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VerbalART

A Global Journal Devoted to
POETS AND POETRY

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A Peer-Reviewed Print Journal

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Chief Editor:

Dr. Vivekanand Jha

Associate Editor:

Dr. Rajnish Mishra

Review Editor

Dr. Chandra Shekhar Dubey



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POETRY

AINE COLLINS

Walking Masterpieces

We hang masterpieces on the wall,
admire them,
curate them,
build museums to hold them,
revere them,
and yet we walk the earth,
forgetting who we are,
Walking Masterpieces,
each one an original,
made by the master of life itself,
Everyone you meet bears his signature,
is an opus.

ALESSIO ZANELLI

The Unknowing

Nowhere on earth. Resolve, endurance, will
have never been of help. No search, no find,
no loss have either. None of them keeps still

or on the move, they must maintain a kind
of status leaving room for doubt. Awake,
asleep, or even in between, the mind

can't be rescinded from the body, take
its place, or kill it, which is valid for
them all, however each may try to make

itself a case apart. What is in store
is carved in stone, has always been displayed
upon the surface, in full view, before

the eyes of most, who think they've really made
all that's required to be allowed to know
the score. The highest price will just be paid

in terms of time, not gold, because the flow
of wasted days can't be reversed. Until
the earth uplifts and nothing's left below.

AMIRAH AL WASSIF

No Intention to Quit!

A kind of magic pumps in my chest
When the poetry lines weave their nest
More legends and tales spread along the mind
When the brilliant imagination ends his rest
My heart touches the honey light
Muse is manifest!
Take me slowly through the clouds
I am fevered because of the reality mist
Tell me what upper stories about?
Give me a fast summary at least
A kind of magic pumps in my heart
When I lose in the garden or in art
More harmony overwhelms me
When my eyes meet the swart
Dance with me on the road
No matter with barefoot
Here we will witness our born again
Let we absorb all the rain
A kind of magic pumps in my mind
More innovative horses need to ride
All the time in creating and
No intention to quit!

ARTHUR TURFA

**Diptych: The Window at
Pazo de Mariñán. La Coruña**

I

Through the open window stream strong
sunlight, smells, sounds of places that

beckon me. I want to walk across
the lawn, ascend the stairs, explore

what is beyond the tree line. After
awhile I will look back towards the house

to see how far I have come. If I see you
in the window, I will return at once.

But if not, the gentle breeze shall carry me
along new paths to the far horizons.

II

Eyes indeed are lamps to the
soul. Not only receiving light,

they illuminate what lies behind
them. Each day blesses me with the

light you have shared with me,
flooding me with warmth and wonder.

When troubled times surround me,
I remember the light glowing

from the distance. Nothing can ever
diminish that light, nor extinguish it.

Continued comfort, constant joy
may you find in my light to you.

CHARLOTTE PLATT

Have you ever had a Flat blow up?

Have you ever had a flat blow up?
It's a funny thing.
It starts small, cracks and creases
Creeping up, creeping down the wall.
Then it goes further, Council visits,
Upstairs moving out.
Friday 13th and a knock at the door:
"Pack an overnight bag, it'll be the weekend, no more."
Aye, right.
Raised on an island, I knew better.
"Pack all you can carry, love."
We looked like we'd fallen off a flitting.
Policemen, fluorescent and laughing,
Guarded the now closed road.
Bags on our backs, bags on our chests,
A bag like a body held between us.
No wonder donkeys bite you.
The new flat was cold, and miserable in the way of dead
people's things.
We ordered pizza and got drunk on cheap gin.
Found out the old place got burgled,
No surprise there.
Then we had to move. Again.
Work called North, and more packing.
We moved, we called, we tried to book a visit in.
Our belongings, those not packed, still sat there lonely.
"I'm sorry," Bill said,

(Nice Bill, who helped us evacuate)
"We had to demolish them – too risky with the subway."
And that was that:
No things, no flat.

COLIN JAMES

Indiscriminate Acts of Kindness

Cutting through some farmland,
I invariably pee in a corn field
wondering if the tractor driver
I can see in the distance
sees me and rages silently.
The gullies that drain away
excess water are full of dead birds.
I wait for spaces to occur.
The crows will come and fill them.
There used to be a phone box about here,
and a convenience store
of proportional provenance.
All gone leaving just fields.

DIVYA P.S. RAWAT

Books, My Truest Friend Indeed

Thy touch so divine;
So thirst-provoking,
Thou art a seed of knowledge
At my brain's door, knocking

As thy cover and pages,
I instinctively turn,
Senses in slumber in me,
Yield to learn

With thee, I elope,
Holding thy hand,
Beyond this mundane,
I witness a fairyland

Thou acquaint me
To the reign of a king,
Sometimes, I meet
A fierce lion in the ring

To the saints and great souls,
Nothing could outlive,
Romeo & Juliet like romance tale,
In thee, I live

Has a glorious history,
My motherland, thou unfold,
The freedom fighters' sacrifice,
Oh, my breath, I hold!

Magic and Science divulge
How living-beings grow,
Maths, Physics, chemistry, and
All the languages, now I know

Sitting on thy wings,
How I cross all the borders,
Thou guide me how to follow
Every country's laws and orders

Mystery, thou unravel behind
All the seven wonders
Ruins reflect destruction of wars;
The repercussions of our blunders

With cultural diversity, thou show me
Our country's unyielding unity,
Instill in me, love and respect;
All humanity sans profanity

So, thou art my silent mentor,
Enlightens me in need,
I love thee so much,
Thou, my truest friend indeed.

EDWARD AHERN

God's New Clothes

So little left of the old garments.
The fewer and older priests
face us robed in apologies.
Shrill tailors of God's message.
Costumed nuns have died away
replaced by off the rack laity.

The churning suits and dresses
That draped across the pews
have worn thin and sparse.
Strictures are raggedly observed
and churches are cast off
Like Good Will overcoats.

Yet some of us still wear faith,
Displaying hand-me-downs in a church
no longer fashionable.
We're not dressed as we were,
and unsure of holy style,
but hopeful of our future ensemble.

ERIC HEPERLE

Gift of the Sun

Flowers open their petals
And bloom with fragrances that entice
Beckoning the bees to come hither
The pollen they gather
To make honey so sweet
The nectar becomes food of the Gods

Young children lay down at night
Thinking about that sweet honey
That is the delight of their day
It gives them energy to survive
And energy to play

The Sun speaks warmly
Offering energy to all
The flowers turn and give thanks
The bees flap their wings in gratitude
And the children smile with appreciation
For, the gift of the Sun, is oneness

GLENNISE AYUK

When I Find Love

The face of love will shine so bright,
Its radiance will be dazzling white,
The eyes of love will look at me,
The look, my broken heart will heal.
The hand of love will touch my soul,
My body and my insides cold.
I will know it when I have found love,
For love will make my spirit whole.

The smile of love will set me free,
Upon its confidence I'll lean.
The faith of love will keep me strong,
With love I'll be forever young.
The light of love will cast the dark,
And make the stars come out at night.
I will know when I find my love
For love will fill my heart with joy.

