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Prosopisia
A venture of A.R.A.W.L.L...

AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF POETRY & CREATIVE WRITING

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Vol - VI, No. 2, 2013

An International Journal of Poetry & Creative Writing

PROSOPISIA

Prosopisia is the official journal of A.R.A.W.LII... (Academy of *raite**(s) And World Literati) which intends to provide a literary forum to the creative writers of the world. A biannual journal, it aims at creating a platform for shared experiences of human existence as voiced in the literary products the world over.

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An Excuse for an Editorial...

I love my country and I hate myself for doing so.

Yes, I do love my country for its ancient past and past idealism, for its intangible abstractness and vast incomprehensibility, for its myths defining the human existence *in toto* on this planet, for its history beyond time, for its Nature's poetry and poetic flora and fauna, for its legends and lore, religions and a few rites too, for its diversity, its folk art and culture, its cuisines and recipes and spices, its sky and seasons, its rivers and mountains and for all that it was and was.

Yes, I do hate myself for to me past seems all oblivion, present all bleak and future appears even bleaker, for the artless artificiality and the powerful powerlessness of the weak and the down-trodden, for the rush and race after power – power to harm and for the glittering coins of honesty, sincerity and selflessness tossed to dupe, to realize the most scurrilous dishonest and selfish ends, for all corrupting power to corrupt all, for the canker of politics eating up all the organs of human society, for the inhuman insensitivity under the obnoxious mask of so-well advertised sensitivity, for the religions which up their heads like hoaxes and find supporters as scoundrels and/or fools, for the fact that I, too, am in the rut and a part of what we are and are.

The other day I was attending a workshop on Consumer Protection and was shocked to learn about the various ways the commonmen are duped and also about the different modes by which the consumers can and should protect themselves against them or resist such temptations. But who lures them and why to such pseudo-isms?

The problem is not with the system but the human element. Can there be any law/rule to reform it?

The world, so believed Shakespeare, is a stage and we all are actor and spectators. But today, the world is a big bazaar and we all are sellers and buyers. What a commodification of human existence? What a conspiracy?

But then, is not all life a conspiracy? Is not religion, politics, all growth, each progress and love nothing but conspiracy? And poetry too? This world is a cosmic conspiracy. This cosmos a cosmetic make-over. This divinity – a duping device. This *Maya* just a make-up? For reality is what is beyond – beyond – beyond.

*Nazar chilman, tassawwur perahan, jaama daanai,
Haqeeqat hai haqeeqat se pare, kab iski tai paai.*

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(Cheque/Draft should be in the name of *Anuraag Sharma*)

Prosopisia will publish only original and unpublished texts. All contributions must be submitted to the Editors or Co-Editor.

Contributions : A poem/short-story/one act play/essay must be typed single spaced, Each article each page with poet name and email.

A hard copy and a CD (or E-mail attachment: Subject is *Submission for Prosopisia*) in a DOC, RTF, PDF format must be sent to the editors.

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ANTHONY FISHER
(UK)
Denmark – May 4th 1945

“Wake up Little Darling and see what is happening.

Her mother had never done that before, woken her up.
Tonight she felt different; soft, eager, uninhibited
though these were words that came later –Karen was three.
you must not miss this special moment.

The heavy, black blinds were gone,
the windows wide, wide open,
everyone's windows were open
“Se-der erlys! Look there is light!”
Nu er vi friNow, we are free.
There were candles on our window sill
there were candles on every one's window sill
the night was bright with a thousand candles,
neighbours and strangers dance in the street
drank from bottles, kissing, cuddling, singing.

“There will be a lot of babies,” Mum said.

The house opposite was dark
tight-shut against the crowd.
“Her finery won't save her now that they've gone;
now that they've taken her husband away.”
For a moment Mum was hard and angry.
Your uncle was jailed for resisting
now it is the collaborators that must pay.

“Enough, enough, come let us go and dance,”
and they did, and men came to kiss her Mum,
kiss her, moustaches bristling, lips alive
with the sharp stinging drink Dad made
in the shed where they pickled cucumbers.
The drink that made him sad, made him cry
was making everyone laugh, love and dance.

My Father was in Denmark then, operation Eclipse.
One of the few stories he told me of the war.
A lieutenant Commander in the Royal Navy
his last task was to accept the surrender
from German garrisons around the coast.
All heavily armed, all unpredictable.

“A side arm would have been of no use,
so I decided to wear my dress uniform.
There was a picture in the paper. The caption:
British Officer takes surrender with gloves and cane.”

He then fell in love with a girl on Samsøe.
He came back but family life was never the same,
so I think of him tall and straight, sky-bright eyes,
standing in the prow of a tender with gloves, cap and cane.

•

Londinium

Put your ear to the ground -
and hear the shouts of rotten flesh,
the clash of smith and wheel wright,
twist and stretch of the rope maker.
Your eyes will sting with the scent
of wood smoke, run with the bite
of ammonia from foetid urine.

Long below all this runs
the mark of Boudicca's revenge
in the thin, red slice of burnt iron;
splitting a line of ash and clay
layered in the stones and tiles,
wood, old fires and bones.

Now squeezed by North and South
within its mud-soft lined canal;
the river once nurtured Neanderthal,
Homo Sapiens; lonely itinerants
drifting by for half a million years.

The first hut 15,000 years ago,
now a city of a myriad tongues
that adopts all who come -
hunter, farmer, the dispossessed.

•

Texas 1940s – The Boy

They were mean critters
You'd never invite them to dinner;
tough, hard, fast, taller than me.
He was telling me of his childhood
on his granddad's farm. .

I could shoot a Jack Rabbit,
leaping at full speed by the time I was 4.
He grinned, In officer training
they classed me as a sharp shooter.

He told me how to kill a rattle snake,
to wave a hoe in front of the varmī't
back and forth, back and forth, make it dizzy
lay its head on the ground
so you could chop it off.
Rattlers don't die until the sun goes down.
We'd hang them on a fence
and they'd writhe until night.

The flies were fat, blue-black
and as big as peas.
You had to be quick
but I could snatch a handful
from the window pane
throw them to the floor, crack!

It was self-protection
the flies, jack rabbit, rattlers.

The pig pen was our rodeo.
Boy would they squeal,
twist, turn, run and buck.
We'd leap and most times
fall flat our faces, we aimed
to lie flat arms around them
or holding their ears.
We laughed and laughed –
it was such fun.

We were happy -
didn't know we were dirt poor..

...

BARBARA K EMANUELE
(USA)
I Hate Jazz

I hate Jazz
The excuse it gives for
Pretentious and ostentatious manipulation
It's not about the love of Music
It's about being cool.
It's about teenage girls
Barfing in a bowl
And spreading their legs
To fit in

It's about standing outside
Smoking cigarettes you don't want
For one more minute with hiiiiim

It's about finding meaning
Where there really is only hazy
Drug fueled crap

I hate that it is yours
And that you keep trying to give it to me
This mash up of what was pure
Is now with interpretation
Forever signifying nothing

I hate Jazz
It's what you did to me

It's what I did to me to be
Jazz

•

Essence

When all is shadow
And the same
Nothing
I draw light from dark

Here is when you are with me

My bed expands
Your shadow lies beside me
My mattress bows to your weight
Your scent lulls me to sleep
My hand in yours
Your arm over me

I know your height and weight
I know how tobacco robes you
I know your hands
I create what I need

In this cave we dwell is
The perfect version of you
The perfect version of me
That cannot be

I say "I love you"
The night's breeze carries it up and away
I never dreamed you hear my voice
And think it was someone else

•

Watching You Read

I know I know you.
The beard casts you as someone else,
a yourself I have yet to remember.

Not your usual clone;
You're Sephardic
Ashkenazi
And Moor
Suddenly it's an inquisition

Someone needs to get you
new clothes;
Those freaking things are as old as
You.
Me.

Just not you and me.

There's a fancy word for
writing over writing over writing...
The old blue book,
with old verses,
the old Triumphs;
My only kind.

•••

CHANNAH MOSHE
(JERUSALEM)

Expecting

On the edge
Of the Universe
I sit on the garden wall
Dangling my feet

I look around
At the endless expanse
Am I five again?

With time
The odds
Silver lined

The star's light
Is perceived eons
After its demise
So the Almighty
Must still be

I feel a smile
Transcend the vast unknown

Is happiness
The ultimate goal?

