaving dead my soul

I get so scared to imagine that someone, out of ill intention
Might one night get access to the giant clock of the universe
Then hold the gadget from moving, against Deity's creation
Shall we live in darkness forever?—what hell shall be for us!

PURGATORIUS IGNIS

Hanging in this burning emptiness of retribution, between
Death and the final dwelling--in this condition of existence—
I move stealthily like a cat, perpetually on the balls of his

In this blasted cold by an unrepentant, shivering

Kafka, who could not even make good
The one life he was granted, while I,
Steeped in my own ennui endlessly experience
Birth, death and rebirth in many foreign tongues.

Kafka, you left with so many of my desires
Unfulfilled, so here I rise, again and again,
Putting brakes on my bestiality
Like you killed your own desires
And became human. How late was it
Before you realized the greatness
Of transforming into an insect?
Look up now, to the old clock tower and count –

How many writers need to suffer and die
To bring one insect to life.

4.

I cannot see the numbers. Right now,
Women and men become numerals on the Charles Bridge.
With no choice, I push my way through and descend
To a nondescript punt waiting for me,
A boat fated to drown fate, time after time.
A man waits for me there
Dressed in a long coat like Kafka.
He waits for me, eating chickpeas;
The fucker hasn't rid himself of his old habits.

Am I not going there
Just to tell him that the remains of his snack
Should be thrown into the garbage bin?
Have I forgotten why I need to meet someone?
Who am I supposed to meet, and for what reason?

Or, am I the man in the Kafka coat
And while I say that I am moving along,
Am I actually standing in one place
Waiting for the punt under the Charles Bridge,

While possibly, a man in a Kafka coat
Is in the boat, slowly approaching me
As I stand here eating chickpeas?
And, as I wait for the man to approach
The breeze blows dry shells from my hand
And you say, don't you even know
How to eat chickpeas? This means that
You clearly think I am some kind of arsehole,
So let me tell you a story:
Not one that you should not repeat
Nor one that no one knows, but
Metamorphosis means the transformation
Of a city into an installation in an exhibition hall,
A human artwork to be regarded by insects,
An insect artwork to be regarded by humans,
Where a dim light metamorphosed over the installation
Is the one that bathes the poet's composition
In a soft, linguistic, biographical sheen
While the city, as it is now
Is the detritus of screaming, blood-soaked geography
Or of raw imperialism that, like a half-done omelette
Is left to sizzle in the frying pan of history.

. . . and one more thing:
Kafka prefers to drink English tea over coffee.
There below the Grand Clock
He waits to see which will turn into piss first,
My coffee or his tea?
We have a wager, Kafka and I—
While the one who pisses first wins, the other
Will have to run, micturating all over Prague.
It was ten past ten when I met him
And all around his coat rose the angel-dust
Of Prague's magic realism.

5.

From where I stand
I can see the impending demise of Kafka's language.
What can you see from where you stand?
Can you see the tale of Gregor Samsa

Or only the ongoing, unending story of Franz Kafka?

6.

Wandering through the Josefov quarter,
I get this feeling of people screaming loudly in my ear;
Those who but moments ago walked arm in arm
Now lunge for each other's throats;
Soft voices are now shrieks,
Russet-tiled homes now collapse into debris.
I run, and the whole city gives chase
As if I am the alpha and the omega of their destruction.
Inside Café Franz Kafka, I see people drink Coca-Cola
Instead of coffee. I turn to leave and cups, saucers,
Chairs, tables, coffee machines rattle and bump
And grumble loudly: fucking Coke . . .

Slowly, without fuss, I transform into a two-inch cockroach.
Divining with my antenna, I reach the Praha railway station
Even there, these bloody Coke bottles block my path.

As I turn back, Kafka accosts me, whispers in my ear
That scuttling along these cobbled streets with me,
For the first time, he realised Prague was sexy.

Fuck! I never once paid heed to the city's sexiness.
Praha, I'll be back!

Translated from Marathi by Mustansir Dalvi

India

Anna Keiko

EXISTENCE AND NON-EXISTENCE

—*My daily life*

The sky wakes up, the grass sleeps
A new day is like a rolling washing machine
fire rice, cooking pot
The kitchen, existing and non-existent forms
home, a bed, ruin gesture
A door without a wall, the study
There are countless people communicating in the pages of the book

you fill out a blank page
Replacement of unpredictable interlayers
For a poem, in a dream
Talk to Muses about Confucius, Yi Yin, King Wu
Talk about Ulysses, Aristotle
When talking about Qu Yuan and Du Fu, there is a flash in the east

I used to live in red tape
Some indelible memories, like movies
Hanging on the wall, evoking the desire to die
resuscitated like a snuffed cigarette butt
Rekindling Faith and Love in a Forest

therefore
I sew buttons on an old shirt
Find your way out of the world for absurd islands
Find a place for a body-intimate creek
Water the truth for grown vegetables
Pray for apple trees, rice fields, miscanthus

A SNOWY DAY

Only when I open the window do
I realize that there are snowflakes outside
A few minutes ago, some people had faces like the sun
In an instant, it was dark on the ground, and thick fog covered the sky
Right now, the book is opened at the Brueghel page

A "Hunter in the Snow" jumps out of the real scene
depicting the desolate scenery that my words can't evoke
Several hunters walk in the empty field
Are they looking for prey or for themselves?
What is the meaning behind the painting?
While I face the distant era
There are no surging mountain torrents and emotional waves
Snow once piled up on my naked body
It doesn't matter whether icy consciousness can wake up or not.
Hollowed out night eyes are still happy
But when pain has no tears
laughter becomes a ritual
The demons of snow and the sun are no longer different from fantasy

Translated from Chinese by Andreas Weiland

China

Katarzyna Georgiou

WHAT IF I WOULD HAVE...

If I were the wind,
I would lift human concerns
into the not so much of oblivion.

If I were thundering a storm,
I'd clear up the doubts
blocking the road to the destination.

I wish it could rain
washing away the guilt
born of confident naivety.

If the sun could light up the skies,
I would be a ray of hope
the struggles of a wanderer.

If I become a silent night,
I would cover with a kiss of darkness
the paths of human hatred.

But I am only a woman, dichotomic by nature—
so I am at odds with myself.
I can only change myself as I travel the road
expanding the spectrum of consciousness.

Just this much and enough,
to finally see it
this is better and more friendly
the face of the world.

Poland

Carolyn Wright

THE COSMIC SCHOLAR

Secretary to the thoughts of others,
I grow, each night, to be the tenured scholar
of all galaxies. I gaze out
at the ancient history of stars—lights,
years old and centuries apart.
Anywhere we are, my text tells me,
is the center of a universe
on the exhale. Stars hurtle out
from every other star, like trees felled
by a meteor. They speed up
as they go—locomotives on an incline
or small boys sneaking out of school to fish.
If we caught up, the novas we've chased
would be old suns, ulcered with spots. . .
By now I'm lost: the Horsehead Nebula's nostrils
quiver, I race Ferraris around Saturn's rings.
Before sleep, I shift down-spectrum—
blue to gold to red--and gather, soberly,
my scattered notes. Assembling once again
a face, like a chart of the periodic
elements, I leave it for the morning,
—the ditto sheets and cold white stares—
and follow the receding pulsars of the heart,
the stellar vapors reeling as I go. . .

HEART'S JOURNEY

How close you are: a small voice
through the Transatlantic cable,
the lights of a city
glowing on night clouds,
a planet shrunk to a fly-speck
at the wrong end of a telescope.
A mountain range away,

clouds begin the long gallop into storm.
The trees, arched bridges
tremble on the ponds. The wind
flaps open, its most decrepit wing.
There's a place out there
I've got to get to—
would you keep one light on,
one door open to admit my thoughts?
What I'll bring: birds' throats
for your silence, one flower
to meet the solitude.

Seattle, USA

Manu Dash

MY JAPANESE FRIEND

The pensile sun
On the western horizon
Conspired with
The wind, sand and beach
At Puri.

His apparition as a
Doppelganger,
A valise in his waist
And a come-hither look.

Drew me away from my
Quest for the immaculate breasts
Of a fisherwoman.

Was is a false start
That greeting was replied to
By a stiletto and a nation's
Glory repeated the music
Of the evening sea
That witnessed my bloodstained palm?

Your departing look
Compelled me to cloak the fact
In the womb of time:
You had stabbed me once.

AN INVITATION

Tonight, the moon won't visit
Our terrace gardens.

I invite you to
Join me for a cup of black coffee.

That would be the perfect
Place and time
I swear,
To make you the perfect assassin.

Translated from Odia by the author

Odisha, India

Satya Mohanty

MEET ME IN STORY BOOKS

My empty stomach howls
Because someone didn't pay my wage,
Someone charged me double or stole my money
I was rained under batons.
These events are not troubling enough;
They are not pillage or plunder.

I am not a rodent, a carrier of plague,
Invisible, furtive and unknowable,
But a human with the wrong grime of history.

My astute steps side steps the police,
They transfer my persecuted parts everyday
From place to place; but from distance
You can't see my swollen legs and peeling soles.

You will not know me, you will not meet me.
If you meet me, I would look like one of you
It is better to meet me in story books.

THE ATLAS OF TWO WORLDS

Walking back to her hearth and home
With five children in tow,
On a silken road
Rough as contour map.

The police swooped down from somewhere,
Beat her like soiled cloth
With lingering stains
That requires extra effort to clean.

She cried; her children cowered.
Onlookers stared on without trying to stop,
Their hunger and weal on feet

Rolled into a charade of discipline.

She got up and gathered her children,
Wiping tears with the diaphanous fringe.
Broken, she started walking back
Through the cartography of cruelty.

II

The walk never seemed to end,
The soles sloughing off
Like snakeskin,
Hunger refusing to go away,
Like stubborn topography,
She slumped like a torn map.