The sound of love my ears will hear,
The sound of all I hold so dear,
The sound of faith and none of fear
For love dispels the doubt in here.
The kiss of love will make me smile,
To a home of serenity I'll be confined.
I will know when I have found love,
For love will stay both day and night.

Before me is the gift of love,
You're kindness, laughter, joy and songs.
I know that this is love I see,
For everything that's within me,
Now blossoms out like flowers in spring.
The face of love now looks at me,
Its radiance is dazzling white.
The eyes of love are fixed on me,
My night is filled with starry skies.

I know that right now is the time
For in this very moment,
As here I stand,
Love has found me and found my heart.
Love has healed my broken heart.

HOWARD WINN

Look to Nature for Truth

we are often told as if
it could speak to us with
the vital message of life's
meaning but it has nothing
to tell us for the language
is not ours any longer
and we cannot translate
this foreign tongue into
our lives even if Thoreau
thought he could read a
message in the woods
that surrounded Walden
Pond when the real lesson
was from the people who
lived in the town of Concord
hiding alone in an upstairs
bedroom or walking the streets
while considering the trap
that was conventional faith
for nature and its animal
tenants could not inform
without a human mind
inventing
the order that was mortal
and analyzing the facts
as neutral science reveals
them to the perceptive human mind
for Darwin discovered more
than Thoreau observed

IAN SALVAÑA

Nathaniel

The silence of our plates draws the words
the dining table wants to keep—

I like you

But we determine a rule without our eyes
meeting: Silence means far from readiness.

And so, just screeches of friction,
my words muffled from the kisses of knives.

We only look at each other's hands,
the way we cut the steak in precise shapes.

Our body movements are our only language.

Our muted conversation remains in the
meeting of forks, caressing our lips with
the tender meat and down our throats.

We play this game when we like to hide.

In silence, escape becomes the form
of breathing, sitting in an erect posture,
resting our feet firmly on the ground.

We drown the vestiges of the scene
to understand the slightest shivers of

Our skins.

So we forget the crowd, engulfing us like
the untouched juice we're afraid to drink.

We become stern, occasionally eyeing
the platter gone cold by now.

So we take cues to know we've become
different pages: My eyes to you and yours
always to your plate, and so we remain

Silent.

J.J. CAMPBELL

The Ghosts of Murdered Children

broken angels and lost souls

the ghosts of murdered children
marching the streets right before
dawn

all the factories have closed

their parking lots are full of
weeds and dirty needles

these small towns are allergic
to the future

no one wants to step out of
their little utopia

this is what happens when
you never open a book

venture to the wrong side
of the town

or spend any nights
drenched in reality
we'll all be dead soon

just an endless nightmare
broadcast on the national
news

an epidemic makes the most
unlikely celebrities

J.P. CHRISTIANSEN

The Mudra of Self-Realization

My seed lay dormant in the muck
for ages before my self-realization.
Light brought me to water's surface,
my leaves spreading for a coming.

A dragon-fly hovers above my green
below petals of Lotus into blooming.
My body is photosynthetic –
a chord, of elements my mind plays.

Come night, I close for my mudra.

Discovering my mind was a frightening 'thing', at first,
but then came the beauty of realization at seeing
through the waste and conceit of in-authenticity
born of false expectation, hope, desire, and fantasy.

A flowering lotus emerged from the death of it.
It knew from whence it had come,
and was no longer a stranger in a lovely world,
but a fragile essence unfolding self-nature.

A dragon-fly settled on its crown to sleep.
It, too, possessed its own nature,
and self-awareness wasn't part of it.
Together they became one in the pond.

JACK SHIPSEY

Delay

Friend, loved one
Puppeteer to my poor heart's
Perpetual strings

I have lingered too long
In silence's safe solace –
Where two opposing realities coexist,

Where the favoured outcome
Finds its way into every fleeting thought
And the poisoned possibility

Remains sealed in the box.
No more. The truth is teeming
Tirelessly from every trace

Of my essence
And come hell, Connacht
Or high water

I will hone my hopes,
Elucidate my emotions,
Submit to providence,

And pray that neither
Past positions nor future fears
Will dim the glistening twinkle in our eyes.

JAMES BERKOWITZ

A Saint in the City

Unnoticed, he travels the sidewalks
and alleyways sharing leftover food
and pocket change to those in despair
standing on corners,
living out of shopping carts,
and shuffling to keep warm.

No recognition, accolades, or media
worthy story attention is given
but the action takes place.

He dries the tears and wipes the dirt
from faces with restaurant napkins;
consoling the unfortunate without
therapist prices.

This unknown person carries on
with charitable work sacred to those
who receive.

The dire streets are his place of
worship for those forgotten.

No titles or distinction are necessary,
and a mere thank you is suffice.

Many will never know of his
whereabouts but he exists.

He is the evolution of endless time,
the Buddha, Jesus, Mohammed
and all thoughts of greatness
beyond the human eye and brain.

He is the saint in the city,
cloaked in a robe of heart and compassion.

A saint in the city,
amongst you and me and me and you
and everyone we know.

A saint in the city,
walking in love and light.

JANE MARIA

Raunchy Sex Talks

As she opened her sex life,
over a raunchy cup of coffee,
I was losing the hope about mine.

As she decoded her pleasure in pain,
I wept for my right to romanticize.
Dragged back into that hole –
where sex and screeching orgasm –
formed synonym for its mechanics.
There she goes, dissecting into her pains,
and I pray – Woman! Let my Soul thrive.
The day was weary. Body is tired.

Only hope for the night is –
somebody may walk down the aisle,
with an offer to make love over true love.
And there! I am romanticizing –
a naked relationship – where we're not,
proving anything or becoming anybody.

The day was weary. Body is Tired.
And there! I am romancing, all alone.

JEVIN LEE ALBUQUERQUE

Critters

Two dirt roads and a river of fire
two foxes move in the same direction
on opposite sides of the fire

The female fox's paws are worn down
She strikes the ground too hard, alone
The male's paws are worn to the bone
And his ears burn, too fast
they never slow down

On a rare full moon, the female enters
the river, to soothe her aching paws
The male fox, streaking by
invokes her tenderness, she sees
his wounded paws, but the male
races on, the female looks away

Under a rainy sky, a different moon
lightning strikes the male, jolts him to a stop
To cool his joints, he enters the river
to the delight of the female

Not saying a word
the foxes spend hours, under the moon
healing their paws in the water

When they are completely healed,
they have forgotten the road,
which way fox traffic flows

JOHN GREY

The Vanishing Neighbors

The people next door are leaving.
A huge moving van is parked at their front gate.
No matter how much my daughter asks why,
I have no explanation.
I've never been inside the house
so this is the first time I've ever seen
their kitchen furniture.
And outcome parlor chairs and sofa.
My wife is beside me.
Her only comment is that the color
of the upholstery doesn't match the curtains.
She doesn't stay for the boxes,
twenty of them at my count.
This is where heirloom china dolls
lie down with men's underwear,
sweat pants wrap around knick-knacks.
photo-albums share space with paperback thrillers.
Each carton is a house in miniature.
It's all about how the oddest things
find commonality.
Two big brutes do all the heavy lifting.
The wife carries a suitcase,
loads it into the trunk of the car.
Whatever variation of her innermost secrets
is stuffed into that luggage,
it will not travel with strangers.