Mother calls out:
"Wash up before supper"
Will it be what the Almighty planned
Something delicious
Or what Mother planned
Something healthy?
Seeing her smile as I walk in
I imagine her hand caress my cheek

I'm ready
For something delectable
But then she cries out in dismay
My footsteps leave muddy imprints
On her clean carpet
Yet she foresees
My many small steps
Will lead
To something worthwhile

•

EFTICHIA KAPARDELI
(GREECE)
Be Blessed

With wounded hands
I measure my strength
Whole soul stretched
in just one day

Under the
great dome of church
faith in reason
in love
be blessed

Oh! we are alone in
world
with hands tied
and devastated members
centuries in the same way
with that shivering
that the mind plunging into drunkenness

Be blessed
Spring as an swallow
will follow the miracle
Enlightened, free wing with
and
to freedom of thought

•

Bridge

In the river of time
water
woke rebellious
as the tireless body
that love
vein to live
deals
the rain
mouth moist with her to join

These days, stone commands
with hands axodeftis
power
and white stones
groundfish
build a bridge
two worlds, two roads
Both lands unite
dreams of
banks to save the wear

Immersed in stone
I get strong support
Bridge lasted Heaven
the starry emotion

•••

ERIK GREINKE
(USA)

The Way The Heat Pours Out

Your house where you keep all the lifeless birds,
Ceramic, carved in ebony, prosaic,
Silent statuettes & mobiles moving
In the window-wind,
Perching on glazed branches,
Singing unheard songs.
Redwing blackbirds, purple finches & exotic
Chinese canaries
Haunt me now that the ice-storms of January
Have made the air too cold for flight.
They've all gone back to Virginia now.
It's too bad we can't do that.

My house in your absence still has its dust,
Uncolored, soft as a sigh, prolific,
Lying on the window ledges & the book shelves,
Covering the paintings on the wall
With a fine kindness of distortion
Of familiar facial-features.
It bothers me with its soundless sorrow,
Now that the dust has covered all
The smudges & the glass-marks,
The cigarette-burns & candle-droppings.
All the glasses have been put away.
Dust can't penetrate a closed cupboard-door.

All the birds except the songless sparrows
Have made their way back to Virginia now,
& the prolific dust has taken dominion
Over my shelves & your songless-glass.
Your house where you keep all the lifeless birds,
& mine where I keep the dust,
These are shadows like the shadows on the snow
That the picket-fence makes as night falls.
The songless sparrow picks & searches
Through the frost & snow for seeds,
To keep his warmth from leaving him
The way the heat pours out my door when I open it.

Isolated Incident

*Low grey clouds
Breathed a chill warning.
The smell of ice
Was in the air.
As darkness fell
I could hear
Whispers of flakes
Falling in the dark.*

*Next morning,
From where I stood
On the covered porch,
A series of footprints
Led off toward
The old logging road
That climbs the hill
Behind my hidden cabin.*

*Someone had stopped
While I slept.
Maybe a hunter
With a head start
On daybreak,
Or did the hunted
Take a break
From the snow*

Before the last cold hill?

•

Dark Star

*Dark star, deadly binary nemesis
Of the transitory star we call sun,
Here we are, on beleaguered planet earth,
Worrying about our own extinction.*

*Dark star, parent of the next meteor,
A tsunami of lethal energy,
Serial killer of the dinosaurs,
Great reaper of scheduled massacres,
Here, we are the captives of gravity.*

*Dark star, our lost identical twin,
Shooting mountains in our direction,
Playing Cain to our reflective Abel,
Birthing invisible anti-matter,
Catalyst for horrific disaster.*

*Dark star, planetary doppelganger,
Mirror occupying negative space,
Black reflection at the vortex of time,
Here, in sunlight, we wait,*

& mature.

•••

GULSUM CENGIZ
(TURKEY)
I Know How It Is

I live through
what all other women live through
I dust the days
and brush joy clean.
I sew
sometimes I knit
creating useful things
is something I enjoy
I write poems...

I'm a mother
I know what
sleepless nights
at a sick child's bedside are like
I live through
what all other women live through
My steps are like a timid pigeon's hop
returning home from work at night.
My heart is like a sparrow's heart
In cat's claws
A heart afraid of lovelessness.

I am a poet
I write of
woman's pain
her hope
and love
I am a women
I write
what I have lived...

•

Nameless

No-one saw how much he suffered
No-one heard he was dead
only his executioners were present
at his burial.

A human being lived in this world
lived to the full, in a human way.
Only those who knew it all
could say how he lived and died.
Expecting no applause for what he had done
he harvested his hopes
as patient as an ant...

As he reached the clouds his mind
loved life- and people- in the boundlessness
of seas,
he wove the future with his hands
his head
his heart.

A human being lived in this world –
lived to the full, in a human way.
Fighting evil, resisting pain
and losing nothing of his humanity.

•••

GUSTAVO VEGA
(SPAIN)

Your skin? Absence. How *to tell*...
The flow of the I in time, germinated from
death, looking. Looking for you.

But there is always something that distract us, for example,
the cold season, clouds and clouds always different from other
clouds, a farewell photo, the poliedric face
of threat, a spit on the forehead or
a nail stuck in the skeleton we hide
under, the crystals of some
invisible wall or ...

Lucky for us that life protects us
from our own passions.

•••

JETON KELMENDI
(BELGIUM)

Your Face With Golden Eyes Is Appearing

Today autumn can get full with the night
The moon fell in the window
The best
Verses
I will write for you

Maybe you are asleep
My best lady friend
Before you reached
Ten and ten
I sing for the verse
The word has plenty of night

The clock
Passed midnight

The sky descended on verses
And in the sparseness of the stars
Your face is appearing
With Golden Eyes

Just like in ancient times
"From that ridge I threw my eyes to you"

•

What Do You Want From the Anti Dream

There was a very enigmatic trip
It was taking everything with her
The departure and arrival

Taking with her the welcome and non welcome
And you
With many lyrics were dreaming
For love

Every direction had a road
You who did not ruin the desire of the dream
What do you want from the anti dream
Where yesterday turned into the day before yesterday

Tomorrow turns into today
You took everything of mine with yourself
And threw it away from me

Away from you
The emptiness of which

I have always been scared
So that it does not get too late

•

Anti word

Know the problem of faceless
When you don't have anything to say
Learn how to be quiet
With honor
Never trust
The bed of antiword
Today and in the day of floods
Be careful of yourself
I have the right to sing lyrics
With your name
And the autumn that I knew
Your Springs with my Summers
Like the South and the North
They rise and fall
With the law of the word will speak tomorrow

•••

JONATHAN BENNETT
(AUSTRALIA)
Chip Trucks of Southern Ontario

A hairpin turn dragged the escarpment's
serrated edge, scoring the sky. You and I
argued road sign grammar, *fresh cut fries*.
(I bemoaned the lost art of the adverb,
you advanced the hyphen, either way.)

Shield rock nursed pockets of April snow
in its nooks of dark. We were so remote.
We ate at a picnic table by a lake
that we could agree, was not *lead* grey.

Your salty mouth unlocked, now eager
to lick me clean. So jump to me in
a middle-distance, dappled remove.
A cut I do when my point of view shakes,
when even the ending is wrested away.

•••

PAUL TRISTAM
(UK)
Woman Child

Oh mother, please help me, my dear mother
there is so much confusion here inside.
For every grown up feeling I have had
a thousand times have I unhappily cried.
Now, am I a little girl or a grown woman?
No, I'm just a strange mixture of the two.
I act so different when I'm with friends
but when I'm alone I always imitate you.
Adolescent failures and teenage confusion
they hide behind my shy, red-faced smile.
While anxiety and embarrassment they both
lay down next to my awkwardness in piles.
I am now in the middle of the muddled years
and I do not understand how all this began?
I hope that I can remain self-respected until
those saving birthday bells of twenty one.

•

Washed Away

Down in the gutter
the rain comes pouring in.
Like a tidal wave
to wash away my sin.
I knew you'd leave me
I knew it all along.
I wish I was not right
sometimes I wish I was wrong.

Down in the gutter
heartache comes flooding in.
As the pain rises
I realize that I can't swim.
I'll build a life raft
from the pieces of my heart.
I am living without you
but don't know how to start?

Drenched, delirious
your face is all I see.
Magical, mysterious
your memory's are feeding me.
Where is my rainbow
where is my sun today.
Like my happiness
It's all been washed away.

•

Walking With Love

Many of the colourful birds fly high,
straight up into the turquoise sky.
To drop heavily scented flower petals
just like confetti all over you and I.
Eagerly the warm Springtime breeze
softly caresses your beautiful face.
Next to you all of Nature's creations
will always come in at second place.
I'm now considered a fully grown man
but I am laughing just like a child.
You have opened the doors to my heart
to set free the boy who lives inside.
I was wandering through the Winter
but now you have brought the Spring.
Instead of dull loneliness inside me
there are happy songs I want to sing.
All of the many dreams in the world
they walk behind you in single file.
They are just hoping for the chance
of simply seeing your wonderful smile.
When I hold onto your precious hand
or when the two of us look eye to eye.
I know that we both have something
which any amount of riches cannot buy.
You really have exactly every quality
that I have searched for in a wife.
You have happily given me your heart
now I am gladly giving you my life.