She cried, howled in protestation.
Some people came, took note and argued,
Someone lifted her,
Straightening her disappeared legs,
Someone put a food packet in her hand,
Through tears she saw
The alphabets of humanity.
She smiled; it shone in sunlight.

Odisha, India

Kira Wuck

NOCTURNAL ANIMAL

I ironed out the creases in my legs
lived with you
like a heartbeat

If we didn't set the bar too high
we were reasonably happy
we ate carrots every other day to stay healthy
compensating for the lack of daylight

when everyone was asleep you got out Dostoyevsky and
whisky

at night in a tiny bathroom, we developed photographs
on our knees, as though saying a prayer
the images gave you exactly enough distance
to be able to care for people

FURRY ANIMALS

Animals move around the city in coats
sometimes they greet each other like old friends
who didn't know what to do with themselves
"mustn't grumble," the rabbit says to the racoon
"and I never get tired"

as death clings to me I keep spirits up

and walk from murder scene
to murder scene
I watch on tv as
someone points a gun at the cameraman

keep on watching until the last light has gone from the room
discover a trail of blood dripping from the fur
and trickling down my neck

SPACE SHUTTLE

I used to go to the animal shelter quite often
barking looked like rays of light through the bars
the longing to be put on a lead

what depressed me even more
were the women casually coming off their sunbeds
close to breaking under their skin
a sickly feeling of shame welled up

I also watched the way mothers who weren't my own
waited for their daughters
Laika who was sent into space and never came back

Netherlands

Gabriel Rosenstock

IN ALGHERO

I'm in Alghero, Sardinia.
We're in a restaurant
seated by a lobster tank.
The lobster looks ancient—
It has seen many lives, I am sure.
It stirs. Begins to perform
some kind of impossible yoga.
Cruelly (I thought)
the pot which captures all its brothers and sisters
is there with it in the tank.
Its yoga seems to be an attempt to unite
with the salty sea-world of its birth
and when it turns around,
I see that its pincers
are taped. It levitates,
comes close to the glass
and utters a mantra that would take Patanjali
an eternity to decipher.

Ireland

Sitawa Namwalie

MY MOTHER VOICE

My mother gave me her voice.
I took it, anglicized it, changed its cadence,
spinning it far away from what she knew as hers.
At first, she admired my new voice.
She showed it off to her friends.
She would use it to elevate her lineage.
So, she thought.
Or, so she thought, until it began to strike her,
how much like my voice I had become.
Too late.
Too late, she realized I was not the daughter she needed.
I, was not, the daughter, she needed.
Especially in times when the wilderness threatened to engulf her.
When her world fell down, crumbled around her,
leaving her mouth full of the taste of dry words.
In those moments, she needed a daughter who echoed life back at her.
A daughter who knew the stories grandmothers breathe in the dark.
Instead, she had this one.
This one, sounding as alien as church bells ringing in the desert.
This one, whose round vowels float and vanish at the slightest puff of
wind.
This one.
My mother gave me her voice and I lost it.

Kenya

John Kinsella

GRAPHOLOGY PARAPH 6: 'NEGATIVE PROMPT WEIGHTS'

When kids tried to enforce 'opposite day'
so they could say every hateful, harmful
thing they could conjure out of the info
massed via interface with the world, I
hid in language that didn't have antonyms.

Almost sixty now, and warding-off tech
that destroys the biosphere, I look into
a face of AI and don't recognise myself.
But I am in there, distanced. It's a consequence
of 'me'. I've been occupied and reconstituted.
I tell this to the ring-necked parrots

I talk with most days: they have a range
of calls you can't know unless you exchange
something with them and don't take without
giving back. I discuss further, and they say,
across their full vocal range: can you
imagine a better outcome than flight,

than finding the same trees waiting
for you at nesting seasons? I don't say
yes when I mean no, I don't say no
when I mean yes. They add: 'median
human' is weighted by vested interests.

GRAPHOLOGY PARAPH 7

Due to the steepness of the hill
and the likelihood that a fire truck
going down a firebreak wouldn't be
able to climb back out, the ranger
has designated a new firebreak
configuration — the driveway
as primary break, and then a spur
and loop around the old arena

so trucks can move in and out
without risk of being trapped
by any fire they might be fighting.

As part of this grammar, the 'old
firebreak' along the top boundary
is either to be left to grow out
or, if we wish to retain, which we do,
then a barrier and 'no entry' sign
placed at its access point to prevent
a catastrophe happening under
dire circumstances.

Affected
by the heat as I document this,
having only just come inside
after constructing the barrier,
I am more sure than I will be later
that a discursive poem might act
as both preventative and footnote
to a hope that none of this becomes
necessary, or that our preparations
aren't caution thrown to the wind.

Australia

Turzi István

THE VOICE

To other poets

Through the starry nights sharp as specters
streaks a voice over the stagnant gold of whisperings:
„show me the poets you read,
and I'll tell you who you are.”
Show me the poets you respect
and I'll tell you who you were.
I see our grandfather's gaunt figures
during times that seemed unbearable
when parks withered and we only had our books
to tide us over the winter.
Show me the poets you rally around,
and I'll tell you what will become of you.”

TWO MINUTES OF HATRED

Flash of light, clock starts.
Not a single facial muscle moves;
concentration with no pretentions.
Obey the rules of the game.
The goal of persecution is persecution.
The goal of torture is torture.
The goal's the same; so's the target.
The movement's perpendicular
to the intention.
The look in their eyes undermined.
You can't be
blonde and blue-eyed
here.
Your past's clear, your logic's different,
by your own rules do you live
and do you think,
so for the time being
it's all over for you.

Things
in the majority of cases
come full circle.
Your escape route now blocked
by your decaying conscience.
Should be damned to some place.
Some place very far.
Oh,
how sin
makes the heart shrivel up.

FRIENDSHIP

I'm scared.
Ever since the trees entered my room to warm up,
it's been a tight squeeze.
Suspiciously they blinked at me: just what kind
of creature am I?
Why all the legs, hands, why the gleaming
eyes? And why isn't my hair green?
They tasted my dinner, pulled up their noses,
flicked through my books, took pity on me.
The bed gave them a cramp in their hips, while
the postman's motorbike scared them to death.
They came to like Mozart though. Each afternoon
the cheery sound of the flute welcomed me home.
Till the blossoming buds did our friendship last.
This morning the lumberjack arrived,
and by means of a greeting he cut
a nice part out of my past.
The trees clung together.

Hungary

Mathura**SIENA**

This poem begins with rainfall in the narrow streets
 everything is first a dream
 once, there was only a hillock here
 drowned in sunlight and a sea of cypresses
 but now it rains
 on pale and patient paths of stone
 ever polished by the feet of visitors
 is there a meaning to it
 archways walls of houses
 the chime of bells and an echo of praises
 rain that keeps on falling
 on Piazza del Campo
 wetting my hair
 the only word for it is serenity
 or business
 hasn't heaven always been
 a place for those
 who are ready to come falling down again

DARK GREEN

By the edge of a ragged coastline,
 a frozen track of roedeer prints,
 the forest like a sea ablaze,
 this autumn merciless as much as it is
 perfect, your own care—or unconcern—
 little more than the sky ripped open,
 with the tattered white of leaving swans,
 yet itself grey, darker green later;
 there it is that you return to,
 see the sea grow raging,
 light has almost ceased to be.

Translated from Estonian by Ilmar Lehtpere and Matt Howard

Estonia

Moncho Iglesias Míguez**THE DESERT**

The desert was already blooming
 and a bunch of soldiers sprouted
 and changed the weather
 The emergency horns were heard
 and the pollen filled the civilians with allergies
 and life changed
 We traded justice for environment
 actions for denials
 demonstrations for continents
 and violence for vaccines
 We learnt to add and to undo the equations
 to eat according to the race
 and *to be or not to be* according to the economy
 We covered the glasses of the fair eyes
 We applied seats for understanding
 and we shouted from the sidelines in the neighbourhoods
 Teachers grew toxic in chlorophyll
 and the printing press demanded paper
 and experiences the voices
 Balloons and kites filled the sky and speakers were left with leftovers
 And we grew walls and other genres
 and we dressed the conflicts in acronyms
 and we got tired of sweeping
 and we colonized new experiences
 and we violated the landscapes for the museums
 and we guarded the flavours
 and after cleaning that much we rubbed our hands
 and we lost the years
 and the deserts
 and even the soldiers
 and then
 the desert was already blooming

Translated from Galician by the poet

Spain

Ben Mazer

THE GHOST

Why must you pace like that? You'll wreck the place
and I won't clean it this time. You'll have to.
This is the ghost then, which we always joked
in bed would come to haunt one of us. You—
you haven't really got it all together
and seem to have fallen into a deep funk
between the Coleridge and the china.
When I left here you said you had a plan,
you'd reached a new conception of your work,
but it's amazing how things never change.
The furniture is still where I arranged it.
I see us squirming in that one small room,
you working just as when I last rolled over.
Why is it we could never get along?
You always said you'd change if I would change.
But nothing has changed. Does the island change?
Stop pulling faces. Quit your carrying on
like Lon Chaney Sr. or John Barrymore—
wanting your orange juice served to you just so
or quiet while you look over the mail.
Granted you loved me more than anyone.

Massachusetts, USA

Nina Cassian

DOORS

The open doors reveal fruit,
water stains, cats, and leaves.
The wide-open doors reveal other doors,
raindrops, pebbles, and a pair
of greenish slippers with long ears.
The open doors face other open doors
bridged by a danger zone
—whoever tried to cross it
has never reached the other side—
then fruit and water stains again
and the sun's slow-moving snail reflects,
crawls over these creatures swallowed
by the void between two open doors.
And we insist on seeing the endless
row of pebbles, raindrops, cats, and slippers . . .