Nor will the stuffed monkey that her
daughter wraps arms tight around.
Or her son's skateboard,
the one thing out of all these belongings
that I recognize.
It will not be missed.
Out comes the father.
His name is Frank.
I know that much.
And he works for the gas company.
But beyond that, gas company Frank is a blank.
No need for me to toss my limited knowledge
of my neighbors
into the back of that truck.
It will leave of its own accord.
Within the week, I figure.

JOSEPH HART

Keats

Like a silver star,
Junkets' verses sing,
Hanging in the cosmos,
Not attached to anything.

Neither are they personal
And neither history,
But cold and unapproachable
Perfect poetry.

JOSEPH HART

11 Lines

Art for art's sake. Everybody tries
To write it. Even me. The magic phrases
That pop into my head while drinking coffee,
And artificial do not mean a thing.
Even Junkets didn't try to write them.
Sincerity, imagination, something
Flowing in a line across the page
That's beautiful with meaning. Can there be
Anything – like Shakespeare – that will show
The feelings and endure a century?
Not just a century; eternity.
A perfect union of the heart and mind.

JOSEPH MURPHY

Buddha's Cloak

A wave breaks on pristine sand
glinting in the veins
of a wind-blown leaf; in the shimmer
of Buddha's cloak.

I balance that wave on the back of my hand; willfully,
without regret.

The voices within the cloak rejoice; the rooftops
recede; avenues vanish.

Silence. Stillness.

I begin to be freed of memories
that have chafed stem and leaf; but a joy
resounds; creating
an immense shadow, cooling
my fragmented dreams.

JOY LEFTOW

**The Planet Completes
One More Spin around the Earth**

A pleasant fresh chill fills the air
Evening sings, temperature drops
Season's preview, pull out winter socks
Dark at four thirty, tranquilized
Sun arrives at six forty five
Clocks schedule set back an hour
Quarter moon mesmerizes me
Fragrant mists flower
Bloom in autumn's last hurrah,
Sun salutations drive us, survive one
More rotation around our earth
One more round of death and birth

LANI O' HANLON

Beside the Blackwater

Fish slide through the crooks of her elbows,
the backs of her knees.
Tiny mouths suck.

She is growing towards the river.
Parts of her
in tidal water, silt.

Young trees on higher, dryer land
strain away from the rank of it
her shawl of green weed

her keen. Sometimes birds
make nests within her, she buds
like she used to

parts of her embedded
in the land, her memory of sky.
She leans, ache

of exposed roots,
the ringed sap of her,
the rivered silk. The cruel quiet kiss.

LEA VERGARA APILADO

My Sacred House

My body, my temple
my sacred house
I am its Vestal Virgin
tending fires, making offerings,
cleaning its nooks and crannies
I care for its health,
for its happiness, for its safety
To never take it for granted
nor miss a day at its hearth
Only the worthy enter the temple
but sometimes I forget –
the Virgin is human after all
Fires are unlit, the hearth left cold,
cobwebs grow, dust bunnies roam
I invite Tempest and lie with him
in my sacred house.

I saw a snail's shell, hollow and empty,
and took it –
It broke into pieces when dropped
I would not let my house crumble so
like brittle pages from ancient books
too fragile to touch and read
they had to be kept under lock and key

So I draw the curtains one by one,
open windows every day,
light humble fires whenever I can
Sweep away the dust and the cobwebs
as if my life depended on it
Go back to the good and the worthy,
slowly but surely,
to spending time tending the hearth

This is my body, my temple,
my sacred house
And I am its Vestal Virgin.

MADELEINE. R. KELLY

Endings

The sun will set, and rise on the other side.
A flower blooms, becomes soil, feeds the next born.
The wave reaches shore, and melts back into tide.
A cloud rains down, then rises back into form.
Summer becomes winter, then spring, then the fall.
Roots will keep drinking, even when they've been torn.
White is made of rainbows, yet holds none at all.
People stand still although their world is spinning.
There is no darkness, just light we can't recall.
When it seems we are losing, we are winning.
There are no endings, only new beginnings.

MADHAB CHANDRA JENA

Your Scarecrow

A series of painful mid-noon
passed away...
still I stand there below the open sky.
Protect your paddy crops and
many of your lost lands.
Laughing like before
As you wish
Inside a black hemisphere.
heading with a painted clay pot,
standing there,
year after year,
never tired never died
you can use or
you can throw
because I am your scarecrow
never tired never died.
standing here,
year after year.

MARIEL YOVINO

Ghosts

There was a martini in front of me
like cool salted water on my lips
turned to moths in my mouth
tongue rough like desert sand.

Or was it a mirage?

Villains from dreams
puncture the screen
and walk out of the theater
to follow me to work

you might call them ghosts

I don't have a word
for things I've always known
that I've never had to name

MARIEL YOVINO

Not at all Like

Not at all like a leaf
cascading down a slide made of wind

or the unweaving of a pulled-on thread,

or anything really at all
like she'd imagined it to be.

More like
a stack of dishes,
freshly washed and poorly dried
slipping from the daring hand
that held them
in a murderous rage –
crashed to the floor.

An actress who once was young
appears unexpectedly
in a film you're only half-watching
and she shocks you with her age.
How old she's gotten,
but she's younger than you.

MARK A. HOWARD

The Cricket with One Broken Leg

Tragic, isn't it?

The poor bastard – crying and lying
across concrete,
sprawled out – spread eagled,
waiting for a friend to drag him back,
underneath the cover of the cooler,
where the refrigerated air will keep,
him and the bacteria at bay,
while they set his bones and bend him back,
into shapes familiar
to his kind.

...or they don't!

No, he's laid there for about three hours now,
twitching and singing swan songs,
as they pass him by in a Genovese cry,
where no prayers were ever said.

So, finally, out of what I assume to be desperation,
he flutters his wings in hope,
to fly away to safety, but fails.

Instead, he just plows his head into the cold concrete,
as thundering feet shake him all around;
further and further, in circles, he spins,
until finally, someone struck a nerve,
or, rather, the nervous system,
as a boot heel, size seven or eight,
came crashing and crushing down,
and no more was the issue of his flight,
nor his ability to pick himself up.

No, because, now brain, bone, blood, and being
have coalesced into one dismal puddle,
and – on occasion – another one would step on him,
not realizing he was already dead – or maybe they did?

Who knows?

Tragic, isn't it?

MARYALICIA POST

A Casualty

The day after Pearl Harbor
his whole basketball team signed up
so he did too
because that was one sure way
to get out of going to school
And the Marines
taught him
everything he needed to know
to become a sniper
and a scout
before sending him
to Iwo Jima
where he was taught
to spray the caves with fire
to force the enemy to come out
which they did
including one very young soldier,
just a boy,
in flames.
And the only thing
he couldn't learn
was how to live with that.