•••

STEVEN SHER
(JERUSALEM)
How It Starts

First the fluttering of wings
above a bustling city. Some smudge of color
breaking through the suffocating smog.

Nothing but a glimpse of mountains
in the distance shimmering.
The hazy silhouette of wakened faith.

•

Midnight

This is the hour David rose—
when gentle winds stole up the hills,
stroking his harp,

and the stars became his eyes
until the dawn—

extracting Psalms
like pools of wax that
dripped from dancing wicks.

•

Ellis Island

A babel of birds
escorts the ghosts,
those huddled poor,
to the great tile hall

where they once gnawed
on last stale morsels
saved from steerage
shuffling forward in the line

as some were quarantined
and some sent back
from where they came,
whatever port of desperation.

•••

TAMMY NUZZO MORGAN

(USA)

*Unnamed
for Joey*

Sometimes I can see him, the one who could-have-been, our boy.
Your sea-green eyes, velvety brows, tall & dimpled chin, blended
with my full lips & curly hair; so full of possibility.
His birth date is fast approaching. In high school: baseball, wrestling,
poetry?
He, the magician who fooled the Universe, didn't desire to travel the
dark tunnel
to cold air, bright light. Didn't think the show was worth the price of
admission,
the one who told us to go on, live without him.

•

Your silence set off the last explosion;
sending shrapnel everywhere
into the walls, the ceiling, the dog, me.

Slivers of glass showered the easy chair,
the floor, the cat, the sofa, me.

No one & nothing was safe from your war,
you arsenal of rage; the children, the coffee
mug, the paintings, me.

...

VIDA NENADIC
(SERBIA)
The Dreaming Landscape

Yesterday
the neighbors cut the pear tree.
I can still hear that fall
although now
through the windows
I can see the stars.
Easily.

Today,
while the landscape is dreaming
I am
looking at the sky
over the stump.
And I am afraid of the dead, yellow leaves
and the shivering of the dry branches.

...

ZVI SESLING
(USA)
End of the World

--for Gary Snyder

The six of us descended Glacier Point
Yosemite

sat by a slab rock
"Ok to drink, sun purifies it"
someone said
 cupped hands
 gathered
 drank thirstily

We sat and looked over the valley
 Half Dome
 El Capitan

Like looking at the world's end
Or

The world could have ended and
we would not know it

So into the valley we descended
where I bought the local newspaper

Headline: US SHIPS ATTACKED
 IN GULF OF TONKIN

We didn't know where the Gulf was, but
we knew it was bad

 like another Pearl Harbor

A couple US ships sustained damage
 no one was hurt

North Vietnam had three torpedo boats damaged
 4 killed
 6 wounded

A decade later 55,000 American soldiers
 were dead
thousands more were MIAs or in North Vietnamese
prisons or were wounded
hundred of thousands of North and South Vietnamese
 soldiers and civilians were dead
or wounded
 Laotians and Cambodians too
like a fade out scene in the movies
 the screen went black
 reopened
in Iraq and Afghanistan
we never learn lessons
 let the military
 rule
our disasters

•

Mud

Sloshing through mud one
shoe is lost to a *thwock* then
the other one goes

Mud cools especially
between toes as the
shoes sink

Not the sucking sound of
baby on breast instead
it is the sound of loss

O those shoes remember
where and when they were
bought and what they cost

Worn to work and occasionally
parties re-soled and re-heeled
polished enough times to make

A sailor or shoe shine boy
proud and they walked the
city with pride

Shoes have pride
they must be allowed
to breathe at night

Repaired when needed polished
with regularity kept in good
company mud is as good

As a grave, though it is perhaps
better than a garbage dumpster
a last resort for the worn and used

Can a bloodhound find them
or a mud hound once in their grave
they are forgotten

The dances running for a bus or
pressing a gas pedal down a kick
to the tires for an air check all forgotten – *thwock*

•••

TAMMY ROTHMAN

(USA)

Minute Waltz

When keys bleed in motoperpetuo,
I master the art of time travel.

Not in H.G. Wells' spinning stop-watch with Rod Taylor
as my co-pilot but in my hands' need of a Paquet Metronome,
oak framed and faux gold.

I master the art of time travel,
proving Einstein's assertion of a steel-beam-past false
in my hands' need of a Paquet Metronome, oak framed and faux gold,
counting beats in Chopin's Minute Waltz, so it remains unchanged.

Proving Einstein's assertion of a steel-beam-past false,
my fingers push through measures' prestissi necessity, mindfully
counting beats in Chopin's Minute Waltz.

It remains unchanged
and Chopin smiles in his grave, maybe.

My fingers push through measures' prestissi necessity,
mindfully melting that steel beam,
breaching the lost art that couldn't be found.

And Chopin smiles in his grave. Maybe
in reanimation, defibrillating 60 seconds of suspended sound,
I find fluidity.

Melting that steel beam, breaching the lost art that couldn't be found,
not in H.G. Wells' spinning stop-watch with Rod Taylor
as my co-pilot but in reanimation,
defibrillating 60 seconds of suspended sound.

I find fluidity only when keys bleed in motoperpetuo.

•

Foil

i.

He says to understand the universe
We must acquire a base 10 alphabet.

Let's start with FOIL:

$$\frac{-6x(x+3)}{(x+1)^3(x-1)^3}$$

Perform $-6x$, the outer, first.
Then the inner: $(x+3)$.
Combine.
Repeat action with the denominator.
Divide.

(Note: This is a trick question.
The above calculation is the solution.)

ii.

i've become the reinvented invention
the nullified equation the dull tick-tick-tick
mill-working quantified breath alive
only in the CPU sense
a microcosm of flowering numbers
i dream i still dream...

iii.

the trout in the sky can fly
their underbellies wink a rainbow blink
and Newton's apple shined.

iv.

At Fujiwara Bay the moon, white as manna, and the floating dusk,
gulls picking gray oysters, and my arms, soft, pink, hollow,
fell into the still rhythms of low-tide.

•

Whispering Crickets

*Though the purity
Of the moonlight has silenced
Both nightingale and
Cricket, the cuckoo alone
Sings all the white night.
-Anonymous (from the Japanese)*

Last night I turned to the red berries,
the yellow buds on the flowering dogwood
and heard only branches bending.

Tonight, wind on the dogwood leaves,
cars whirring on the Belt.
I turn to the crickets whispering in the grass.

What do they say?

what do they say?

I hear only myself in the darkness.

•••

ETNAIRIS RIBERA
(PUERTO RICO)

The Pleasure

Seven times I circled the known parts of the world,
its plateaus and majestic forests,
the highest peaks, the wheat fields,
the deserts of tunics and camels,
the urban chaos.

In my baskets I brought incense to celebrate life,
and at times I gathered passionate encounters
that I often spent in torrents.

In my last season,
when the loss of longed for leaves was inevitable,
even the tree of good and evil fell to autumn in my path.

The most delicious fruits in my lips tasted empty,
but I kept eating them to know myself alive.

At times, I confused the knife with hope,
and each time I crossed the sea,
I heard the song of some sailor.

Soon I returned to the books,
to those who have known me so long,
alongside my first house.

It had been there always,
while I turned with the world.

I burned wings at dizzy speeds,
I took the most beautiful bodies
and claimed that no one dies from love.

Then, I sought the original path
and climbed to the pleasure of contemplation
and touching the great miracle of nakedness.

Every morning, during the rain,
a certain energy of love wakes within me
and scatters this scent of myrrh and spring.

•••

MOLLY THOKWANA

(Africa)

Skin

I have been bruised but still they stay as black as coal
my mind darkened
by thoughts and ability yet I have lived by the darkness in me

I have crawled
for I had nothing to embrace as feeling nor care
I lived by a mother
who starved and earned over tears for me
rivers would flood if I expressed this feeling
I have been defeated
chanted with chaptered red hunger lips
from the sips
of drowsy rivers that flood no more but only held life of thirst

I have been burnt
though I know nothing about how heat is
I am as dark as the name African
I am just an African child
feeling and expressing a fiction
that brings images to action
by my skin
and just words

•••

GRETTI IZAK

(Jerusalem)

Here All the Time

How well trees speak to us.
Like being subjected to an electrical shock,
I think – they were here all the time but I saw
only the city, the physicality of buildings,
the assertion of new apartment blocks hard
against the smoky sunset sky, the mass of steel
cables and antennae, fast walkers and car lights.

Walking after midnight the solitude of streets,
reminiscent of an empty stage awaiting
the actors entrance -
after the amnesia, the many distractions,
voyages, detours and false conclusions,
only now I start to understand the language of trees
and see how they have lost their unequivocal statement
of bare skeletal authority, and glow with a message
of renewal, that reaches out and speaks to us,
empowering us with love and hope.