Translated from Romanian by Eva Feiler

Romania

Mark Pirie

HER MOTHER'S MAGIC

The winter sun could be hot
on her face.
She would avoid the garden
in wintertime.

Outside, she would go
if things warmed up enough
to reimagine the summer flowers
her mother had planted.

She knew her mother must
work some magic.
because in wintertime
things were all different.

She sat in the winter sun
and tried to work her magic
and wondered why the flowers
had all disappeared.

The sun grew colder with the day,
the girl returned inside,
and asked her Mum why
her magic no longer worked.

New Zealand

Lidija Dimkovska

THE WATCH

When he was six
he wrote to Santa
asking him for a wristwatch.
After his father's death
he found the letter
among the old photos.

Santa had brought him
an encyclopedia with a faded cover
listing sixty questions about time.

He had forgotten about that letter,
but for years kept collecting
wristwatches.
His children play with them –
a watch repairer's, a jeweler's,
antiques shop.

He doesn't get mad. He winds them up,
polishes them, puts them in their boxes,
counts them and listens to their ticking.

And every night he wakes with a start
at the moment when their hands stop
to pay respects to the watch which isn't there.

Suitcases

In the little chest under my mother's bed,
brought from the village to the town,
fish-shaped dishes lay dormant for years,
each individually wrapped in newspaper,
a wedding gift, the souvenir of a society.
Their gills had gone pale, their sea grey,
when we opened the little chest
they had already eaten each other up.

In the small suitcase under my uncle's bed,
 which I used to open a hundred times a day,
 all the wars from all times were mixed up together
 in the notes taken during history lectures.
 Folded in two, in two columns,
 they charged out of the trenches
 towards what would later become a state,
 a political suitcase of oblivion.

In the suitcase under my bed in the student dorm
 I kept the Liubinka typewriter
 on which the Mongolian girls, my roommates,
 wrote their love letters in Cyrillic,
 and before sending them across three seas,
 kept them for nine nights in vodka,
 in bottles with sheep guts,
 the umbilical cord to their motherland.

The suitcases in Auschwitz, separated by glass
 from the reach of visitors,
 confiscated at the very entrance
 under the arch saying Arbeit Macht Frei,
 are heavy with the emptiness in which
 the weight of life, the lightness of death sit hunched over.
 The Holocaust was a one-way ticket from a world which vanished
 in the false bottom of existence.

Life is a puff of wind among people,
 leaving their suitcases in its wake.
 In them knowledge gathers dust,
 memory—mold, oblivion—stench.
 Every suitcase is an open story,
 every story is a closed suitcase.
 And you don't need to leave in order to stay,
 or stay to have already left.

Translated from Macedonian by Ljubica Arsovska and Patricia Marsh

Macedonia

Aleš Mustar

REQUIEM FOR ALAN KURDI

Her brain overcrowded
 with other school subjects
 in place of ethics,
 Ema, safe in my arms,
 closed her eyes for one more night.
 You closed them too, dear Alan,
 and in your case it was forever,
 in the embrace of cold water.
 All by yourself you fell asleep for eternity on the Aegean shore,
 by the sea which every year swarms with too many European tourists
 who lock their doors twice upon return in fear of intruders.
 May the sand be light to you, Alan,
 now you are free to build castles in the air.
 May God, Allah,
 Krishna, Vishnu, Shiva protect you.
 The news of your death flooded the world,
 social networks,
 yellow, red, and black newspapers alike.
 Millions clicked like on your death on Facebook.
 Alan, guardians of the borders do not read
 holy books, let alone belle letters,
 neither Aesop's Fables nor Andersen's Fairy Tales,
 only the laws, colder than the water that washed you ashore.
 May your guardian angel accompany you to eternity then.
 Sleep, dear Alan,
 rest in peace,
 may your death knock on the consciousness of stiff bureaucrats,
 may it dry the palms of those who use tear gas against your peers,
 may it get stuck in the throats of politicians during work dinners.
 Sleep, dear Alan,
 heavens are for the brave,
 while I swallow the lump in my throat
 and read The Little Match Girl to Emma for goodnight.

MIDDLE AGE

Never again smuggling jeans and bubble gum
nor the feeling of joy at seeing New Year's adorn the grey city.
milk in plastic bags
black and white cartoons,

calls in public phone booths,
greetings in doctor's waiting rooms.
No more parties on the shore with guitar and syrupy songs
city bus tokens
queues in front of kiosks selling French fries,
corner stores.
No more friendly barkeepers
who let you run a tab,
no more giro accounts
and excuses that the bank is closed.
Only heaps of plastic
and the world like a darkened
smart phone screen.

Translated from Slovenian by Manja Maksimovič

Slovenia

Lana Derkač

CELESTIAL CAMERA

If you don't fancy these clouds, we will roll out
another sky with a more cheerful design, says Davor,
the ever-inspired salesman.
The sky itself sells the curtains, just before the storm
offering a seventy percent discount on all samples from the old
collection.
The river below is all shiny and swelling,
even though the sky refuses to take care of it for three days already.
Gurgling in the hotel pipes continues
its incomprehensible confession,
so I turn off the faucet preventing it from becoming the twin
of that magnificent river outside.

Depression is a sapling found in someone's
family history.
Depression is a sapling left in a glass before the rain
so I warn Davor not to pity it for its languor,
reminding him not to succumb to its requests to change the water.
I say, your history speaks Czech, German,
Hungarian and Hurricane languages.
All of them sometimes express archetypal fury.

With each bolt of lightning the room lights up with celestial flash.
I'm guessing what will the journalist, having put down his camera,
ask the Earth.

THE HOTEL

The road sign for the hotel points to the cemetery.
Surely, the dead in the restaurant are rattling plates,
opening doors and windows in the rooms as they used to draft.
One of them watches the curtain as it blows over his shirt
lying there all crumpled on the chair.
It offers itself to the room like a zeppelin,
so the dead man contemplates booking an afternoon trip.

Observing closely all the comings and goings, the other one mistakes
the curtain for a supervisor.

If a dead man can feel fury,
he negates the dignity of silence, yelling at the room
that in his vision turns into a Nazi camp.

Into Eichmann's lips as he continues to gesticulate
so passionately that the parquet floor below him is about to come
alive.

The third deceased stretches his hands towards the window,
quite joyfully as the draft tries to draw the fabric closer to him.

It belongs to the room; it will be its wedding gown.
Finally, he is sure: it's time that he confined himself
to this room never to leave the hotel for the dead.

Translated from Croatian by Damir Šodan

Croatia

Naznin Seamon

EVIDENCE

They ask to show my bruises, but
I have none!

My eyes were never swollen,
no one ever punched me on my face
or tortured leaving me half dead,
no mark of strangulation on my slender but irritated throat.

I have no discoloration on my fairly light skin,
never I went on hunger to be a bag of bones;
no lost limbs or injury to mend,
nor do I look withered at all.

They refuse to have reliance on my assertion,
as if I am the transgressor and
give me abominable looks waiting to tear me apart
like the cackle of hungry hyena.

Destitute, I give a blank stare...

How can I show my wounded heart,
captivated thoughts, wrecked desires,
shattered dreams, unredeemed hopes,
suppressed wills, silenced voice and on and on?

No one left any evidence except my zealous memory
of austerity and deserted struggle.

RIDING A BIKE

I don't remember those details.

I know for sure I held that finger and learned to walk.

You sat with me in Ahad Ali Park while I cried, and
at times tore the grass with sheer pleasure and put them in
my mouth to prove Freud's Pleasure.

You came running, took out the wet grass from my mouth and
held me in your arms.

You taught me how to walk on the street—neither to look up or down
constantly, instead, showed me to enlarge my vision.

You taught me how to ride a bike holding the bar.

New York, USA

Dirk-Uwe Becker

VANISHING LINE

I follow the swan-song
of the mountain ash
try to keep up
with the course of the river
mirrors revolve on the water
between misty boats
the fugue adapts masterly to
the early light—it mixes
nightly color with our thoughts
games we never played
and dreams we never dreamed
and lives we never lived
finally once in a long time
the root-wood of the years has dissolved
the skin in the mirror shine mutates to
a lake-eye, whom we each
blow a kiss in the oar-silence
and we let the hair fall free
from the bathing caps
in the wake of our
vanishing line
from now

CLOUDS DRUNKEN SKY

look at the sky
the clouds
so drunk
and the moon
that shakes her up
to knock the dreams
out of her folds
look on earth
the trail of the rain
worm and other animals

Shabdaguchha

how they pair-hoofed
and meander
around the tree bark
falling leaf by leaf
rearing and fornicating
look in yourself
like in the veins
the blood rushes
like the synapses
vibrate and swing
to the blow of the hammer
on the anvil
the world does not come to rest

DAY AND NIGHT

I loved you in Russow
day and night
So bright your eyes
when the sun's rays themselves
break in your tears
Like ebony your hair
that on the pillow
catches my dreams
Under the tree
behind the pond
I refreshed myself
at the sweetness
your plump apples
which—curious
on the skill of my fingers—
tumbled out of your basket
The moon borrowed the night clouds
to cover our nakedness
We did it exhausted
like the frogs
and jumped into the water

Germany

Violeta Tančeva-Zlateva

IS THERE NO ROOM FOR US YET AGAIN?

It is too narrow, the deck of the world,
to gather us all.
Some will have to stay at the dock,
with the bindles on their shoulders
full of hastily packed garments,
just enough to cover their nudity.
They will remain empty-handed,
with a lump in their throat—
and they will always be last in everything
even when they are the first to arrive.
They will be yet again brushed aside,
as if mere dregs swung away
by the great broom of the system
to make way
for the ones entitled to board.