MAYY ELHAYAWI

Dad in a Dream

Please visit me in my dreams;
Help me get through the pain;
Teach me how to fight with might and main.
Hold my hands tightly and let me
Feel your pulse once more;

Help me forget the nightmare,
And all that I have been through.
Ever since your heart stopped,
Mine has followed too.

Your death didn't only break my heart;
It has also smashed my backbone.

MEWEN WOODWARD

The One That Got Away

– turning on the next chapter,
the world awaits –

As the day went bright and warm,
When my heart was at peace,
And my mind was filled with inquisitive questions,
I hardly seek of what it was going to happen
Until you and I met with pure serendipity.

We were young,
Adult mind with childlike hearts – our unknown desires
But as blissful as I was to get something from you,
You were wised enough to discover the best of me.
And so, our amity was invaluable.

– a blissful heart
with corrupted mind –

As the night went dim and chill – the clock was ticking
Warm fuzzies were dancing when we read our words while the
moon was still young.
– Full of laughter and unexpected expressions –
Like I was drunk with intense euphoria.
And the flower, that I didn't know, grew and slowly began to
bloom.

Day by day, we had spoken on matters that weren't normal;
We made promises that might poisoned us if we speak up.
We exposed half of ourselves to one another, that we used to be
afraid to show.

But as the matters went deeper,
Our fate had led us somewhere that we were afraid to speak up.

– an arduous truth to say,
and lies to believe –

With the passage of time, slowly, we began to build walls.
We hid ourselves behind these walls.
As our actions, our words, were much lesser,
We chased down for our dreams hereafter,
So as our fate was never meant to be.

When the night was cold – and the day was about to be born –
Our emotions became singular;
I had thought of giving up – forgetting our memories
As I knew everything was just an illusion,
I deeply erased you since I was getting sick of this fake love.

– when my heart was in pain,
the mind became clearer –

As those days of lies ended,
I let go on the things that slowed me down,
I abide on my journey to find myself here in this world.
Since I thought I had lost my way,
Thus, a miracle gave me a sign.

Seeing the brighter side of the world
Was an epiphany that changed my whole view.
I was saved and I was fine.
My only place that carried peace was the magic shop,
And the key to open the door was to learn how to love myself.

– ending this chapter,
there is hope for the next one –

MOUMITA CHAKRABORTY

A Joyride

“Ticket, please!”, yelled the conductor,
Leaning over from his place;
In yet an attempt
To put the kibosh on the ever-increasing rage,
That had engulfed the two women scuffling away
Over that one fateful seat (the mother of all palaver)
Claimed to be hers by each!
“You shoved me aside”, scowled the one
With a big bun and fiery eyes.
“No way!,” was the ready reply;
Ten times louder and fuelled by,
“You hurt my son so bad he got cut!”
Referring to,
An age-old spot on his hand bearing,
Needless to say,
A weak proof!
And off went the red-eyed monstress
“I hurt your son, didn’t I?”

My my! What a liar we’ve got for a joyride!”
Announced she,
Turning to us for advocacy,
While we sat quiet and unblinking!
One should have seen the little fella;
Sandwiched forever between his mother dear
And her paralleled peer,
Scarcely breathing,

His hopeful eyes silently pleading
To bury the hatchet once and for all
And get him the darned seat,
Which his mother wouldn't
Until she had 'rightfully' achieved it!
Thus they fought and fought,
With all the zeal and ardor
Of never-say-die Roman gladiators,
When came the next stop;
And up an old lady popped;
Her bleary view falling instantly where it should;
While her failing health without fail
Broadcast her urgent need-
That of a mere seat!
Hence,
Subsided the twain drama queens,
Having gotten over their histrionics,
Hot and flushed like the midday sun,
While a suppressed laughter rose from around!

MOUSUMI PARIDA

The Slum Boys – Not less than the Emperors

I raised my palms to wipe out the drops of their tears
To make them laugh,
Offered deep breathe to subdue their distress.
But I perceived that God blessed them
With inner stabilities and endurance
To fight out all sorts of scarcity.
No matter how they were despondent and helpless,
Didn't quit the battle like cowards.

Yes, they were the brave fighters.
For their gallantry I astounded, bowed
At their courageous accomplishment.

I curiously judged them how they laughed,
Sang the song of ecstasy.
How they conquered every nightmare
To prove their distinctness!!
At the end of a fatigued and starved day
How they gathered energy to fight for tomorrow,
Wasn't it amazing!!

When their palms were wounded by hammer
In breaking stones, they were clapping
When tears of their eyes searched
The way to shed down
They caroled the song with smile...

Were they god or equivalent to God
I don't know, but have seen the garbage of others
On their back, to carry unhesitatingly in whole life,
But I wasn't able to carry the sorrows of mine.

They laughed and enjoyed their little achievements
But I cried for everything from
A broken pen to stolen sandal.

At their smile and sorrow I discovered God,
How much their hand filled with the emptiness,
Could create the opportunities
To overcome ups and down.

In every moment of their life,
Dreams burnt with reality,
But life couldn't stop there.
A new horizon waited to prove them.

The slum boys aren't less than emperors
To rule over their burning dreams and rescue them
For budding, without the weapons
They can defeat the opposition.
Their non-ended struggles prove them real heroes
To enlighten how to contend bravely
To own their potentiality.

MUHAMMAD AUWAL IBRAHIM

Death and the Boy's Black Hair

At twelve, thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen
Young he sees himself,
Calls himself even in his dream,
Just because of his dark boyish black hair

When we preached death shall visit every soul
He said he was still young,
When he gets old he will change
He does not know what tomorrow holds
He cheats, lies, plays without any fear,
thought of death now
because he is still yet to see grey hair on his head
His parent cannot talk to him

At sixteen, seventeen, and eighteen life still continues
Nothing new on preparation for his hereafter
All his struggles end for this world
Despite all his knowledge
He seems to be ignorant
Just because of worldly materials

When you intended to preach to him
You would remember his knowledge
When you are bold enough to approach him
Wherever you quote,
He will complete it before you
When you keep on telling him the truth
From then, you are his fiend
He will desert you

Today, he is visited by Angel Azra'il unexpectedly
The one in charge of the death
Now he remembers Allah,
Now he wants to turn to Allah,
When it is time to return to Him,
He don't know that it is too late
He is now regretting his sins
Trying to say the kalimatu shahada
Suddenly, he falls and dies
With his black hair
All eyes of friends and family on him
Crying over his sudden death,
Soon they would be separated by sand

His eyes were blind,
When his neighbor's child died,
Cousin died, unborn baby died,
President died, emir died, minister died,
Scholar/preacher died,
Former governor died, former first lady died,
All, were not a lesson to him
Both unborn, young and old
Die when their time is due

Ustaz name he forgot
New modern name he found
All is over now
Time is never taken backward

If he was arrogant because of his beauty,
Now his beautiful face would be the food of maggots
Or if it was because of his knowledge,
That his brain would now be the food of maggots

NIELS HAV

My Fantastic Pen

I prefer writing with a used pen found in the street
or with a promotional pen, gladly one from the electricians,
the gas station or the bank.

Not just because they are cheap (free),
but I imagine that such an implement
will fuse my writing with industry
the sweat of skilled labourers, administrative offices
and the mystery of all existence.