•

Counting the Days

It still hurts where blows fell
on bone and left me with a
disfigured face
 but lest I get too sorry
for myself I am counting the days -
soon the New Year will come
amenable to change, and I'll pick
myself a new face for the one that
hot winds and the nights of weeping
ravaged with the wild colors of living.

At the back of the waning moon
salamander novelties wait to make
an entrance. Will there be more
modern ways of slaughter; when
we drink the drug-hemlock that dreams
engender, will the music be the same?

As I prepare my reception of the new year,
I pray for an earth where nothing ever happens
but loving, where the sacred cows of Vishu,
ivory white, meek and tender,
with fresh-painted horns and garlands
on their necks, cater oceans of milk
for the hungry,

and our damaged image on earth
may be corrected and we will be
forgiven all our misdeeds and follies.

•

Mirror, Mirror on the Wall

I, Eve, transcendent actualizer,
mandala of my species,
possess a mirror
of iridescent splendour
that aims to perfect
the image of man -
 though lost now
is its golden first reflection.

Shall I lie?
No, I cannot.
My inheritance on earth is sorrow
as facets in the mirror disclose
that peace is beyond the glow
of my power.

But look beyond the life
of passionate surrender to drums and dance,
to swirling moons of ego trips that swell
the wings of man's tempestuous nature

and see then in my mirror
the smile of No-Man,
spanning the transient Now
to hidden realms of peace
where Adam and Eve,
irrevocably love each other

their souls united their destiny
by God's intent fulfilled.

•

White Butterflies

On the trail to the tall grasses
of the soul, white butterflies,
bearing the scent of fields,
orchards and distant lands,
flutter and rise with the wind
to descend gently and commute
with the daffodils in the garden.

My six-year-old hand in my mother's,
she shushes my cries of excitement -

teaches me to keep quiet
when confronted with the divine.

•••

HASIJE KRYEZIU

(Serbia)

An Anthem to the Sky

A wild fragrance
Flushing
Something of a woman
Tearing
The law of the silence

I squash the nightmare
In order to expell the demons
From my body
Thrive to commit suicide
From coldness
Even when I became mad
Perversed

The feeling came around
To entertame
The december morning
Singing
The cold Anthem
Of the sky

The poorness of dissipation
Is pronounced without pain
Fatigued
And desparation
Of the obelisque in the sky
To approach
And stay loyal
In my corp of ashes

•••

JOAN MICHELSON

(UK)

Lena Slotnik

The aunt who sang opera longed for children.
Each time she swelled, hope rose, then fell.
Five times she suffered a dead birth.
I grew up. Left home. Forgot Aunt Lena
until thirty years later, burying mother
she was suddenly there. The size of her,
the air of theatre, the Old World elegance.
Even on the edge of disappearing
she was striking, the same voluminous bosom,
the same sweep of long black cape-style coat.
She fell on me, smacking lipstick kisses,
hugging, repossessing and began explaining
how it felt to be aware of sliding
out of knowing. She kept losing things.
Last week she'd needed the police
to find her car justy where she'd parked it.
I heard that she was taken into care.
Her daytime helper wished Aunt Lena was
her grandma. She liked it when Aunt Lena sang.

•

The Simplicity of Mortal Things

Loss is a long time leaving.
Doors open. I step through.
Sometimes a space glimmers.
Sometimes a door swings back
in my face. I want to ask
forgiveness for my sadness.
I am so alive in the bite
of autumn, in the forest
with its floor of dead leaves.

•

Isaac's Story

I am thinking about Isaac bound and laid
on a bed of kindling. He wonders about the offering.
Where is the sacrificial lamb? Looking up
to read his father's face, he sees his father's arm
outstretched to take the knife. His father's hand
is stayed from killing. Abraham has proved
that he holds the Lord in greater reverence
than his feeling for the boy, the child
long longed for. Next we know of Isaac,
his seed is dividing into warring nations
within Rebekah's womb. His inner world
remains our surmise. Does the moment
return to Issac? —the knife, his father's arm,
the trusting face, and he, the boy carrying
the kindling to the alter. (Could he have felt
sacrificed to trauma?) In old age,
blind and easily deceived, does he remember?

•

Namesake i

Each day I start earlier.
I lose my way
on one path or another.
A hot wind thunders.
I start to tremble.

You stand before me.
We bury mother.
We bury father.
I bury you.

I walk on.
The fields are pools.
the lake black-edged with firs.
Rungs of ladder light
cross the water
leading into dazzle,
the angel Jacob wrestled.
I take his name.

•

Namesake ii

When the War was over and he knew his friend
was dead, Bronislaw took the name of Moishe.
He'd swallowed words so long, he stuttered. He felt
slow of tongue. With his younger brother's help,
he spoke. As he grew older, the memory stole
closer. His mother gave him bread and milk
for a Jewish woman and her children.
He's left it on the road and watched them gobble
and hurry on. Half an hour later,
he heard dogs and saw Nazi soldiers
on the tracks. The dogs sniffed the roadside
crumbs. Without seeing the attack,
he saw too much. He still mourns these people
who he never knew – caught, shot.

•••

TÒNIA PASSOLA

(Spain)

Tianamen Square

Through the festive August blue, kites
stroll along with life, a multitude of sizes and colours.
Masks, butterflies, wings and birds' wings
fastened to hands that don't let go of the strings.

Blood goes from earth to heaven
from heaven to earth.
Dusk comes over the mausoleum where Mao lives death
over his gesture, today photography.
Day after day it lifts towards the horizon,
over the red walls of the Forbidden City.

•

Offer Thrice

As splendid wedding cakes
Bali offers coloured fruits,
sugared buns and sweetmeats
to the gods of good.
And also pork heads, duck legs,
rows of dried innards, lard petals,
to the gods of evil.

And so there is peace between
the gods and the devils
who order the terrestrial world.
Never remembered, though, are those gods
who like to pretend they are devils,
knowing them to be peaceful and inoffensive.
Also forgotten—and this is worse—
are the demons who pretend to be gods.

•

Swastika

In his Kathmandu workshop, a boy sews
a jacket in purple velvet.
I try it on and my fingers stop suddenly
among the buttons of shiny swastikas.
Look, I am in the path of light!
Amidst the hieroglyphic illuminating
Chinese, Indian, Tibetan temples...
amidst thread embroidered into Greek and Roman mosaics.
I am inside the labyrinth that comes from faraway,
inside the open landscape of the universe,
whence gyrates, full of eyes, the planet.

•••

NI'MAHISMA'ILNAWWAB

(Saudi Arabia)

Seven upon Seven

Seven upon seven
Their feet move in circles
Circles within circles
Unremitting
Unstoppable
Echoing the movement of the very galaxy
Seven upon seven

Al Bait al Ateeq, the Ancient House, a beacon
The center of earth
Center of the universe
Centering their very beings
As they fall in consecrating circles
Seven upon seven

The glint of stark gold, soothing silver
The hidden yet shapely black
Of woven intertwining threads
Framing beloved passages
Of His message to Mankind
Stunningly outlined in the early dawn
Shimmering in mid-day heat
Luminous in gentle nights
Call out to the circling lovers
Seven upon seven

Each footfall falling
In the place of previous footfalls through centuries
As their uttered and unuttered invocations
In all the known tongues
Merge in harmony
Fill their souls to the brim
Overflowing with the flow of their flowing robes
Past the scene of the timeless circles
Seven upon seven.

•

Final Destination

Mental compartments form
the plane speeds across the heated tarmac
luggage of marked memories
flash across the cerebral arena
retracted and remembered

Eons later
a tape of invisible recall
bursts upon the conscience
flavors and colors
of times ripped and ripened
amass on a pinnacle of survival
as years pass in seconds
of captured images
and the baggage of expectations is released

Landing hard
scanning crowds of exhausted travelers
Waiting for their luggage
hurrying to and fro
the thoughts bring forth
the waiting crowds in another realm
when the final destination is the final step
in the journey of life itself
and our baggage supersedes our very selves
shunting us into a chute of everlasting darkness
or elevating us to the heights of eternal serenity.

•

The Onlooker

She glided with the silent stars
skittered, alighted and thrived
in isolation

Unreachable
beyond comprehension
beyond trivialities, surmounting sorrows
of localized existence

Looked down
at the blue-green glittering gem
shattered with impurities, ravages, strife
cut with precision,
Facets polished by a Master
to reflect
human supremacy, ultimate power

It all seemed so small
We, so small
all the colors of sorrows, joys, war, death
unified,
obliterated

The universe lays in wait
watching from afar
the fledgling, fluctuating globe

In utter indifference

•

Healing Eruption

An erupting volcano
shedding the gossamer garments of taboos

A configuration
blazes

Voluptuous, multicolored smoke
entrances onlookers

Orchids of flaring fires
open their seeking petals

As healing, soft sands
shoot up though the shuddering earth
seep into the darkening volcano

Crackling limbs, tender shoots
Erupt as a forest
grows in the space
left behind.