And there the ship departs:
rowdy passengers
screaming children
rattling plates
freshly brewed coffee
and a bottle of champagne here and there
tossed in rage into the ocean.

Left ashore
the unworthy still wonders—
should they wave their goodbyes
or just curse out in humiliation?

Translated from Macedonian by Paulina Jamakova-Pejkova

Macedonia

Tendai Mwanaka

UP TO NOW

Up to now he knows you still haven't figured out why he
avoided you after the prayers that day, why he left you
with your Auntie, why he left for home, alone even
though it was raining that evening.

Up to now he knows you haven't figured out that he was
so scared of you, of what you now represented to him, of
how he felt for you.

He had never been a child, all his life and, for him to
now trust you completely the way he did was to part
away with bits of himself that he never wanted to part
with, in order to make room for you.

The balance of this loss and whatever of his reach, still
left in him, was like the colour of absence to him.

Zimbabwe

Toby Davidson

TODAY'S SIMILE

Like a stolen car
on the Harbour Bridge
– ablaze, upturned
in Cretaceous
morning mist –
disaster captures
us sweet
with a twist
as part of
its larger
creaking arc.

RESURFACING, NEWPORT

A whale's worth of whitewater
spikes in the glare
of the bay, won't fade
but drifts—on my
life—through
the teeth of the wind

into quarrelling shades
 robed in sparks,
trailing nothing new.

Propelled to the end,
they are assumed
 and are comprised
to compromise
and peel away from
their own suspension

back to the tonnes
and fins constellated
to upset the overblown sun.

Australia

Roberto Mendoza Ayala

THE WAR

We are left behind
like ruined castles.
In ruins we dwell.

One night a brick falls,
another day a crack splits a dome,
the lugubrious echoes
boom around the ramshackle furniture
of our unfinished and looted library.

We watch the coming threat,
the gray wave that will burst
into our jolly parties
undermining the columns,
muddying the portraits
and tarnishing the luster of our family crest.

From the top of our battlements, worried,
we realize that down there
children play
at making war on us.

Translated from Spanish by Arthur Gatti and the poet

Mexico

Daniel Sklar

WHAT I WANT

"No streets and no language."

—*Sam Shepard*

Sometimes I want to be
out of touch.

I do not want to

know what is going on.

I do not want information

and I do not want to give
information.

I don't want information.

I want relationships.

I do not want to believe
one thing.

There are too many
things to believe.

I don't want to be more
productive.

I want to walk across

Spain, to come to some

little town where

men drink small

glasses of beer at a café

and sweat.

I MEAN IT

"There is a world elsewhere."

—*Shakespeare*

I could live in
another country,

in a hut or
something.

I don't need

to write

in a powerful

nation.

Shabdaguchha

I don't believe

in powerful

nations anyway.

I could live in

Honduras, say,

live on beans and
rice.

I could live in

another country

with a bicycle,

notebook,

and drum.

I could live in

a country that

has no army

where I could

write nothing,

play a drum,

ride a bicycle

places to write

nothing and

send the things

I don't write

nowhere.

Massachusetts, USA

Sergio Inestrosa

THERESA'S GRANDFATHER

There comes Don Porfirio, Teresa's grandfather,
he arrives carrying on his back
a life full of bitterness and various torments.

Grandpa is a slightly naive old man
and he hauls his meager possessions on an old wagon
that he will have to leave this side of the border,
no matter how much it hurts him to do it.

Teresa's grandfather, comes from distant lands
and he brings with him all his family,
they walk together with other families as part of a caravan,
for thus they feel accompanied in their common misfortune.

Everyone has come this far, supporting each other,
together pursuing the dream of a better life;
but they are still missing the worst, the truly complicated thing:
to cross this border that arbitrarily divides the Sonoran desert
into two very different nations.

Maybe, with a little bit of luck and with God's help,
when they pass to the other side
they will be able to obtain the bread that their own land denies them.

Translated from Spanish by the poet

Massachusetts, USA

Hassanal Abdullah

SWATANTRA SONNET 209

The world is my village. You, its lone neighborhood,
surrounded by mountains and seas, loving big trees,
tasting winding waves and caressing earth surface,
bloom out in the South Pole at every dazzling dawn.
I receive your rare touch as you create a Yod.
The surging rays emerge through our eternal breeze;
we are engulfed and re-freshened from the same race.

Piles of snow lie around the ribs of the North Pole,
the sunlight continues to bring warmth in the East.
Doves and Robins entice lots of internal joy.
Calendars of the East and West depending on
each other, observe our hill-houses crack and scroll
down the gloomy desire, sky spins its mystic mist;
under aeon's shade, human harmonies employ.

SWATANTRA SONNET 212

Thereafter, we come together one by one and
sit in a circle with our boys and girls. Eating
on a Chinese porcelain, we offer stories
of our native land, somewhat emotional, more
mystical thoughts seize us; beside, we understand,
our uncles' tables, busy clinking and chatting,
they are eating in joy, expressing their glories.

We talk about Iraq—Afghanistan, Syria—
various bloodsheds across Gaza and West Bank
seize conversation. How a brother sucks brother's
blood in fury, and how much do people adore
this suppressing power? Meeting all criteria,
breaking other peoples' necks, we, who love to rank
higher, are dreadful animals all together.

Translated from Bengali by the poet

Bangladesh

সম্পাদকের জার্নাল/ EDITOR'S JOURNAL

১.

কাল বিকেলে পাশ্চাত্যে চুকেছিলাম কিছু খাবার কিনতে। দরজায় দেখি সদ্য হাইস্কুল গ্রাজুয়েশন করা আমার ছাত্র, জন, বাবা ও ভাইবোনদের নিয়ে দাঁড়ানো। অনুষ্ঠান থেকে বেরিয়ে ওখানে এসেছে, গায়ে তখনও গ্রাজুয়েশন গাউন জড়ানো। আমিও অনুষ্ঠান থেকে বেরিয়ে বেশ ক্ষুধা অনুভব করায় গাড়ির দিকে না এগিয়ে আগে পাশ্চাত্যে চুকেছিলাম। জনের বাবা এগিয়ে এসে করমর্দন করলেন। ভাইবোন দুটোও সৌহার্দ্য বিনিময় করলো। আমি খাবারের অর্ডার দিতে গিয়ে জিজ্ঞেস করলাম তাদের জন্যে কিছু কিনবো কিনা! জন জানালো তারা ইতিমধ্যে অর্ডার করেছে। কাউন্টারের ভেতর থেকে একজন বলে উঠলেন, "হাই মিস্টার আব্দুল্লাহ! কেমন আছেন?" আমি লক্ষ্য করে দেখলাম মেয়েটি আমার পুরোনো ছাত্রী, ওমু! আমি বললাম, "তুমি এখানে কাজ করো?" ওমু বললো, "জী, আমি এখানে পার্টটাইম চাকরি করি।" বুঝলাম কলেজে পড়ার ফাঁকে ওমু এই কাজ করছে। হেসে বললাম, "এখন যেখানেই যাই আমার দু'একজন ছাত্রকে পেয়ে যাই!" দীর্ঘদিন শিক্ষকতা করার এই একটা সুবিধা, দেশের সব জায়গায়ই আমার ছাত্রছাত্রী ছড়িয়ে গেছে। একবার ইয়াংকি স্টেডিয়ামে গিয়ে পেয়ে যাই আমার এক ছাত্রকে। একবার রেড লাইটে গাড়ি থামাতে অন্য লেনে একটি কনভার্টেবল দামি কার থেকে এক ছাত্র হ্যালো বলে জিজ্ঞেস করলো, "আমাকে চিনতে পেরেছেন।" সাবওয়ে ট্রেনে একাধিকবার সামনে এসে দাঁড়িয়েছে কতো কতো প্রাক্তন ছাত্র। একবার ভিডে'র মাঝে একজন আমাকে সিট ছেড়ে দিলে আমি তার মুখের দিকে তাকালাম। পূর্ণাঙ্গ এক ভদ্রলোক আমাকে বললেন, "আপনি সম্ভবত আমাকে ভুলে গেছেন, আমি লাগুয়ার্ডিয়া কলেজে আপনার ছাত্র ছিলাম।" সেই চাকরি ছেড়ে আমি হাইস্কুলে চলে এসেছি ২৬ বছর আগে। অতএব ওই ছাত্র নিজে থেকে পরিচয় না দিলে স্বভাবতই আমার তাকে চেনার কথা নয়। খাবারের অর্ডার দিতে গেলে জনের বাবা এগিয়ে এলেন আমার বিল দিতে। আমি তাঁকে ধন্যবাদ জানিয়ে নিজেই বিল পরিশোধ করলাম। মনে মনে ভাবলাম, এতোকাল শিক্ষকতা করে কয়েক হাজার ছাত্রছাত্রীকে কলেজ জীবনের জন্যে তৈরি করে দিতে পেরেছি, তাদেরকে জীবনের মহাসড়কে তুলে দিতে পেরেছি, এটাই বা কম কিসের। আমি আমার ছাত্রছাত্রীদের জন্যে গর্ব বোধ করি! ওদের সফলতার মাঝে দেখতে পাই নিজের সফলতা।

২.