Once I wrote meticulous poems with a fountain pen
– pure poetry about purely nothing
but now I like shit on my paper, tears and snot.

Poetry is not for wimps!

A poem must be just as honest as the Dow Jones index
– a mixture of reality and sheer bluff.

What has one grown too sensitive for? Not much.

That's why I keep my eye on the bond market
and serious pieces of paper. The stock exchange
belongs to reality – just like poetry.

And that's why I'm so happy about this ball point pen
from the bank, which I found one dark night
in front of a closed convenience store. It smells
faintly of dog piss, and it writes fantastically.

PHEN WESTON

Komorebi

If I could count the infinity of you
I'd place each second within your soul,
and lay my breath between the stars
that form your heart and whole.
Was it privilege to love you?
Painted hues of viridescent lives
to those lost seconds when we saw
the world begin again in strides.
Lived in promises reconsidered by death
and blues. Do you know I was forged of you?
The collage of unnumbered lines,
the lithesome stranger redefined
in dawns of lithium dwam and dew,
the twinkles of lost cosmic youth.

We watch the world behind monolith eyes,
each turning page that falls apart
and loses ink to emotive tears,
knowing that I could never write with conviction
because I never gave my heart
to more than contradiction.
But, doesn't depth produce the soul?

RAKESH AGRAWAL

The World of Sacred Hopes

Encircling steps of success
Going from the nadir deep inside earth to the zenith up there
In the sky
Slippery steps with a skin-deep coat
Greasy coat littered with feathers
Feathers of desires and dreams
I tried to climb the stairs
Only to slide from top to bottom
Very much like a conveyor belt
Reaching again and again
I standing on the fissure belt
Reaching again and again
To the very same point
I'd begin with.

Milestones on the empty road call life
Depicting bygone years
Lost forever in vacuumed sphere
With a beginning. Without an end
No smile. No laughter
Can displace me from the belt
To a bubble on the surf of the worldly ocean
And I keep chasing the invisible rainbow
On the jelly grey sky.

Success is the magical wand
Angles extend to you. Him. Her. They
Like a ray of seven plus one colour light
Touching everybody on this earth and away
Forgetting those dumped in the pit
In the pit of slumped hopes and drunken desires
Waiting for a hallowed spirit to descend and take them
Take me. In the arms
And take away to another world
The world of sacred hopes.
Sacred desires.

REED VENRICK

“The Thinker” Statue Revised

In history’s cultural line of time, poetry
one day will be written only by those
who grew up on this side of the millennia wall,
a cultural place where children go to school
with cell phones clutched in sweaty hands.

Soon, those who never studied without
access to this second techie brain, will write
their poetic lines only on their handy machines,
carried carefully as a baby through the rapids
of study and into the working life they are fated to fill.

So a new millennial sculptor is needed to
reincarnate the famous statue of Rodin –
not just in Paris, but at Columbia U, even in
Cleveland, where a Rodin copies contemplate
the American universe.

Rodin’s first thinker still sits solitary
on a boulder in the garden of the Musee’ Rodin,
where he’ll always muse on the destiny
of the Seine, flowing under yonder Pont Neuf,
and out to the universal ocean.

But Rodin’s “The Thinker” redesigned and
recast, updated for a new millennia generation,
will not be contemplating where rivers flow
or where French sailors sail to colonies go.

But “The Thinker,” statue, revised for the age
of cell phones and obsessive techie progress,
will be placed again in gardens and museums,
again contemplating the cosmic mystery

of why we are sitting here and thinking there,
staring into the mysterious map of the universe
in the palm of the hand.

RENÉ VAN DER KLOOSTER

The Lamb

all along the track
of the butchers of life
pure innocent blood gets spilled

walking down the track
dried blood in the foul soil
fresh blood of the hiker drips

high above the track
vultures of death circle
eager to eat you and me

flowers on the track
thrown by those left behind
heralds of their own demise

sunlight on the track
of the blood of the lambs
evokes the immortal souls

somewhere down the track
of the blood of the lambs
a lamb slaughters the butcher

RICK BLUM

Poem 301

*I like to tell younger poets that everyone
is born with 300 bad poems in them.*

– Billy Collins

The long journey across a dystopian landscape strewn with strained metaphors and mixed meters, rhyming couplets that sing-song down the page like drunken coeds, sonnets and sestinas sagging from the weight of overwrought wordsmithing, and free verse indistinguishable from prose save a sprinkling of absurdly alliterative phraseology has finally arrived at its Elysian destination – a place of ineffable joy, where cannily crafted images flow as naturally as cool mountain streams, and past blunders – like writing poems about writing poems – are but a distant memory.

ROGER G. SINGER

Cottage Song

I remember the shadows
and the long arms of strength

I see smiles and pain
seasons passing.
voices over a river
one I'm familiar with

thoughts provide a healing.
of scars no longer visible

I recall the aroma of lilacs
in morning.
dew covering canvas awnings
and red wing blackbirds
heading to the tidal basin.

SANDIP SAHA

Golden Girl

I saw her while walking
On the street of New York,
The crowd was on the move,
But her face got engraved
In my mind forever.
She also looked at me
Perhaps seeing me as a foreigner,
Turned her face away immediately.

In the tide of time everything perishes;
After so many years those curly
Silky hair, some of them caressing
Her cheeks, wide open eyes,
Soft looking face,
Soothing skin, bright white complexion
Still remain as fresh as ever in my mind.

My mind flies as a white pigeon,
Goes to her house, sits on her window,
Sees her sleeping on her bed
Covering herself with a bright blanket
Keeping her face out of it.
She wakes up at the flapping of the wings
Of the snow white pigeon.

She senses the pleasure of a message,
Catches the bird that seems
To be happy to get caught by her.
She kisses the bird
With honey touch of her pink lips
As if she is whispering 'how are you'?

SANDRA T. ADEYEYE

The Dialogue

He just announced he is getting married
To the perfect ballet dancer without a past
Everyone rallying round them so happy
That should be me, but he said I was FAT!
Others had taken their bites piece by piece
He had taken a chunk with a dip of his knife
Funny how fate plays this record
From a nursery to the tripod.

He announced she is pregnant with child
Twelve and one times had he butchered mine
To the trash all our memories canned
That should be us, but I have become trapped
He returns to say it was a mistake
He had not meant to put her in a family way
Like a click, I was news.
I watch him jiggle with every stride.

He returned to me on bended knees
Saturated with awe, I took to my heels.
He had announced of how his love was unending
And that same tongue had cut and left me bleeding
He tells now of how his dreams are full of me
Yet he is stuck to another like branch and tree
“Will you really leave me?” I heard from afar
With my bags packed and shoes in hand,
Zap! My breeze is all that is left behind
Never will I tap on rewind.

SANJEEV SETHI

Mosaic

The thruway is between serene
and summer. Toting a popsicle
machine, you arrive in slow
motion. Thump of footsteps
reach me even when you don't:
this dirge of distance keeps us in
comfort. Effortlessly your hand
crawls to create a glissando of
greed. There is no Maginot Line.
We're at war without munitions.