•

In the Color of the Hollyhock – Chopin's Waltz

He played
a waltz then meadow and air
she soared above the bittersweet grass above a sonata
and above a prelude
as if she hadn't yet lived in her body
she said and invited him to her place
tomorrow afternoon

Mon Dieu!
she smokes a cigar wears pants
(is she a woman?) hats like flambeaux
her white-red costume
it's rumored the blood of a Polish king runs in her veins
and she used to dance mazurkas polonaises
my God!

before long
he'll move his fashionable grand piano to her place
she writes smart books each day after supper this new mother
like a pharaoh's wife
she calls him her genius and her weakling
her children keep guard at the bedroom door hoping
he'll die
on Majorca
he's rasping and dying
the clamminess in his fingers and the monotonous
chords of rain are killing him
he fears death and compassion
the island doctors say he'll die soon or
has died already

in Paris
salons await him
a dandy he puts on a gilet the color of hollyhock and gloves
like buckwheat white as snow
a crimson storm surges in his chest
its sparks will ignite everything
into a perfect fire

he coughs
and spits blood
behind his breastbone Polish homesickness
sleepless like cosmic dawn
she's so terribly alive and beautiful
all around kings of life drink gobble have fun after them flood
and fire

far away there
he dreamed of light
and of the sky rising over a birch wood in pure fifths
and octaves
here beamed ceilings like tree limbs fall into hellish triads
who's that?
play sonny don't spare any sounds
don't stop.

Translated by Ewa Hryniewicz-Yarbrough and Teresa Cedar

•

Union with Kafka

He knocked feebly as if he wanted to leave empty-handed
when I opened the door there he was rescued and disappointed
then he stood in the middle of the room silent and absent
when a car alarm came on outside
he began to gesture like a salesman
of shabby goods
I didn't hear what he said
leaving he laid the flowers on a console table in the hall
I realized that he had proposed
I ran up to the window to see what he looked like from behind
in the yard children were playing

Eins zwei drei Polizei
One two tie my shoe

he returned unexpectedly kissed me clumsily
and reluctantly when the alarm came on again he ran down the stairs
in the yard an old woman was feeding pigeons
she stretched out an open hand to him as if to a bird
it seemed that no one and nothing could hear the persistent sound
that it was only in my head

for several years I was sick or maybe I simply went away

a letter came from the Office of Records a manila envelope
"Mr. Kafka. Priority."

•

The Eye of John Keats in Rome

For hours it stands in the window
once in a while it casts itself onto the Spanish Steps
or into the Tiber

on the steps
it bursts and then like a gel medusa
returns intact into the dark-skinned palm of a street vendor

in the water
it swims and then flies to dry its wings
it sweeps the Hadrian arches of the bridges
the sky of the Vatican domes
the horizons' caravans of pines

in the evening it orders the same wine
in the same bar
at last it returns to the window and writes on the pane with its finger

the crowds on the steps won't let it sleep
it doesn't know what to do next
so it starts all over

from the pupil
from the core.

•••

FARAZ MAQSOOD HAMIDI

(Pakistan)

Villanella III

The songs we sang were saddest, at their best,
Blanched words under an avalanche of prose.
Your consciousness is harnessed to my flesh.
The walks we walked despaired the old request
To temporarily stop for repose.
The songs we sang were saddest, at their best.
The drinks we drank were good but lay suppressed
In tactful hands too discreet to oppose.
Your consciousness is harnessed to my flesh.
The dance we danced on nights that we confessed
Our love was rare — and yet, did not disclose
The songs we sang were saddest, at their best.
The dreams we dreamed fell short, lay dispossessed
Of grace and of glad tidings, I suppose
Your consciousness is harnessed to my flesh.
The life we lived, unstirred, did not suggest
Calamity comes quietly and knows
The songs we sang were saddest, at their best;
Your consciousness is harnessed to my flesh.

•

Indian Summer

We were ears on either side
Of your long face, your pointed chin;
Your high forehead, your Bombay Gin —
We held hands along the shoreline.
We were part of your silhouette
Glimmering in the spangled sky,
I don't know how those days went by.
But they did — as we expected
The meiosis in history's womb,
Where our spirits lay side by side;
Somehow, you linger in my pride,
My saffron liver, my old wound.

•••

FRANÇOISE ROY

(Canada)

Flying home

To Ilya, Mindy, Maryam and Sudeep

As the wound on my heart was finally closing, many statues—made alive by the touch of the moon in Taurus— were rushing in before the rims of the two flesh got together completely like two bloody magnets.

You were the last one in line, daddy, the last one waving goodbye at the sun before its last sunset, and from inside my wound, sitting on my pumpkin throne, I was wishing for the two fleshy doors not to kiss each other too fast, so you could get in whole, your body parts not slashed by the blades of that soft guillotine, just like you were before, daddy.

Do not be afraid, daddy, of poems describing me as a hermaphrodite. They are only poems, and they also talk—shuffling words like a poker of syllables— about the holy bread of friendship, hairless medusas, the bridge of Varolio, the lost bullets of the Zetas.

While I am writing this, a war is raging in Northern Mexico; my husband and the two cats are waiting for me to return home, beating like three miniature hearts in our pocket-size jungle; Ilya, Mindy, Maryam and Sudeep are flying over mainland China or the Pacific Ocean, each one a wise man or woman following a propitiatory star, holding no kinship ties with the others but poetry, a mighty citizenship if any. Blinded are we, the four of us, by the same glitter that melted Icarus' wings. Fluttering peace flags are we, parting like darkness at dawn.

May your chest, daddy, no longer be the stage of a home-made war the size of a human body.

At 32,000 feet above sea level, I am dragging the whole of Ningxia province with me, tied to my ankles with red ribbons, a millstone as light as Neptune or the feathers of a new-born phoenix.

•

Skin labyrinth with birds

The face is a labyrinth.
You reckon it as fragile and entangled,
the yellowish door of a map
fled by the countries of yesteryear.

What dust in its delirium makes you see birds
with instructions to divide them?
What tide of another color than blue
would flood the ship on an autumn day?
I say: verses made of nests and roots.

Tumultuously throat, the sobbing floats,
lifts the sewer lid upside-down
to let the soul flow as a liquid telescope.
You slip gently at the edge of light,
the tower at the other end of the sea.

•

First love poem

Maybe you should give me a little of your frosty heart. In exchange, I would hand you a piece of the one ringing as a bell inside me, and out of the two, we would make a perfect heart, as soft as your touch, an organ not yet mapped in the anatomical chambers of the gods, those apparently silent who wait for us with open hands, guardian spirits of the kisses ordering us to separate after loving.

Stateless hearts, they found a narrow nuptial bed where to sink, as brittle as paper sailboats shaken during a storm at sea.

Love, this place of banishment!

Will we ever find each other, some day, back from our exiles, standing at the crossroads of an unknown map, snow and wasteland together, soul and time mixed together like the two ingredients of a magic potion?

Third love poem

I wonder how deep I would have to dig under the bark of your skin in order to find it, now a caged bird, then an orchid or a diamond glowing by itself in the dark, a light-filled tear running down the cheek of the Universe. To dig like one digs a grave, blistered hands holding a shovel. Layers of fabric of all kinds on top of it —a beating placenta, it unfolds over the distance separating your hand from my body, my body nothing could ever hurt when you stand close to me.

I, on the other hand, wear it right under my skin like a full-body glove that could have slid through a slot on my chest, my skull, wherever something as thin as a razorblade might cut slashing through the darkness of the guts. The only thing you have to do is scratch my chest with your fingernails and you will see it in broad daylight, a raw wound I bear.

My skin rolled around your heart.

•••

ALBERT RUSSO

(Belgium)

Excerpt of my ZapyZzen novel, the seventh of my humorous Gosh Zapinette series:

Sing ... Sing Singapore

‘Sing a song of sixpence la lalalala’: when I was a little girl of five or six an English pal of my class used to hum that tune every time she heard the bell of recess ring, like she was being rewarded for having stood an hour still at her desk, and now, all of a sudden, that we have arrived at Sing-a-pore, I’m humming it myself like a friggin talking *robotess*. Isn’t it funny how *yokellish* one can get in spite of being otherwise smart, coz at the time, I thought that song to be the silliest tune I’d ever heard. But Sing-a-pore is something else. If I thought Hong Kong to be the mega queen of sampans and skyscrapers, Saigon the false Paris of the East with the smiliest people, and Bim Bam Bong, the craziest and *bejewellest* of them all - I was going to write ‘the coolest’, hey, not with 110 degrees fair’n heart; yeah people die of heart attacks with that kind of temperature -, Singapore is the most polished, most *sofisticle*, and, by far the cleanest city I have ever seen anywhere between here and Solexius.