আমন্ত্রণ পেলাম পোল্যান্ডে অনুষ্ঠিতব্য বিশতম আন্তর্জাতিক কবিতা উৎসব, "পোয়েট উইদাউট বর্ডারস," থেকে। এ উৎসব হবে নভেম্বরে। পোলিশ রাইটার্স ইউনিয়নের প্রেসিডেন্ট কবি কাজিমেরোজ বুরনাত স্বাক্ষরিত এ আমন্ত্রণ গ্রহণ করতে পেরে আমি আনন্দিত। কবিকে অসংখ্য ধন্যবাদ আমাকে পুনরায় কবিতার এই আন্তর্জাতিক ফোরামে দাওয়াত করার জন্যে। উল্লেখ্য, আমি ২০১৯ সালে এই অনুষ্ঠানে প্রথমবারের মতো যোগ দিয়েছিলাম। ২০২১ সালে যাই পোজন্য়ান শহরে অনুষ্ঠিত কবি দানুতা বারতোজ আয়োজিত রাইটার্স ইউনিয়নের অন্য একটি আন্তর্জাতিক কবিতা উৎসবে। গত বছর ১৯তম কবিতা উৎসবে আমন্ত্রণ পেয়েও একই সময়ে ভারতের অডিশা আন্তর্জাতিক সাহিত্য উৎসবে যোগ দেবার কারণে যেতে পারিনি। এ বছর আবারও আন্তর্জাতিক বলয়ের বন্ধুদের সাথে দেখা

হবে। দেখা হবে আমার প্রিয় পোলিশ কবিবন্ধুদের সাথে। ধন্যবাদ, কবি কাজিমেরোজ বুরনাত!

৩.

ম্যাস পোয়েট ফেস্টিভাল আমাকে ১৫০ ডলারের একটি চেক পাঠিয়েছে, গত মাসে কবিতা উৎসবে অংশ নেবার সম্মানী স্বরূপ। 'শব্দগুচ্ছ' পত্রিকার ২৫ বছর উদযাপন করার সুযোগ করে দেবার পরেও এমন সম্মানির ব্যবস্থা করায় আয়োজকদের ধন্যবাদ জানাই। উল্লেখ্য, কবিতা লিখে আমি প্রথম সম্মানি পেয়েছিলাম ঢাকা থেকে, সেই ১৯৮৯ সালে। সেটা ছিলো পঞ্চাশ টাকা। আমাকে আলোচক হিসেবে একটি কাব্য পাঠের অনুষ্ঠানে ডেকেছিলো উত্তরার একটি শিশু সংগঠন। ফেরার পথে অবাধ করে দিয়ে সংগঠনের সভাপতি ৫০ টাকার একটি নোট আমার বুক পকেটে ঢুকিয়ে দিয়েছিলেন। তারপর একটি দৈনিকে জ্ঞান-বিজ্ঞান বিষয়ে কলাম লিখে প্রতি সপ্তাহে ২০০ টাকা করে পেতাম। সেইসব দুর্দিনে টাকাগুলো আমার খুব কাজে লেগেছিলো। নিউইয়র্কে আসার পর আমার পরিচয় হয় কবি রবার্ট ডানের সাথে। তিনি কবিতার আসরগুলোতে আমাকে ডাকা শুরু করেন। অনুষ্ঠান শেষে মাথার টুপি খুলে তিনি উপস্থিত সবার সামনে ধরতেন। যে টাকা পাওয়া যেতো তার অর্ধেক আমাকে দিতেন। ওদিকে কবি স্ট্যানলি বারকান দু'বার কবিতা পাঠের ব্যবস্থা করেন ব্রডওয়ের একটি রেস্টুরেন্টে। কবিতার বিনিময়ে খাবার। আমার সুযোগ ছিলো তিনজন অতিথি সাথে নেবার। আশি ডলার প্লেট। কবিতা পড়ে সীমনকে সাথে নিয়ে তখনকার সেই নৈশভোজের কথা ভোলার নয়। একবার লিংকন সেন্টার আউট ডোরে কবিতা পড়ে চারশ' ডলারের চেক পেয়েছিলাম। সেও ছিলো অন্যরকম স্মৃতি। লং আইল্যান্ড ইউনিভার্সিটিতে আমি ও সীমন কবিতা পড়ার দাওয়াত পাই দুইবার। কবি ও অধ্যাপক জোন ডিগবি ছিলেন রাইটার সেন্টারের পরিচালক। আমাদের তিনশ ডলার করে সম্মানি দেয়া হয়েছিলো। এমটি ভিলে কবিতা পড়ার স্মৃতি আজও জ্বলজ্বল করছে। আমাকে বলা হলো, একটি কাগজে প্রত্যেক বইয়ের নামের পাশে দাম লিখে দিতে। কবিতা পাঠ শেষে ফিরে এসে দেখি বুড়িতে একটিও বই নেই। পড়ে আছে টাকাগুলো। কতো কতো ভেন্যুতে কবিতা পড়েছি। ভিলেজে, হারলেমে, নিউজার্সির বেশ কয়েকটি বইয়ের দোকানে, ব্রুকলিনে, কুইন্সের নানা জায়গায়, কুইন্স প্রেসিডেন্টের আয়োজনে, কুইন্স লাইব্রেরি সিস্টেমের আয়োজনে। একবার ওয়াইট প্লেন-এ দুইঘণ্টার একটি অনুষ্ঠান ছিলো: পুরো একঘণ্টা ধরে কবিতা পড়লাম, তারপর প্রশ্নোত্তর পর্ব। ভিলেজে বহুদিন ধরে দাওয়াত করছেন কবি মাইক গ্রেভস। ওদিকে বাওয়ারি পোয়েট ক্লাবের বব হোলম্যানের দু'শ ডলারের সম্মানীর কথা একবার লিখেছি। টীন, গ্রীস, পোল্যান্ড ও ভারতের আন্তর্জাতিক কবিতা উৎসবে যোগ দিয়ে কতো ভাবে সম্মানিত হয়েছি। এগারো ভাষায় কবিতা অনুবাদ, ইংরেজি, চাইনিজ ও পোলিশ ভাষায় অনূদিত বই, ও দুটি আন্তর্জাতিক কবিতা পুরস্কার: হোমার মেডেল (২০১৬) ক্লেমেন্স জেনেসকি আন্তর্জাতিক কবিতা পুরস্কার (২০২১)। নিউইয়র্ক কালচারাল এফেয়ারস থেকে তিন হাজার ডলারের অনুবাদ গ্রান্ট (২০১৯)। মেক্সিকান কবিতা উৎসবে অনলাইনে যুক্ত হওয়া। এসব অন্যরকম স্মৃতি। কবিতা নিয়ে আছি, কবিতার পথে আছি।

8.

ছেলেকে বললাম, চল নাটক দেখে আসি। তখনও সে অনলাইনে অফিস করছিলো। ইয়োরোপ থেকে ফিরে এসে সপ্তাহখানেক হলো কাজে যোগ দিয়েছে। শুক্রবারে সরাসরি অফিসে যেতে হয়নি। ওদিকে আমিও বিশাল যানজট ঠেলে আমার কর্মস্থল হারলেম থেকে বাসায় ফিরেছি। কিছুক্ষণের ভেতর সীমনও ফিরে এলেন। ছেলে একবাক্যে যেহেতু রাজি হয়ে গেলো, আমার মনে হলো ওর মা-ও রাজি হবেন। ছেলে ও মায়ের এই অদ্ভুত মিল দেখে আমি মাঝে মাঝে যে অবাক হই না তা নয়। সকালেই ফেসবুকে নাট্যকার মাসুম রেজার পোস্টটি চোখে পড়েছিলো। ওদিকে নাট্যশিল্পী শিরিন বকুলও তাঁর ওয়ালে একই পোস্ট দিয়েছেন। যেহেতু ভেনুটা আমার বাড়ির কাছাকাছি তাই তখনই সিদ্ধান্ত নিয়েছিলাম যে দেখতে যাবো। কিন্তু ভাবিনি যে সেটা সপরিবারে উপভোগ করবো। অতএব আমরা যথা সময়ে জ্যামাইকা আর্ট সেন্টারে উপস্থিত হয়ে গেলাম। নাটকটির নাম *পেডুলাম*, একজন মানুষের নিঃসঙ্গ জীবনের কাহিনি। একা একা ঘুরে ঘুরে তার বেড়ে ওঠা, কর্ম, প্রেমপড়া, স্ত্রীর ছেড়ে চলে যাওয়া, সন্তানদের বিদেশে পাড়ি জমানো—এইসবের মাঝে কিছু সফল স্মৃতি উঁকি দেয়। হারিয়ে যাওয়া সময় ফিরে আসে, আবার চলে যায়। ধর্মের অসাপ্রত্যয় হাস্যরসের ভেতর দিয়ে ফুটে ওঠে। মহাজনের অত্যাচারও থাকে। কিছু কিছু দার্শনিক সফলতা ধরা দেয়। মাত্র দিনটি চরিত্র দিয়ে একটি নাটক ফুটিয়ে তোলা খুব একটা সহজ কাজ নয়। বলতেই হবে যে এখানে পূর্ব-পশ্চিমের কিছু যোগাযোগও লক্ষ্য করা যায়।

নিউইয়র্কে জন্ম নেয়া ও এখানে বেড়ে ওঠা আমার ছেলে, একক, যখন নিখুঁত অভিনয় খুঁজতে চায়, আমি তখন গল্পের বেড়ে ওঠা ও পরিসমাপ্তির কোথাও কোথাও নিজের জীবনকে মিলিয়ে নেবার প্রয়াস পাই। আর সীমন খোঁজেন এ দুটোর সমন্বয়। অভিনন্দন মাসুম রেজা। অভিনন্দন খায়রুল ইসলাম পাখি, শিরিন বকুল ও শীতের ধর! নিউইয়র্ক এখন বাংলা নাটকের মৌসুম!

৬.