SANJEEV SETHI

Speculation

My fingertips feel the wake of your rush on
the possibilities of pleasure. Your catch light
reminds of the reason I love without fear of
abscission. Unlike plants we postmark our
mail. Or do we? Adjacencies compose their
contentions. Ours is an envisagement of an
estimate beyond the bounds of reasonable
immersion. Does pretext kindle the process?

STEVE JACKSON

Love's Victory

With your kind personality
you were my high calling
urging me
to put my best foot forward.

Reaching beyond
the fear you could hurt me
I suffered setbacks
feeling I said the wrong thing to you.

Alone I anguished
while a voice inside me,
ideals,
told me it was good
to endure pain
with patience
learning to come across
in a good light
for you.

In time I saw your face
like a soul
when you kissed me.

And now I recognize
my own soul is you
beyond the pain
where love's victory
is joy.

STEVE TROYANOVICH

one more rainbow for the road

*Traces of a future lost
In between the lines
One more rainbow for the road*

– Kris Kristofferson: *This Old Road*

was it the dream
or the remembrance
of the dream
that was *real*...

detours crisscross
like Rod Serling signposts
inside my mind

the rearview mirror
of fugitive shrouds
the broken recollections
in between the lines
of lost highways

i was alone yet with me
the fading roads of yesterday:

*i rejoined Lew Welch for another lifetime
one afternoon in Riverside*

*near the torn desolation on the banks
of the Ohio James Wright shouted encouragement
to me*

*i heard Abbie Hoffman's voice again – -still calling
me his flowerchild with thorns...*

i survive. dreaming... lost...
huddled in corners of memory and frail illusions
as lonely as the darkness
traveling down this road

TARIQ MALIK

A Billion Ships of Theseus

Every seventh person you meet
Is a migrant
A veritable ship of Theseus
One of a jostling legion
Going on a billion strong

We leap across entire continents
Our identities in continuous flux
Our status and address unknown
In attrition and assimilation
Rejection and absorption

And always persecution in safe havens

30 million of us are condemned
To a lifetime of bonded labor
20 million are legally slaves

A million strong are frenetically raising
Glass pyramids out of the Arabian sands
To fulfill the wet dreams of modern-day pharaohs

We are migratory herds feeding on hoof
Testing with savage tongues
Integrity of barbed wires
Electrified barriers
Concrete mazes of bureaucracies
Mined harvest fields seeded nocturnally

And the carnage continues

The ground is shifting beneath our feet
Our armadas chant the delivering tide
The denied shores beckon

Last week two stowaways
Tumbled casually out of an astonished English sky
To land on airport rooftop
While another spilled from an unclaimed suitcase
Circling the baggage carousel

Each in snapshot rigor mortis

Perhaps
We are all such
Unclaimed baggage
Propelled by twin dynamics
Of pull and push
Of hope and despair
Endlessly circling
Global carousels

THOMAS LEONARD D. SHAW

Misrecognizing Urgency

The rainstorm a ghost shivering
in the vanishing horizon, consuming
all bodies fantasizing the intimacy of warmth

with a starving darkness ignorant
to the plight of lamps, the despair of streetlights,
all light that illusions a struggle for or back.

In the midst of collapse you ask for a candle
hidden in a kitchen cupboard. I will obey
regardless of the futility of a tiny flame

to withstand the onslaught of Earth
and its whispers. Beating against tin,
we submerge in the pitch black,

around us the air of anger mixing
with a doubt heavy with the years. I hesitate
to bring up the issue

because in the face of a shared oblivion
the last thing we will need is a fight. You
and I will instead stretch worn out arms

urging embrace for one mere moment,
to long for each other, to be within each other,
as reprieve, as the beginning of a different kind of end.

In the morning I will throw away a shirt a size too big
to be ours. You will hide scraps of paper,
rolls of film, countless other memories I do not remember.

In the afternoon we will pick up what has fallen
outside of what was our home. You will linger by the door
while I learn to scavenge between uprooted trees.

TIM HALL

Working People, Why Still Slave?

Working people, why still slave
For men who ride you to the grave?
Why still toil, drip sweat, shed blood
For lords who tramp you in the mud?

Why still serve to those who shirk
The banquet flesh of you who work?
Why give away unbounded wealth
That geysers from your laboring self?

Galley-slaves of factory,
Why still forge in misery
Chains that bind your very life
To your foe in bitter strife?

Do you have leisure, peace of mind,
Unstressed love, food, shelter, time?
Or what is it your hard work buys
While unrest in your heart lies?

The cars you build you buy to drive;
The wealth you coin keeps rich alive;
The clothes you weave are sold to you;
The guns you forge defend the few.

Build cars – but build your strength to rise;
Coin wealth – but also, organize;
Weave clothes – and fighting network tight;
Forge guns – to seize for your final fight!

Then build cars – for working folk to keep;
Then coin wealth – but let no rich man reap;
Then weave clothes – delight in your struggle's fruits;
Then forge guns – lay low the lords in suits.

TWINKLE GEORGE

Finding Her

I rummage for her,
among the scrambled letters,
Life amidst the dry leaves,
only a crackling whisper
Lost in the abyss of words, she stood
ruined, among the ruins.
Stripped of hope and desire,
veiled in silence, consuming silence.
A tiara for her ricocheting thoughts.
I rummage for her,
The child in me.

USHA SRIDHAR

Moment of Reckoning

Why this angst against a hapless mongrel?
Woeful, is its plight, its sight, a sore.
Why rush onto a speeding car?
You will have to forever, live with a scar.
Why knock your head against the wall?
Is this an intelligent way to settle a score?
Your attempts to hang yourself with a rope;
with life, you'll never then be able to cope.
You are hurt, dejected, I understand.
But, act this way? In your thoughts there is a drought.
A friend's words these were; wise and sound.

If you must, wake up your pride, self confidence
let it erupt, flow out like burning lava, far and wide.
Discover your inner strength, and rise to the occasion,
like Arjuna (eventually) stood valiantly against the opposition;
even if it means walking this challenging path alone.
Someone has to start. Why not you on your own?
You might not have a Krishna to mentor you;
look at the victims, events around you for clues.
Their tales, heroic struggles will be an inspiration
their early inputs could fire your imagination.

Thanks my friend, I bow to you with warm gratitude
your astute words, have forever changed my attitude.
Why feel guilty by the demeanour of the callous?
I will henceforth, respond harshly to acts, malicious.

Yes, I am an equal among all the equals on this earth,
to live a meaningful life we all truly deserve.
The path is long, meandering; strewn with obstacles;
but, victory befriends and allies with the truth
it is divine, and so needs to be pursued.

Brimming with confidence, I stood tall
ready to weather anything – with a resolute will.
I wish to make a difference with my presence
as I tread a new course, with lessons learnt.
I'm in a hurry to make up for much lost time
I will be a warrior and saviour at the same time.
I want peace to reign in this heavenly abode
where harmony, joy, reside side by side.

Faced with a crisis, I had found my true self;
fears I dispelled; to my insecurities bid farewell.
With a song on my lips, spring in my feet;
was ready to act, knowing it would be no mean feat!
Could I inspire more? To take up the cudgels;
come up victorious ; end one's troubles?
Try, I must, without a doubt.
Rise up, sans triumph, to fight another day;
O lord, give me strength, I pray.