UnkyBerky and I decided we would spend the day alone, far from the madding cruise crowd and took the super speedy subway at the harbor which led us strait downtown. Here I will spread myself thick and fat into in-, out- and a-sides, coz everything in this place is better and shinier than anywhere else I have visited, including glorious Paris. They say our metro is the best in the world, my foot and three bunions, is what I say! First of all the cars in the Singapore subway are much newer and look more like planes than trains, and they are air-conditioned, but washmore, unlike Paris where the oldies can no longer take the metro because it is hot, smelly and especially because it has almost no esca- or elevators, here you have magic carpets that bring you up to the surface in no time. True, it’s always hot and humid in this city-state, but then you have so many lovely places, stores, shopping malls and tea-rooms around and the moment you walk in you feel like you’re being kissed by fresh mountain air. Here like in NoooYawk, which I looove and always will, even though it is messier, there is a mix of people from all corners of the world, and unlike in Paris, here they mix most gently. You oughta get into a taxi line here if

you want to take a cab, which we did once, everybody, whether they're yellow, brown, white, red of black, smile at you with such patience - now, for the first time in my precious life; I experienced the meaning of being zzzen, no matter how much you sweat, and Goddess almighty, you do sweat under the blazing sun here. Compare that with the grumbling and the cussing of the Parisians who queue up at a train station, some even trying to slip past you and steal your place all the while they fire the dirtiest look at you. This is such a French reaction, which is *countercartesian* - which mean the contrary of logical, you nerd - in Paris, it's the people who cross the street when the light is red who get angry at you when you tell them off. Go explain that to foreigners.

Did you know that in our beautiful capital, which happens to be the most visited city in this whole wide and wild world, there is a clinic for Asian tourists who get post-traumatic treatments on account that they come to our country like it is a fairyland - they confuse it with Disney Paris - and then the moment they disembark they get the nastiest woolfish looks that not even they experience in their own zoos; many of them get robbed of their Vuitton or Prada bags just bought in a luxury store, and on top of it all when they ask their way to some elderly people of my uncle's age - the younger people like me are much more civilized -, they either hear more grumbling or are led the opposite way. I saw that in a French documentary on TV. The poor Indian, Japanese and Chinese visitors - though most of them are velyvely rich - to whom these bad things occurred told the interviewing psychologist that, besides the fact that they loved Monet, Renoir, Pissaro or Matisse - famous French impressionitic painters - not only were they not at all impressed by their hosts - and Pissaro or no Pissaro, they were really pissed off -, but some of them even added that they thought the French language to be the rudest, *disgustingest*, most screeching language to their ears. Wow, I, who am half French and half American - ok I've already said that several times, never you mind -, always thought that Molière's language was one of the most elegant, diplomatic and beautiful in the world. The change must have come with the famous globalisation of our societies, especially with the Asian Tigers and Tigresses who are ready to rule and invade the world commercially - I hope never militarily, that would be the end of all the other races - which they already do. Just look at every second thing you buy in Europe and in America, not to mention on the other

continents, especially Africa and South America, where they get counterfeited generic medicine made of pork fat and grains of salt, are made in India, China or now in Vietnam. So are the model Eiffel towers, the T-shirts with the Sorbonne university logo or even the typical Breton béret, sold to tourists. Even the famous French wineries are being bought by Chinese moguls, and soon we will be drinking some kind of colored ink, not worth a fart - they used the word 'farthing' in the days of Charlie Dickens who twisted that poor young Oliver so much that the little guy kept asking for more bread (mostly stale) while he got smacked for being so arrogant, coz in those olden days the children of the downstairs class - what do you think? my uncle introduced me to the British TV series *Upstairs, Downstairs* - had the rights of battery geese today, except that instead of being forced-fed, they were forced to fast.

Even though it's none of your business, I looove *foiegras* (which is the result of exploded goose livers) ... my oh my, are humans cruel, look at that other luscious dish, which I also looove: lobsters that the chef in chic Parisian restaurants cook alive in front of you to prove how fresh and healthy they are - I'm sure some greenhorn must have had his nose clawed by one of the beast's frighteningly large pincers, coz these animals know how to defend themselves! Ok, that just happened twice to me, since it costs an arm and two legs to eat in these very ladiplaces. I don't remember whose anniversary or whose communion it was, but I do remember the frigging noise the lobsters made when they were thrown in the boiling oil.

Not that cheetahs or vultures fare better than us. In a documentary, I've seen the so-called king of speed tear a lovely springbok (that's a South African bambi), it looked like she was still thinking of escaping its predator, all the while the cheetah had already disemboweled her - yuk yukyuk - and you must have seen her shocked and imploring eyes. I had tears in mine for her sorry state, and so had my uncle, we cry in tandem in front of such terrible images and we sniff and sniff, not in tandem though, on account that he has much wider nostrils than me. And you complain about my asides! Don't ask what the Japanese's most expensive delicacy is: a venomous fish called fugu which, if not skinned or cooked in the right manner, kills the (velyvely rich, on account that this fish itself is velyvely expensive) gourmet. And how about them snakes they sell on Bangkok's floating market that one chooses and which the seller skins alive? Yeah, how about that aside?

While visiting the center of Singapore, we stopped at the colonial-style Raffles Hotel, where apparently all the biggies of this world ... and the former - that goes back at least three generations - have pressed their precious buttocks on its luxurious beds and its leather armchairs. To receive us were two guards dressed in an impeccable white costume like in the times of Queen Victoria, with their heads coiffed in a turban.

«They are Sikhs», my uncle said.

When I told him that they didn't look a bit sick to me, on the contrary, they seemed to be quite well-fed, he then explained to me that they belonged to a very famous ethnic group from northern India who were chosen to serve as fighters in the British Empire for their bravery and their dependability. One of them stared at us with his nose up like we were hillbillies, but the other one, who had the face of a gentle teddy bear with big nipples, let us in, winking at me - he was probably a grandfather, while his nasty looking peer was much younger and thought himself the cat's whiskers.

Oh I have to add this, coz in French we have a much funnier expression: 'ilpète plus haut que son cul', meaning 'he farts higher than his ass'. Clever, isn't it, in spite of its smelly meaning? But how can one actually do that? I've tried it but never succeeded, I always fell down. You must be an acrobat to be able to perform that kind of a feat. The circus people probably must be the only ones trained to do such things, but when they're flying so high on their trapeze, you could never hear it on account of all the clapping and showing down in the arena, then too how can you associate such beautifully sculpted people with farts? If you think this is fart-fetched, listen to this. Anna Magnani, a great Italian actress of the times of Mathew & Felix of Jerusalem was acting with Burt Lancaster - another muscled oldie - in a film set in the south of the United States. One of her great fans, a young man waited for hours before he could see her to congratulate the star. Finally, she came running out of the set and let out a mega faaart, so loud that the young guy couldn't believe his ears, let alone his nostrils, on account that she left a trail of *pestopasta* smell mixed with veal parmigian behind her that must have been a mile long. He was convinced that stars of the magnitude of *La Magnani* could never do such plebeian things, maybe he even thought she didn't have an asshole. Really, some people! After that traumatic experience he

never went to the cinema again and became a machinegun farter, meaning that he learned to fire farts at will whenever someone bugged him or wanted to rip him off. With that kind of attitude, of course, no girl ever wanted to marry him and he finally decided to retire in the country and become a farmer.

You do know - I hope that by now you've learned something about the 'green' revolution' n stuff - that it is the farting of the millions of cows and bulls that people our beef-eating planet that is the cull-the-prick of our bad air, on account that they are depleting our o-zone, oh my!, even more than our cars and our planes.

My uncle wanted absolutely to feel how the people during the colonial era lived, so we went to the very posh tea-room of the hotel, with its high ceilings, its stucco moldings and its original fans; they were huge and turned in slow motion like they were giving their last breath, in spite of the fact - thank Goddess - that the place was air-conditioned. And everything in this hotel had been repainted in virginal white (virgins could be any color, but that's the stoopid expression) you could smell it -, so much so, that you had to put sunclasses even inside the courtyards. An orchestra was playing waltzes, tangos, *foxy trots* and other kinds of dreamy music that make grannies cry out of nostalgia, though there were some young couples too, *hibra* locals, as well as visitors hailing from every corner of the world. My uncle and I looked a bit out of place amid all these well-groomed poeple, with our shorts capswith the logo of our cruise ship, but they did let us in since we looked clean enough not to be confused with hobos ... and we didn't wear knapsacks either.