গ্রীস থেকে প্রকাশিত আন্তর্জাতিক কবিতা সংকলন 'অডিসি'তে ছাপা হলো আমার তিনটি কবিতা। গ্রীক ভাষায় কবিতাগুলো অনুবাদ ও সংকলন সম্পাদনা করেছেন কবি মারিয়া মিস্ট্রিয়াটি। এই সংকলনে বিশ্বের বিভিন্ন দেশের তেত্রিশজন কবির কবিতা ছাপা হয়। সংকলনটি প্রকাশ পেয়েছে মে মাসের ২২ তারিখ থেকে ২৭ তারিখ পর্যন্ত অনুষ্ঠিতব্য তৃতীয় গ্রীক আন্তর্জাতিক কবিতা উৎসব উপলক্ষে। আমন্ত্রণ পেয়েও কর্মক্ষেত্র থেকে ছুটি না পাওয়ায় আমি এই উৎসবে যোগ দিতে না পারায় দুঃখ প্রকাশ করছি। উল্লেখ্য ২০১৯ সালে আমি দ্বিতীয় আন্তর্জাতিক কবিতা উৎসবে যোগ দিয়েছিলাম। ধন্যবাদ কবি মারিয়া মিস্ট্রিয়াটি! ইতিপূর্বে আমার কবিতা চীন, কোরিয়া, পোল্যান্ড, যুক্তরাষ্ট্র ও ভারত থেকে প্রকাশিত ডজনখানেক আন্তর্জাতিক এন্থোলজিতে প্রকাশ পেয়েছে।

— হাসানআল আব্দুল্লাহ

SHABDANEWS: শব্দসংবাদ

মার্কিন মূল ধারার কবিতা উৎসবে 'শব্দগুচ্ছ'-র ২৫

মার্কিন মূল ধারার কবিতা উৎসব "ম্যাস পেয়েটি ফেস্টিভল"-এ কবিতা পত্রিকা 'শব্দগুচ্ছ'-র ২৫ বছরপূর্তি উপলক্ষে বিশেষ অনুষ্ঠান। আগামী মে মাসের প্রথম সপ্তাহে (৫মে-৭মে) বস্টনের অদূরে সেলেম শহরে অনুষ্ঠিতব্য ম্যাস পেয়েটি ফেস্টিভালের দ্বিতীয় দিন শনিবার সকাল দশটা থেকে ১১টা পর্যন্ত বিশেষ অন্তর্জাতিক কবিতা পাঠের আসর "'শব্দগুচ্ছ'-র ২৫ বছর: বহুভাষিক কবিতাপাঠ" আয়োজন করা হয়েছে। অনুষ্ঠানটি পরিচালনা করবেন 'শব্দগুচ্ছ' সম্পাদক হাসানআল আব্দুল্লাহ। কবিতা পড়বেন ইসরাইলি কবি আমির অর (ভার্সুয়াল), মার্কিন কবি ক্রিস্টিন ডোল ও জোন ডিগবি, তুরস্কের কবি সুলতান ক্যাটো, ও বাঙালি-আমেরিকান কবি নাজনীন সীমন। উল্লেখ্য 'শব্দগুচ্ছ' গত ২৫ বছর ধরে প্রায় ৬০ দেশের পাঁচ শতাধিক কবির কবিতা প্রকাশ করেছেন। অচিরেই প্রকাশ পাবে এই পত্রিকায় এ যাবত প্রকাশিত কবিতা থেকে বাছাই করে "ওয়াল্ড পোয়েটি অ্যাঙ্কোলজি।"

শব্দগুচ্ছ'র ২৫ বছরপূর্তিতে ঢাকায় সাহিত্যিকদের মিলনমেলা

শব্দগুচ্ছ'র ২৫ বছরপূর্তি উপলক্ষে অনুষ্ঠিত হয়েছে 'শব্দগুচ্ছ'র পঁচিশ বছর ও বাংলা কবিতার বিশ্বায়ন' এবং কবিতা পাঠ ও আলোচনা অনুষ্ঠান। রোববার (২৭ ফেব্রুয়ারি ২০২৩) ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের আর সি মজুমদার অডিটোরিয়ামে অনুষ্ঠিত হয় এ অনুষ্ঠান। এতে সভাপতিত্ব করেন শেখ হাসিনা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের প্রাক্তন উপাচার্য প্রফেসর ড. রফিকউল্লাহ খান। অনুষ্ঠানে প্রধান অতিথি হিসেবে উপস্থিত ছিলেন বাংলা একাডেমির মহাপরিচালক কবি মুহম্মদ নূরুল হুদা। শব্দগুচ্ছ'র ২৫ বছর নিয়ে আলোচনায় অংশ নেন কবি ও বাংলা বিভাগের অধ্যাপক বায়তুল্লাহ কাদেরী, কবি ও অধ্যাপক সৌরভ শিকদার, বিশিষ্ট আবৃত্তি শিল্পী রুপা চক্রবর্তী, কবি তারেক মাহমুদ, কবি তপন বাগচি ও শব্দগুচ্ছ সম্পাদক হাসানআল আব্দুল্লাহ। শুরুতেই রুপা চক্রবর্তী তাঁর নাতিদীর্ঘ বক্তব্যের পাশাপাশি কবি হাসানআল আব্দুল্লাহ'র একটি কবিতা আবৃত্তি করেন। বক্তারা বিশ্বব্যাপী বাংলা কবিতাকে ছড়িয়ে দেওয়া ও বিশ্বের নানা দেশের কবিতাকে একত্রিত করে বাঙালি কাব্য মহলে পৌঁছে দেওয়ার অব্যাহত প্রয়াসকে স্বাগত জানান। শুভেচ্ছা বক্তব্য রাখেন কবি আহমেদ স্বপন মাহমুদ, অধ্যাপক তানিম জসিম ও মর্জিনা ইয়াসমিন। অনুষ্ঠানে কবিতা পড়েন মতিন রায়হান, মামুন খান, তুষার প্রসূন, কৌমুদী নাগর্গিস, আশিক আকবর, অসিত দেবনাথ, দেবব্রত বিশ্বাস, আব্দুল্লাহ আল মামুন, শায়েখ শোয়েব, এমরান হোসেন লস্কর, অনিন্দিতা অনি, রিজিয়া সুলতানা প্রমুখ। অনুষ্ঠান সঞ্চালনায় ছিলেন কবি সৌমিত্র দেব। অনুষ্ঠান চলে তিনটা থেকে সাড়ে ছয়টা পর্যন্ত।

— শব্দগুচ্ছ

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

1.
Hello Hassanal,

What a revelation meeting you and reading your poems. Just when I lost faith in poetry, you, Naznin, and Shabdaguchha came along. My wife and I have been reading aloud poems from the books you gave me and we are knocked over by the intense and wonderful images, original metaphors, voice, philosophy, and sound of the poems--universal and specific. I plan on using them in my classes to show them what a poem can be and do. It was wonderful to spend some time with you and Naznin and Kristine.

After reading Shabdaguchha and your poems and translations, I can say that you are a great poet.

Sincerely,
Daniel Sklar, Massachusetts, 05/08/23

2.
Dear Hassanal,
I wish I could go to Bangladesh, but I can't. I have classes and I can't go. I've started teaching in Galicia, after many years abroad, and I can't. I'll go back one day, inshallah. I loved February there, with so many books and that life around. I love the bookshops there anyway, not only the ones in the streets, full of anything you want to read, but the smalls ones and the big ones. I think I read all Bangladeshi authors translated into English, or at least all I could get, and I loved them. And some of my students (I taught at Dhaka University knew that too. Lovely ones! Not only gave me away panjabis, but books).

It's great to know you're thinking of opening a library, that's awesome! Don't worry about the bio, I trust what your decision to cut. Here I send you a polished version of the poem.
Best,

Moncho Iglesias Míguez, Spain 01/09/2023

3.
Dear Hassanal,

I just received your email informing me that you are including my poem, Interlude, in your 25th year anthology. If you were here I would kiss you!!! To say you made my day doesn't even begin to express how I feel. Was hoping to have my coming out party as poet and visual artist since retiring in 2019. I thought finally now would be my time, my opportunity to soar. But of course that was not to be because of Covid and lockdowns and new variants and anti-maskers and anti-vaxxers that prevented us from attaining herd immunity and left more than enough room for sickness and fear of getting sick on the table and in person poetry readings and meet and greets were rolled up on zoom and my dreams were shattered.

Since your wonderful invitation however, inviting me to participate in such an historic and momentous undertaking that includes Nobel laureates, I feel hopeful again. Consequently, I have printed out the email intending to frame it like a PhD diploma. So when I start doubting myself as inevitably I will, I'll just look at the great honor you have bestowed on me by including me in your anthology. For that I will be forever grateful!!! Also would love to complement you on your exquisite taste too (ha, ha).

One day soon I would love to meet you in person so I could hug you.
Gratefully,

John DeAngelo, New Jersey, 01/16/2023

4.
Dear Hassanal,

Once again, thank you so very much for this honor! What a fabulous way to begin the new year! I attach a brief bio here. If you would like to edit it, please feel free to do so. I cut it down as much as I could.

I hope that you and your family are all well. We have just started back to school this week. So far, so good. Bill Wolak was here last November with Jeton Kelmendi. Another international caper!

Kristine Doll, Massachusetts, 1/18/2023

Editorial:

I started editing and publishing *Shabdaguchha* to present poets who are overlooked by the editors of other Bengali journals and magazines and who deserved to be published in order to continue the trend of good poetry and innovative voices. I mentioned it in the editorial for the very first issue, “Whoever writes a good piece of poetry and sends it to us, we will publish it regardless of the poet’s age or experience.” We are continuing with the same policy. However, along the way, we also motivated poets who were good, but who, for many reasons, stopped writing, such as Shaheed Quaderi (1942-2016) and Jyotirmoy Datta. Both contributed to the first issue, became advisory editors, and continue contributing to the magazine on a regular basis. Nevertheless, our introduction with the great American poet, Stanley Kunitz (1905-2006), changed the direction of the magazine. We started publishing poetry bilingually from the 2nd year. Kunitz embraced me in his New York City apartment and said, “Welcome to the brotherhood of poetry.” He also called me a “poet-brother” and mentioned that all poets are from the same mother. It was quite a great experience meeting him and later translating him into Bengali for the magazine. In that meeting he mentioned poets such as Louise Glück, who later was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. We are happy that Louise gave us permission to reprint one of her poems for this issue. Also, we are highly indebted to the poet Adonis and his translator, Kareem James Abu-Zeid, for the reprinting permission. It was great to meet Adonis with his daughter, Arwad Esber, in Paris earlier this year.