VANDANA SHARMA

Foot Steps of Winter: Rime Royal Sonnet

I feel your whispers lingering,
among the orchard trees,
snowy mist is the wonderful gift you bring.
Life wraps blanket of cool breeze,
dark skies summon the azure blue sea,
orange, green hues turn to brownish shades,
songs of winter-glory, sing beautiful maids.

Days give space to nights in their hearts,
birds fly away to far summer lands,
a hint of nature for winter's start.
Evening spills warmth hands in hands,
weaving lovely memories strand by strand,
on my door I hear winter's footsteps,
now, it is time for summer to rest.

VASEEM G QURESHI

Waiting

I've been waiting for you
Since the night
When the fight of light and darkness
ended with happiness.

I've been waiting for you
Since the day
When the first ray came to the earth
with divine mirth.

I've been waiting for you
Since the moment
When a beat was sent to my tireless pump
to throb and jump.

Ah! Let me wait!
Till my last breath forgets earthly agony,
and sings with melody.

Ah! Let me wait!
Till my lovely death embraces me
and makes me free.

Ah! Let me wait!
Till my firm faith has love of thee
O come to me, come to me.

WILLIAM C. BLOME

To the Argentine

I don't know about you, but when I'm on the high seas,
I'm just a hunk of lamb trussed up in white tissues
and slathered about in chilly mint jelly, while here at home,
the doorbell next door has to be stuck, and it's chiming
umpteenth times unto jars of gin fancied crescent-style
around your husband's dozing body and his wet bar.
However, everything detailed there is a domicile away
and in what you'd call your sunrise direction. I can
discern it's taking my wife the entire pre-morning
to slide into her Honda, ignite the several sparkplugs,
and then pull the mother back for riding high on asphalt
roads, but nothing there has to change our timetable,
sweetmeat: You just better the hell be ready as clover
for the tongue of your smallish ram to push in, slide out,
go up, and come down, on our cruise to the Argentine.

WILLIAM MASTERS

I Was Too Busy To Stop For Death

This morning I was too busy to stop for death
As he hailed me from inside a cab.
I merely turned my head, north by northwest,
To block his face and declined the impudent request.

At lunch, I received a text to join him for dessert,
“Please... sit with me and my proud guests.”
I ignored his plea and did not respond,
And deleted the text with a wave of my wand.

That evening I received a hand delivered note
With a return address that read, *Death's Door*.
I snatched the presumptuous letter from death's messenger
And wrote across the page, “Stop being such a bore.”

The next morning I received a large white spray
Of lilies, with a black etched sympathy card
That read, “RIP. You fool, you're already dead!”
And yet, I experienced no feeling of dread.

I returned the message without response,
But laughed out loud because I knew
Whenever my life's span ran out
An angel would appear to woo:

Gabriel or Michael or Raphael or Uriel
Would gently lift me up and carry me
Above the Valley of Death into the firmament
And gently set me down at a pair of golden gates.

INTERVIEW

Interview with Niels Hav by Nizar Sartawi

Nizar Sartawi: He captivates you with his simplicity and modesty just as he captivates you with his poetry. This is the Danish poet and short story writer Niels Hav, whose works have been translated into many languages, such as English, Arabic, Spanish, Turkish, Chinese, Italian, and German.

So many poets start writing poetry at an early age. Could you tell us about your beginning as a poet, relating how your education, family, and environment influenced your poetry?

Niels Hav: I was raised on a farm far from the capital on the Danish west coast. Not a particularly literary environment, I was the first in my family to become a university student. Those early experiences with animals, farm work and the nature around still mean a lot to me also when I'm writing poetry. Moreover, I got something very important for young people: a great longing to explore the world. Big dreams grow in small places. As a teenager I wrote hypersensitive and unfinished poems without much life experience. I stumbled around and harvested defeats – thank God for the wonderful naivety in the heyday of youth, without which this world would petrify into conservatism and tradition. Later I went to university, where my personal experiences were put into a larger perspective. The fact is that if you want to be a

writer, you are first and foremost a reader. You must know the tradition if you want to put pen to paper and take the next step and write something new.

NS: In your poem, “It’s Simply Ingenious,” there are two references to Norse Mythology, the pig and Valhalla. How has your poetry been influenced by Norse Mythology? How about other mythologies, for example Greek and Roman?

Niels Hav: As a Scandinavian you imbibe Norse mythology with mother’s milk; barrows from the Stone Age and the Vikings are scattered in the landscape. Nordic mythology reflects nature and life-conditions here: the bright hectic summer followed by a long dark winter, when the days get shorter and shorter and everything drowns in rain or ice and snow. Winter depression is lurking in the corners.

I studied classical Greek and Latin; Homer, Dante and Seneca are foundation stones. But when talking about mythology, the biblical stories undoubtedly are of particular importance. They are common and shared stuff for Christians, Muslims and Jews, and the language is steeped in biblical metaphysics. Our ideas of justice, personal freedom, and respect for the individual, have taken their colors from these basic stories. The dream of the earthly paradise is the engine of all revolutions. When writing poetry we use an ancient language full of metaphysical connotations – language is no private invention, but a common tool, so we have to handle and use the connotations language carries along...

NS: Your rural background reminds me of another Scandinavian poet, Olav H. Hauge (1908 – 1994), who worked as gardener in his own orchard. How does your own poetry reflect this affinity with nature?

Niels Hav: You are impressively well-informed about Nordic poetry. Yes, Olav Hauge lived his whole life in Ulvik, where he was born. An astonishing fact now when we all are a kind of nomads and wander around the globe: it is possible to stay home and dig deep with your own spade where you were born. Hauge was a humble local who used words sparingly and didn't have many material requirements. For me, my rural upbringing means that I came to poetry with different experiences from urban poets. Nature is not only a recreational area for leisure, but also the cultivated landscape, where farmers grow the crops that feed people. The mind remembers the settlements in raw nature, and in all my books there are poems reflecting this, like "The Stone Crusher" in the new Arabic book:

What is man supposed to do with his life?
Walk into the plantation; sit down sheltered and listen
to the conversation between the wind
and the fir trees?
Who has a better suggestion?

NS: At the end of your poem "My father's Wristwatch," the watch stops after 75 minutes, and you put it back in the drawer, saying that "Someone else can decide." What is the symbolic significance of this "old watch resurrected from the dead?" What does it tell us about your view of and relationship with literary and cultural heritage?

Niels Hav: The biggest mystery in life is that time passes. Sooner or later you discover the clock that counts the seconds inside the body and you can't stop it, time trots briskly ahead. My father was a farmer and sexton (he looked after the graveyard in the village), he died many years ago. In my drawer I have his wristwatch as a physical memory, and a reminder to myself: our time with flesh on our bones is so short. Now everything happens on the run,

helter-skelter, and unprecedented changes happen every day – you know the feeling. Life turns unexpected corners and surprises us all the time. None of us understand exactly what’s going on, words flicker through the brain like deep water fish; they constantly shift colours. We bustle around like critters. There’s something we want and something we must do. My father’s wristwatch is old and useless, but some primitive feelings cling to it and I can’t throw it away. In that way my poems live on facts and feelings and the irony of life – and balance between memories and hopes for the future. I want to bring all kinds of heritage with me and to stay with the kids and their spicy expectations.