I had chocolate, vanilla and strawberry ice cream, served in a beautiful sterling silver cup, incised with a coat of arms, while my uncle ordered mint juice and Périer, in cut glass, the size of a vase, all of it accompanied by a nice mix of biscuits and scones with butter and a variety of jams, which, by the way, we never asked, but since the least drop of frizzy water here costs an earth, they add these goodies as a complimentary gesture, hoping that you will come back and spend another big amount of money. Between you and me, my ice-cream was deeeelicious, and you really thought you were in a movie set, with extras dressed for the occasion. For the same price though, you get three portions in a nice coffeeshop, which is also air-conditioned, but sans coat of arms, Murano chandeliers or cookies. Ok, I did feel

famous for at least half an hour, 15 minutes more than what Andy *Waterhole*, the artist who repainted soup cans, dog food, Marilyn Monroe and Liz Taylor in a dozen colors and who made millions of dollars, promised all and sundry, including on Sundays. How rich could I become if I painted a certain type of loo in 10 acrylic hues and give it the trademark of ZapyLoo? Hey I should try that, but shush, ok, if you don't want me to sue you for copyright infringement, larceny, misdemeanor and perjury, all at once and be locked in for 250 years like some poor people in the US of A. Now tell me, how can these judges decide to lock up people for several lifetimes? Even if I'm half Yankee, that doesn't sound reasonable at all or even kosher. Ok, that guy, what's his name again, who robbed so many wretched souls, NGOs - this has nothing to do with No Go, it means, private charities for the sick, the blind, the downtrodden, etc.- and even some bigwigs, like Danny the Frumm, *ponziwise* - I don't know if he also dealt fraudulently with ponies or pansies, but that's not important -, leaving them destitute and forced to give up their homes and sometimes their partner and their kids, on account that they couldn't provide for them anymore, deserves to stay in jail forever, but 150 years? What the hell does that mean? Maybe the judges want Goddess to continue to keep them behind bars once they leave this world for the afterlife. It does intrigue me, coz a judge is not supposed to mix human laws with the laws of Goddess, unless they have added an eleventh commandment to Moses' catalog of laws, of which the little people like us aren't supposed to be aware, on account that it would sound too unconstitutional for words.

The symbol of Singapore is a *Merlion* (it's half fish, half big cat) maybe to show us that the people here can be as kind and tame as gold fishes and if you bug them, as ferocious as lions. But whether we strolled along Clarke Quay, stopping at every second boutique or coffeshop, to escape the heat, or whether we visited Chinatown - nothing really new to me, after Hong Kong or even New York, but it's always fun to see those red and yellow wooden temples and all the paper lamps in different colors -, Arab street with the gorgeous dome of Sultan's mosque - actually the Muslim minority here isn't Arab at all but Malaysian. And we even assisted at the wedding of a middle-aged and apparently vely rich couple, for they were dressed in white silk and

gold, veil for the lady and turban for the man.

But the joliest place to me was Little India, with its lovely garment stores, its jewelery shops - they looove gold here, oh them bangles and their rings and them collars and them brooches and ... and ... you can go on like that circling the planet - and its food and spice stalls. Jeezette did it smell good, you felt like eating on the spot curry rice and all the good stuff that comes with it, whether it's chicken or lam.

Did I tell you that I find the sari to be the most elegant dress in the world. Actually it was at the Raffles hotel that I saw a mindbogglingly beautiful woman garbed in a hazy blue sari, no jewels, except a ruby on her nostril, and silver slippers. She was as pale as her long flowing hair were black, reaching her shoulders, and of course, she must have been either a maharani or a famous Indian star from Bollywood.

After visiting the colonial quarter, surrounded by lush gradens, we were led to the most amazing monument I've seen during this trip, except, of course for Bangkok's Grand Palace: the Sri VeeramaKaliyamman Temple - ok, ok, you can't remember the name; it's too long and too complicated for us Westerners -, which is dedicated to the Hindu goddess Kali. It's about four stories high and has hundreds of life-size gods and goddesses, that look like real people but in all the colors of the rainbow and even beyond. Gosh were they handsome looking, with bodies that would make the gym maniacs blush with shame, not one had a crooked nose, varicose veins or elephant's ears, for that matter, though here and there you could see a cow or some other animal. They all seemed to be performing some kind of ritual dance. Actually one of the sitting gods was watching me, I swear, with doting eyes, as if to say: «When you grow up I wouldn't mind to have you as my favorite wife» - hey, hey, I take that as an honor, but I don't want to be part of a harem, I'd rather be like, what's her name, the maharani of Shah Jahan who built the TajMahal in her honor, which is supposed to be the most fantabulous mausoleum in the world, all in marble and precious stones (maybe they're semi-precious, but that makes no difference to me) and don't laugh, coz it's none of your business, I believe it's telepathic *karmalove*, coz I too made doe-eyes in his direction, and believe it or not, I saw tears shining on his cheeks.

And you thought Singapore was just an ethnical melting pot with historical buildings and jungle flowers? There's the Sentosa Entertainment Park, you can reach by calbe car, which my uncle

promised we would go to on another trip to Singapore, coz, this is a place you could stay a full week, and even enjoy a Safari Night, with wild animals dining next to you - behind an invisible fence, of course, coz I wouldn't want to be a tiger's dessert. And the most amazing modern complex that we visited, inside and out, was a huge three-tower thingamagig with a kind of a glass and concrete ship covering it like an upper bridge in the clouds, with an olympic swimming-pool topping it, giving you a 360° view of the city. Don't ask what was inside these towers: besides the usual luxury boutiques, hi-tech stores, cinemas and casinos, there were restaurants and tea-rooms surrounded by artificial lakes where lovebirds row in gondolas, before stopping at a table they have reserved for a special occasion, like an engagement or their first (or last - one never knows when that can happen) wedding anniversary. *Mindgeekgobbling* stuff, I'm telling you.

The airport looked like an air-conditioned hanging garden, surrounded by boutiques (again) and all the international eateries you can choose from to spend the three hours you have to wait before boarding the plane. They even had massage parlors, temples for all the main religions, and even Silence rooms where you can either meditate or read.

I won't talk about the horrible 13 hours of our Air France flight back to Paris: even worms in a sardine can feel more comfortable than us passengers. Bloomin capitalists!

•••

ELISAVIETTA RITCHIE

(USA)

Flying Time

"My father is walking today!"

I hold him by his belt as he leans into the metal walker and shuffles one step. I'm startled to be able to see over the top of his head. He used to stand six-foot-two.

"Come on, just one more step."

Watitha Jones, the nurse in the doorway, applauds.

His mind also meanders streets he hasn't seen for years, and he is soon exhausted from the excursion.

Watitha and I guide him into his wheelchair, double-loop canvas straps around the metal armrests, then tie them firmly behind the blue plastic back.

Climber of mountains, swimmer of seas, he always chafed at restraint. Lately, however, he no longer seems to notice the cotton vest oddly dubbed a posey. Still I hate to see him tied. But some days, with a sudden burst of adrenalin, or as if he could escape the pain, he tries to get up, and might fall again. The hip which splintered when he managed to take off on his own last July still aches.

How one's world shrivels when one is in pain. My back—

"He can only think of himself," my step-sister noted last week. "Existence is limited to his bodily concerns."

And yet --

"The Baron came to call this morning," my father confides. "He brought his whole entourage. We are still discussing negotiations. We had quite a party. Percy and Gustav and Vladimir and—"

He beams as he relates his friendships with the dead. Several seem still to be lingering over their cognacs and coffee. Then he tires of so much company, and dozes off.

"He had kinda a bad night," the nurse says. "Like he was fighting some war."

"He was a colonel," I explain. "In the American Army, and before that, a recruit in a few other armies. He has indeed fought some wars."

Again a shell explodes and scatters light and alien finger bones. He shouts, screams. The other patients along the hall are terrified, or else unperturbed because they're accustomed, or deaf.

He wakes embarrassed, and confused: he was back at Anzio,

Monte Cassino, Normandy, the Battle of the Bulge. Or the Ardennes, Verdun. Though years have passed, his wars fight on. Shrapnel, rubble and peculiar shards of flesh still litter all the bedroom floor so deep he cannot find his slippers in the dark.

“Don't worry, Daddy, those wars are over. Everything is all right now.”

He looks relieved, but not convinced. I too despise my patronizing tone.

He indicates discomfort.

“I think he—”

But Watitha is already half out the door. “I'll come back and change him soon as I finish down the hall. Won't you be staying with him a few minutes?”

I nod, though in fact it is late and I am desperate to leave. Desperate in part because I am agonized to see my father in this condition, and the other patients, some worse off than he. Whenever I leave the nursing home, I want to run, jog, bicycle, swim, make love, climb mountains—whatever is vigorous, exciting, reassuring. Then at home, a half-written manuscript is waiting, a new job waiting, children waiting, a new lover who with luck is also waiting—multiple worlds waiting like wet canvases. Worlds lively and sane. Worlds that my father shared. Worlds to which, from my childhood, he introduced me. Some, he created.

For the moment, for this long hour, I am grounded by filial duty, and love.

With the nurse gone, in a whisper my father says he is concerned about my alimony. The whispering may be because it is not proper to discuss these personal, distasteful, monetary matters before strangers. Or because, since the nursing home lost his hearing aid in the laundry, he cannot seem to pitch his voice right anymore. Or simply, his voice is weak today. Some days he doesn't talk at all. Reasons vary from hour to hour.