Everyone knows that publishing a poetry magazine for a quarter century is quite difficult. But I must say our journey has been empowered by poets like Shamsur Rahman (1929-2006) and Humayun Azad (1947-2004) from Bangladesh, Sibnarayan Ray (1921-2008) from India, Marian Maddern from Australia, Dariusz Tomasz Lebioda, Danuta Bartosz, Kazimierz Burnet, Katarzyna Georgiou, Jacek Wysocki and others from Poland, Nazrul Islam Naz (1959-2015) from London, Baitullah Quaderi from Dhaka, Probir Das from Shantinikaton, Amir Or from Israel, Maria Mistrioti from Greece, Naoshi Koriyama from Japan, Lidia Chiarelli from Italy, and of course Stanley H. Barkan, Robert Dunn (1959-2008), Joan Digby, Nicholas Birns, Bill Wolak, Sultan Catto, Kristine Doll, and many more from USA. Therefore, we were able to

include more than five hundred poets and translators from over fifty countries. For a little mag like *Shabdaguchha*, I should say, it is a huge achievement. We also introduced a biannual Shabdaguchha Poetry Award since 2001. We are happily announcing that we will publish a World Poetry Anthology with more than 220 selected poets previously published in *Shabdaguchha* to celebrate the magazine’s 25th anniversary. We are grateful to Mass Poetry Festival committee (2023) for inviting us to arrange a multilingual poetry reading marking the magazine’s twenty-fifth anniversary. Also many thanks to our Dhaka correspondents for organizing another reading at the beginning of this year. Finally, we should acknowledge that there would have been no “Contemporary Bangladeshi Poetry” anthology published from New York in 2019 with a grant from the city, had there been no *Shabdaguchha*.

We believe poetry has power to bring people of different race, ethnicity, and language together on the same platform. It empowers people with knowledge of truth and harbors peace. Therefore, I congratulate and thank everyone who contributed to the magazine for the last twenty-five years.

[Some poems that are accepted and are not published in this issue due to space shortage, will appear in the next issue.—editor]

Contributors:

Adonis is a poet and translator, who was born in Syria and now lives in Paris. He earned his BA in Philosophy from Damascus University and PhD from St. Joseph University in Paris. He has initiated a revolutionary work in the structures and themes of Arabic poetry and has been translated into major languages of the world. He is the author of number of poetry collections in English translation including *Adonis: Selected Poems, Songs of Mihyar the Damascene, If Only the Sea Could Sleep*, and *The Blood of Adonis*. He has translated Ovid into Arabic. He received International Nâzim Hikmet Poetry Award, the Norwegian Academy for Literature and Freedom of Expression's Bjørnson Prize, the Highest Award of the International Poem Biennial in Brussels, and the Syria-Lebanon Best Poet Award.

Hassanal Abdullah is an author of more than 50 books in various genres including 20 collections of poetry, and the editor of *Shabdaguchha*, an international bilingual poetry magazine. His *Collected Poems* (in Bengali) was published by Ananya in two Volumes. Mr. Abdullah received the Homer European Medal of Poetry and Art (2016), Klement Janesky International Poetry Award (2021) from Poland, and a translation Grant from New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (2019). His poetry has been translated into eleven languages and was published in various poetry anthologies throughout the world. He introduced *Swatantra Sonnets*, seven-seven stanza pattern and abcdabc efgdefg rhyming scheme, and wrote an epic illustrating the human relationships with cosmology. As an invited guest, he attended international poetry festivals in China, Poland, Greece, Mexico, Canada, and India. Mr. Abdullah teaches math.

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

Dirk-Uwe Becker is a poet from Germany, and an engineer by profession. He is the author of six collections of poetry. He also contributed to various magazines and anthologies at home and abroad and has been translated into English and Polish. He received the Aphorist Passport award (2018) from Polish Writers' Union. Dirk is a member of PEN, Germany.

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

Nina Cassian (1924-2014) was a Romanian poet, children's book writer, translator, journalist, accomplished pianist and composer, and a film critic. She spent the first sixty years of her life in Romania until she moved to the United States in 1985 for a teaching job. A few years later Cassian was granted permanent asylum and New York City

became her home for the rest of her life. Much of her work was published both in Romanian and in English.

Manu Dash is a bilingual poet, author, translator, editor, publisher, and the curator of Odisha Art & Literature Festival. He joined *Anam Poetry Movement* in 1974. He was closely associated with Kumar Mohanty. He is the author of more than 30 books in English and Odia including the most recent poetry collection, *A Brief History of Silence*.

Toby Davidson is an Australian poet, creator, facilitator and editor. His research interests include Australian, British, Irish and American poetry, the public commemoration of writers and interactions between poetry and Australian politics. Toby is a member of ASAL (Association for the Study of Australian Literature). *Beast Language* is his recent poetry collection published in 2012.

Lana Derkač is a Croatian poet, playwright, and essayist. She was awarded Zdravko Pucak Poetry Prize and Duhovno Hrasce Prize, Vinum et Poeta Prize in Croatia and the Risto Ratkovic Award (Montenegro) for the best poetry book in Montenegro, Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. She attended many international poetry festivals and book fairs including Mediterranean Poetry Meeting (Morocco), Stockholm International Poetry Festival (Sweden), International Slav Poetry Festival in Tver (Russia), etc. Her work has been translated into 21 languages.

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

Lidija Dimkovska is a Macedonian poet, novelist, essayist, and a translator from Romanian and Slovenian into Macedonian. She got her Ph.D. in Romanian literature from the University of Bucharest, Romania where she worked as a lecturer of Macedonian language and literature. She is the author of seven collections of poetry, three novels, one diary about an American tour, and one short stories collection. She also edited four anthologies. Macedonian award for debut poetry (1993), German prize "Hubert Burda" (2009), Romanian prizes "Poesis" (2002) and "Tudor Arghezi" (2012), European prize "Petru Krdu" (2016), and Slovenian prize "The Glass of Immortality" (2020) among her many awards and prizes. Dr. Dimkovska lives in Slovenia.

Hemant Divate is a Marathi poet, editor, publisher, translator, and a poetry activist. He is the author of seven poetry collections in Marathi. His most recent book in Marathi, *Paranoia*, received Kavi Keshavsut Puraskar (award) from the Maharashtra Government. His poetry has been translated into more than 30 languages and published in a book form in Spanish, Irish, Arabic, German, Estonian, and English. His publishing house, Paperwall Publishing, has published (under its Poetrywala imprint) more than 150 poetry titles.

Katarzyna Georgiou is a Polish poet, translator, literary activist, a member of the Polish Writers' Union, Lower Silesian Branch (ZLP) since 2018 and the Association of Polish Authors since 2014. She studied in Toronto, Canada, and worked there as a kindergarten teacher, teaching English for a few years. Returning to Poland, she worked for 14 years at the Alis Private Education Team in Wrocław as a teacher. She is the Co-founder of the

Civic Library in Potaszna, (the community nearby Milicz town) together with the Brapoja and Sztukater Associations. She is the author of eight books of poetry and a full-length translation from English to Polish, *Under the Thin Layers of Light*, of Hassanal Abdullah's poetry.

Louise Glück received Nobel Prize in Literature in 2020. Previously, she received Pulitzer Prize (1993), National Book Award (2014), National Humanities Medal (2016), The Tomas Tranströmer Prize (2020), and dozens of other awards, prizes, and fellowships. She is the Frederick Iseman Professor in the Practice of Poetry at Yale University. Louise is known as an autobiographical poet, who is drawn by her emotional intensity, frequent references of mythology and natural imagery, and her personal experiences in urban life. She was born in NYC and now lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Sergio Inestrosa is a professor of Spanish and Latin American affairs at Endicott College, Beverly, MA. He is a member of the Editorial Board of *Tiberíades*, *Red Iberoamericana de Poetas y Críticos Literarios Cristianos*, and of the Electronic magazine *Cine y Literatura*, based in Santiago de Chile. He was born in San Salvador.

Turczí István, a Hungarian poet, writer, translator, and university professor of creative writing, is the founding editor-in-chief of *Parnassus* poetry magazine and publishing house since 1995. He received National Literary Prize, Prima Primissima Grand Award, Poet Laureate of Hungary and Order of Commander. On international scene, he received the Warsaw International Poetry Award (2004), the Mongolian Golden Ribbon (2008), the Eminescu Poetry Grand Prize in Rumania (2013), and the highest Literary Award of the Serbian and Bosnian Writers' Association in Banja Luka, Bosnia (2022). He is the Secretary General of the Hungarian PEN Center. His poetry has been translated into 25 languages.

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

Anna Keiko is an independent exploration poet, lives in Shanghai. Her poems have been translated into more than 30 languages and published in more than 400 newspapers and magazines over 40 countries. She has been invited to participate in several international poetry festivals. She has received 16 international poetry awards. Her books has been published in Italy, Spain, Chile and the United States. *Solitude in Blood* is her recent collection of poems.

John Kinsella is an Australian poet, fiction writer, and a playwright. His most recent volumes of poetry include *Insomnia* (WW Norton, 2020), the first volume of his collected poems, *The Ascension of Sheep* (University of Western Australia Press, 2022), and *ART with Charmaine Papertalk Green* (Magabala, 2022). His recent poetry book with *Kwame Dawes is UnHistory* (Peepal Tree, UK, 2022). His most recent collection of stories is *Pushing Back* (Transit Lounge, 2021) and his most recent critical book is *Legibility: an antifascist poetics* (Palgrave, 2022). He is a Fellow of Churchill College, Cambridge University, an Affiliated Scholar with Kenyon College and Emeritus Professor of Literature and Environment at Curtin University, Western Australia.