NS: In a recent interview, you stated that “there’s rarely real money in poetry” and “there isn’t either much poetry in money.” In other words, you believe that to some extent poetry and money are mutually exclusive. Could you say more about this idea? Also could you tell us how is this idea reflected in your own poetry?

Niels Hav: A fine question, humor is needed when dealing with poetry. If you are waiting for a train full of money you are on the wrong platform. There are outstanding poets who live and die in poverty, we all know that. Money is an obsession in this epoch, a disease in the brain of our culture, but the chances of making real money on poetry are slim. Poetry and money are like fire and water, they have nothing in common. Of course you can’t say that poetry and richness are mutually exclusive, but it’s about focus. The fairytale might flourish in a poor hut, while the billionaire is turning gray in fear of losing his worthless privileges. In the end we are all losers. The most valuable things in life can’t be bought for money; love, beauty, happiness, a strong family and good friends. But there is

no reason for making a mystery out of it, money, shares and the stock exchange belong to reality, just like poetry, this contradiction is part of the comedy.

NS: I know you have been asked about Danish poetry in previous interviews. For the benefit of Arab readers could you give us a brief idea about contemporary Danish poetry: poetic trends, new voices, how Danish poetry converges or diverges with European and/world poetry, and how Danish people receive poetry.

Niels Hav: Denmark is a small nation, surrounded by water, we are only five million people, and poetry is a small branch here as everywhere. A growing trend in Danish poetry seems to be an awaking political awareness of global issues as the postcolonial imbalance between rich and poor countries, climate challenges et cetera.. Female poets contribute more and are stronger than ever before. Inger Christensen was a unique voice of international quality, she died a few years ago. Her Butterfly Valley is a wonderful sonnet cycle of exquisite depth and beauty. Pia Juul writes fairytale poetry full of cruelty and magic, and Ursula Andkjær Olsen juggles with the language of crystal clear paradoxes. Another trend would be the autobiographical prose poem where the poet talks about his background, personal problems or family life. Sometimes it seems almost private, but it's also a mirror for new generations.

Through the last decades immigration has supplied our country with people from all parts of the world, they bring along new food and fresh ideas, and they enrich Danish art and literature in new ways. Something is happening.

NS: Do you see any crisis in modern/contemporary poetry? Could you elaborate on this topic?

Niels Hav: The world economy is in crisis at the moment and this also affects poetry of course. It seems to be a global phenomenon that publishers look around for bestsellers and publish less poetry. This could be a problem if poets at the same time accept to stay inside a special poetry-ghetto with no ambition to engage with real problems. Lots of writers are connected to universities, and of course the discussions about literature in classrooms at all levels are essential, but poetry wants to get involved also outside campus. The world is on fire. Politics, bombs, ideology and religion ravaging the globe. This is what people are talking about in the cafe – and it's the challenge for poetry to join this conversation. To find out and understand what's going on, and if possible to say things as they are.

NS: The world of the internet has changed the way people deal with the written word. Many people publish on the internet. How do you view the following?

Regular newspapers, magazines, and journals vs. literary Websites, online papers & magazines, and blogs.

Paper books vs. e-books.

The Facebook as a social networking website.

Niels Hav: The openness and freedom on the Internet offers tremendous opportunities which are constantly threatened by commercial groups and regimes who want to control people. Of course there is a real legal conflict between copyright holders and the net-user's interest in free downloads, but freedom on the Internet is a fundamental value that is important to defend, and this seems to be a serious battlefield. The Internet makes it possible to follow what is happening around the world, to maintain contacts

and exchange experiences in new ways and at high speed. A bunch of wonderful opportunities.

That said, I must say that I love paper. I prefer newspapers, magazines and poetry printed on paper to literary websites and online magazines. The Internet is a deep container which tends to drown everything in an endless flood of good and bad. You can take a thousand year old book in your hand and read it without problems, while digitized texts and the electronic universe requires constant updates. A healthy dose of scepticism is needed before we close our libraries and throw the books away. But fortunately the one does not exclude the other; the same work can be published as an e-book and printed on paper, that would be perfect.

NS: How do you evaluate poetry festivals?

Niels Hav: We writers are individualists, most of the time we are glancing at the wall at home as a lonely robber in the desert. Festivals are a chance to meet with colleagues and share dreams and ideas. Every business needs this kind of professional venue. Symposia of any sort is an ancient tradition. You meet new authors, new texts and issues. And the poems are meeting a new audience who gets the chance to hear the text read in the author's own voice. The fact is that poetry is related to music, and often the tone and the poet's appearance can be the key to a deeper understanding. A good festival can be a magical place – sometimes it's like being inside a UFO, glowing and pervaded by metaphysics. Everyone returns home with their heads swimming full of inspiring new impressions. That's the ideal festival, of course there are also less successful variants, which quickly disappears into merciful oblivion.

NS: Your poetry has been translated into several languages, including Arabic. Could you give us some details about this?

Niels Hav: Danish is one of the smaller languages, so it's a pleasure to be translated and see the poems thrive in other regions. It has in particular been a joy for me to get in touch with Arab readers who have such a rich tradition for poetry of high quality. When I sit with an Arabic newspaper, I can only "understand" the photos. I'm trapped in the Latin alphabet. Many Arab writers have the advantage over European colleagues, they are able to read two alphabets. I don't know if Arabs are more intelligent than the Europeans, maybe they just are more curious. In English Per K. Brask and Patrick Friesen have been working with my stuff for many years, they initially made it possible for the poems to cross borders. My Arabic book is translated by Jamal Juma, who himself is a fine poet. My friend Salim Abdali has translated a few texts – and you dear Nizar have translated some new poems, I am profoundly grateful for this. Translators are alchemists who make a heroic effort: they perform the impossible.

NS: *Ababil* has published four of your poems translated into Arabic. I am sure Arab readers would like to read more. Could you grant us at least one more poem?

Niels Hav: Yes, thank you, I would be happy to end with a poem. It has been a pleasure to exchange thoughts and ideas with you.

We Are Here

I got lost in a strange part of town.
All streets ran steeply upward, quick-footed people
ran by me dressed in light-coloured clothes

and looking as though they were carrying light things in their bags.

I stopped someone for directions
and immediately I stood in the middle of a clump
of friendly faces. – Where do you want to go?

I began explaining. They listened,
smiling, as if for the first time
they were hearing a dead dialect.

Then they began speaking one on top of another
and pointing in all directions.

I pulled out my map. Eagerly it was opened
and studied with interest. – Where are we?

I asked with a finger on the map.

They looked at me and as a chorus repeated my question.

Then they all broke into hearty laughter,

I laughed too, we were witnessing high
comedy. – Here, said one of them and pointed
to the ground where we stood. – We are here!

(The poem was translated by P.K. Brask & Patrick Friesen)

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