Teresa Juan López is a multidisciplinary Spanish artist (poet, dancer, musician). She recites poetry and makes films based on poetry. She inspires others to play instruments in order to make poetry alive. Current, she is the president of the multicultural Association ProArte Denia in Spain.

Mathura is an Estonian poet and writer, recipient of Gustav Suits Poetry Award, Virumaa Literary Award and other recognitions. His work has been translated into a dozen languages.

Marwan Makhoul is a Palestinian poet, was born in the village of Boquai's, Upper Galilee, to a Palestinian father and a Lebanese mother. He is an engineer and works as the managing director of a construction company. *Hunter of Daffodils*, *Land of the Sad Passiflora*, *Verses the Poems Forgot with Me*, and *Where is My Mom* are some of his poetry titles. He also published prose and drama. He was awarded as the best playwright in the Acre Theatre Festival in 2009 for his first play. Some of his poems in Arabic are also set for music. He has been translated into English, Turkish, Italian, German, French, Hebrew, Irish, Serbian, and Hindi.

Ben Mazer was born in New York City in 1964, and grew up in and around Cambridge, Massachusetts. As an undergraduate, he studied poetry with Seamus Heaney at Harvard University. He completed an MA and a Ph.D under Christopher Ricks and Archie Burnett at the Editorial Institute, Boston University. He has published more than ten collections of poetry, including *The Ruined Millionaire: New Selected Poems: 2002-2022*, and has edited a number of critical editions, including *The Collected Poems of Delmore Schwartz*, forthcoming from Farrar, Straus & Giroux this year. He lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Moncho Iglesias Míguez is a poet, novelist and translator from Galicia, Spain. Recent collections include *pedras de Plastilina* (Toxosoutos, 2012), *Tren* (Urutau, 2018) and *Cheira* (Urutau, 2020) and the novel *Tres cores, azul* (Estaleiro, 2009) and *Don Pepe* (Do Peirao, 2018). He has translated from the Hebrew, Arabic, and English to Galician. Moncho teaches language and literature and have been doing so in Bangladesh, India, China, and Palestine among other places.

Satya Mohanty, a former officer of the Indian Administrative Service, was the Union Education Secretary as well as Secretary General of the National Human Rights Commission. He has also held several senior positions in the Government of composite Andhra Pradesh, a state in the Indian union. *Dancing on the Edge* and *Migrants Chronicle and Pandemic Musings* are two of his poetry collections. He also wrote novels, short stories, and plays. He was an Edward S. Mason Fellow at Harvard University and a SPURS visiting scholar in MIT. He now lives in Delhi.

Aleš Mustar is a Slovenian poet, translator, and a freelancer. He got his Ph.D. in Romanian literature from the University of Bucharest. His first collection of poetry got a nomination for the best debut author (2005) and was translated into English and Macedonian. He has been translating literature from Romanian and Macedonian, and contributed text for theater performances. Dr. Mustar has participated at poetry festivals and readings in the States, Netherlands, Denmark, Macedonia, Romania, Montenegro, Croatia, Serbia, Czech Republic etc.

Tendai Mwanaka is a Zimbabwean poet. He was born in a remote village and moved to the city in 1994. He is the author of *Voices from Exile*, a collection of poetry on

Zimbabwe's political situation. He has written numerous articles and won several awards.

Sitawa Namwalie is Kenyan poet, playwright and performer known for her unique dramatized poetry performances, which combines poetry and traditional Kenyan music. "Cut off My Tongue," was her first production and has toured Kenya, Uganda, Rwanda and the Hay Festival, UK. She has been a fellow of the Sundance Theatre Lab. Her growing body of work includes articles, short stories, dramatized poetry productions and plays, such as *Homecoming* (2010), *Silence is a Woman* (2014), *Room of Lost Names* (2015, translated into French in 2020), and *Taking My Father Home* (2020). She went to postgraduate school in Massachusetts, USA.

Christopher Okemwa is a Kenyan poet, who received his PhD in performance poetry from Moi University and now works at Kisii University, Kenya. He is the founder and current director of Kistrech International Poetry festival in Kenya. His novella, *Sabina and the Mystery of the Ogre*, won the Canadian Burt Award for African Literature in 2015. Its sequel, *Sabina the Rain Girl* (Nsemia Inc., 2019) was selected for the UN SDG 2 Zero Hunger reading list and is fast becoming a popular novella among young people in Africa. He is the author of ten collections of poetry and has been translated to several languages. He has also translated four literary works of international poets from English to Swahili.

Amir Or, the 2020 Golden Wreath laureate, has been recognized as a major voice in world literature. His poetry won him numerous awards, lately the 2019 Homer European Medal of Art and Poetry and 2021 Ianicius award and Wladislaw Reimont award, and the 2021 Shabdaguchha award. His work was translated into more than 50 languages, and published in 43 books in Europe, America, and Asia. Or was born in Tel Aviv, 1956, studied Philosophy and Comparative Religion in the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and lectured on Ancient Greek Religion. He published 14 poetry books, 2 novels, an Essays' selection and 12 volumes of his translations from Ancient Greek, English and other languages.

Serge Pey is a French poet, writer, and performance artist. He was born in Toulouse to a working-class family of Catalan refugees. His work focuses on the intersection of poetry and revolution. Pey received the Grand Prix de Poesié for Flamenco (2017) and the Boccace Prize for The Treasures of the Spanish Civil War and Other Tales (2012). A laureate of the Robert Ganzo Poetry Prize, Pey now teaches contemporary poetry at the University of Mirai.

Mark Pirie is a poet, editor, publisher, and an archivist for PANZA (Poetry Archive of NZ Aotearoa) from New Zealand. His selected poems, *Rock & Roll*, was published in Australia (Bareknuckle, 2016). He is a former founding editor of JAAM, and currently editing broadsheet: New New Zealand Poetry.

Diti Ronen is an Israeli poet, editor, translator of poetry, and a scholar. She has published twelve full length poetry books, five in Israel, in Hebrew, and seven in other languages. Her poetry was awarded numerous international and national award and translated into many languages worldwide. Besides her literary work, Dr. Diti Ronen is a researcher, a lecturer and a consultant of Arts, Theatre and Cultural Policy and she has published several books and articles in these fields too.

Gabriel Rosenstock is an Irish poet, novelist, playwright, translator, essayist and short story writer. His recent titles include *Mullah Nasrudin is Alive and Well* (spiritual humour), *The Stars Are His Bones* (Upanishadic bilingual 'found haiku' with photographs by Debiprasad Mukherjee) and a bilingual book of photo-tanka with photographer Ron Rosenstock, *Daybreak: poem-prayers for prisoners*, published by Cross-Cultural Communications, New York.

Naznin Seamon is the author of nine books including five collections of poetry, and two collections of short stories. Her first book of poetry, *Adigonta Bistirnoter Dhala*, was published in February, 2000 and was reprinted in 2004. She was the recipient of the Shabdaguchha Poetry Award 2007. *Hollowness on the Horizon* (2015) is a collection of her poetry in English translation, published by Feral Press, New York. She is an ESL teacher for a NYC High School.

Sudeep Sen is a poet, translator, artist, and editor from India. He studied English literature at the University of Delhi and was an Inlaks Scholar at Columbia University, where he earned an MS in journalism. He is the author of more than a dozen poetry collections. His work has been translated into over 25 languages and published in literary magazines and journals around the world, including *Times Literary Supplement*, *Newsweek*, *Guardian*, *Poetry Review*, *Literary Review*, and *Harvard Review*. Sen's newer work appears in *New Writing 15* (Granta), *Language for a New Century* (Norton), *Leela: An Erotic Play of Verse and Art* (Collins). He received number of awards and honors including 2022 Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize.

Daniel Sklar teaches Creative Writing at Endicott College, and has been published in *the Harvard Review*, *English Journal*, *Beat Scene*, and the *New York Quarterly* among other journals. His books include *Flying Cats*, *Hack Writer*, and *Bicycles, Canoes, Drums*. His play, "Lycanthropy" was performed at the Boston Theater Marathon in 2012 and was reviewed in *The Boston Globe*. He rides a bicycle to work.

Violeta Tančeva-Zlateva is a poet, short story writer, and essayist. She is the author of thirteen books including five collections of poetry. Her work has been translated into Serbian, Montenegrin, Slovenian, English, Bulgarian, Albanian, Romanian, Russian and German languages, and she received the highest national award for poetry, as well as Antev Zlatnik Award given by the International Poetic and Cultural event, *Ante Popovski-Antevo Pero*. Violeta has been a member of the Macedonian Writers' Association since 2000.

Carolyne Wright's most recent book is *Masquerade*, a memoir in poetry (Lost Horse Press, 2021). She has nine earlier books and chapbooks of poetry, a volume of essays, and five award-winning volumes of poetry in translation from Spanish and Bengali. Adrienne Rich has written, "across culture and language we are encountering a great world poet". Carolyne also translated *The Game in Reverse: Poems of Taslima Nasrin* (George Braziller), the dissident Bangladeshi writer living in exile; and the anthology, *Majestic Nights: Love Poems of Bengali Women* (White Pine Press, 2008).

Kira Wuck grew up in Amsterdam but feels at home at the absurdity and melancholy of the Nordic countries. She studied Art and went to the Writer's School in Amsterdam. She won the national poetry slam championship of the Netherlands (2012), and for her debut collection of poetry, *Finnish Girls*, she got the Lucy B. en C.W.vander Hoogt price in 2013.

CONTEMPORARY BANGLADESHI POETRY

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Hassanal Abdullah

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