“Yes, I guess I am getting some alimony. It will help pay some bills.”

I do not mention what I just discovered: it is not coming in after all, only child support. We do not discuss the expense of the nursing home which is rapidly eating up what little he saved from a generous life during which he rescued others from dangerous situations and lands.

“How much cash do you have with you?” He leans forward urgently. “I have to pay for plane tickets. Last night three men waylaid me and beat me up and stole my wallet.”

“No, Daddy, that was a bad dream. Your wallet's safe in the drawer. Here—”

He struggles to fit the worn cowhide billfold into his back pocket, but it slips between his trousers and the foam-rubber cushion. Of course there is no money in it: the lady down the hall shuffles in other people's rooms and takes what she thinks is hers, and the man in the other bed here—

“Your grandsons send their love.”

I throw out the marigolds I brought him last week. The water is greeny black, odiferous, but does not mask the other nursing home smells.

He doesn't pick up on the grandsons. A rare day when I can cajole one into visiting. They cannot bear to come here. Hard for an adolescent to see old people, sick people, other young people incapacitated. “Grandfather wouldn't recognize us anyway,” they say. “He is always all spaced out.”

Great coughing and hawking from the other bed: The other half of his room is occupied by an 80-year-old Italian mechanic with, among other ailments, emphysema. He still smokes on the sly in the bathroom, scattering ashes and cigarette butts and worse across the floor. But he is jolly, usually lucid, and his family never visits. I have brought chocolates for both men, but lunch is at noon, so I stash them in a cookie tin cockroaches can't pry open.

“We are facing superior numbers,” my father whispers, “but with a little more artillery, we can win.” His voice resonant now, he redirects the Battle of the Bulge and Tannenburg, confers with Genghis Khan, again shifts venue and instructs his broker to sell his outmoded Edsel. Together we shuttle centuries and shuffle names. This is a good day, I remind myself: he is talking.

“Will you have dinner with me?” His old graciousness. His house was always full of guests. Some he might have met once in a foreign country but they would appear, stay a week, or a month.

Where are those friends now....

“I must get home soon, Daddy. I'm working on a science fiction or fantasy...”

He gets agitated, tugs at the straps of the posey, tries to abandon his wheelchair to climb Mount Fuji one more time.

“Too much snow up there at this season,” I point out. “Let's wait until summer.”

To calm him, I sing, the same old songs he used to sing to me when I was little: Irving Berlin's “Russian Lullaby.” fragments of a Norwegian song, and “The Old Gray Mare She Ain't What She Used To Be,” and anything else I can remember used to amuse him to sing. Then my voice cracks and I realize I am crying. Fortunately he doesn't notice.

He insists it is time get properly dressed in his dark grey suit to receive the Queen of Belgium, some princess from Cleves.

“But Daddy, you are already elegant.” I try not to notice that his trousers need changing. Watitha the nurse promised to return quickly.

“Come on, till guests arrive, let's take a stroll.”

I push his wheelchair down the long lysoled hall to the common room, labeled SOLARIUM although the curtains on the east side are perpetually drawn against a sun too brilliant for aging eyes. The television blares soap operas and commercials for snowwhite laundry, action-packed weekends, and eternal beauty.

Parked before the set she cannot see, one ancient lady slips down in her wheelchair until all I can see of her is the untidy knot of white hair with its ridiculous pink bow. Beside her, a grey-stubbed man twisted on a sort of padded cot stares fixedly toward a moribund philodendron. In a yellow plastic chair, an old woman in a pink nightgown rocks a stuffed plush cat and tells it her troubles. A tense grey woman recites a litany of her needs, keeping time by banging the tray of her gerichair. Near the drinking fountain, propped in an angled high chaise longue and attached to plastic tubing, the 20-year-old diabetic lies in an irreversible coma from a not quite fatal enough combination of alcohol and insulin. My heart tightens whenever I see him. Could be my own son.

I should get on home –

A man shuffles up and salutes. A woman chatters past and winks. My father seldom seems to notice the other patients. Is the best solution to existence here a retreat into internal exile? Selective eyesight? Dying eyesight.

Meanwhile, in the Solarium, I deal out double solitaire.

I can't stand the television and all these people talking to themselves and to the air, I'm feeling claustrophobic in here –

The fat-faced clock shows noon. The first food cart is coming off the service elevator. My father's tray is always last, there's time to

wheel him back to his room, he really needs changing but I can't manage it alone. Where –

Nella, the curly blond medicine nurse flashing gorgeous crimson smiles in all directions, passes by with her cart full of pills and syrups and juices to wash them down. “I'll be over with your medicine in a moment, sweetheart.”

With a grand gesture my father kisses her hand, then whispers to me, “Our guests are late! How's our sherry supply?”

The styrofoam cups stick together but I wrestle four free, set them in a row. The only juice at the nurses' station is prune.

Nella returns with a tiny pleated paper cup of crushed pills mixed with applesauce. “Something delicious for you, honey,” she purrs.

I go out to see where Watitha is, she promised –

Out of sight. On her break.

Back in the Solarium Nella is giggling. “He just asked me to fly to Bangkok with him!”

I picture my father's wheel chair grow wide aluminum wings, or his shoulders, skeletal under my hands, sprout feathers – scarlet, orange, green – like a swan sired by a parrot.

“I trust you agreed to fly with him,” I answer. “He was a famous explorer.”

She laughs, slaps her broad palms against her white uniform. “Lord, what a crazy i-ma-gin-a-tion your daddy's got!”

“At eighty-five, he has license for madness.”

Anxious, his blue eyes watch us. I smooth the wisps of hair on his skull. My mad daddy....Here are the springs of my – imagination.

The last food cart is shoved off the elevator. I wheel his chair to the space at the table between old Mrs. Silverman incessantly screaming “I need sugar! More milk!” and Muggsy sloshing soup on his neighbor.

I set the brakes, and search for a nurse's aide. “My father's tired, he needs help eating. I must leave. Please!”

Most of the lunchtime shift seem to be on their own lunch hours. A kitchen worker sets down a special tray in front of my father. The nursing home lost his dentures months ago, and the dentist sees no point in new ones, so he can't chew ordinary food.

Although he would rather have smoked eel and vodka, or curry and beer, or beef stroganoff with good burgundy served in a real glass, I spoon the pureed liver, mashed lima beans and fake grape jello into his mouth quickly before his fingers explore the plate.

“Cheers!” I hold the styrofoam cup of prune juice to his lips.

He smiles. "And what about you, my dear?"

"I absolutely must leave, Daddy. I'll come back tomorrow."

The orderly with a diamond in one earlobe, in fact a pre-med student from India, promises to change my father as soon as he finishes the trays. Or perhaps he'll find someone else –

To hell with it. My father used to keep a sign on his desk: "Nothing will ever be accomplished if all possible obstacles must first be overcome." I wheel him back to his room, somehow hoist him onto his narrow bed, clean him up myself. Something that residents' families aren't supposed to do, a legality about what-if-we-should-drop him, and for modesty, to spare their, or our, embarrassment. A wife, that should be no problem, but wives don't do it either here. Or daughters --

I suddenly recall the first and only time I saw my father naked was when I was four or five, and he hurried into the bathroom to shave while I was still in the bathtub, and he said not to look, then I closed my eyes tight until he left the bathroom. Of course I was naked in the bath but did not think to tell him to shut his eyes...

Now his eyelids are heavy and he is exhausted by the time I have helped him into fresh pajamas. Then he opens his eyes. "Thank you. Please inform the general I'll return to the front immediately." And he falls asleep.

Downstairs, on my way out, I detour to the Ladies Room, inadvertently find myself in the oversize stall with handrails, high commode and the blue-and-white HANDICAPPED sign.

When I too am – all spaced out – will there be room enough here for my wings?

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...

DAVID ALEXANDER

(USA)

Samsa

It was a time of peace and plenty for Samsa's nation, which lived beneath the sink in the vacant apartment on the top floor of the tenement building. Never since the time that his forbears had first colonized this new world had there been such prosperity. Even the eldest among his people, those with memories stretching back across three generations, could not recall an epoch like this.

For an entire generation, almost two, there had been no war, and the last two great wars against the invaders were forgotten by the young who could not even conceive of such things. Samsa had heard of still more distant times, when the world beyond his nation had been inhabited by giants who hated his kind and devised terrible stratagems to erase it from the world. But no one could say for certain if this was true or simply the stuff of myth invented by storytellers.

The older ones, who were usually more pious than the young, believed these tales and claimed that the giants were killed by God for their sins, because they were supremely evil. It was said that there were two of them, of male and female form, and that the earth shook beneath their feet when they walked.

The elders claimed these giants were already in the new world when Samsa's remote ancestors arrived after an arduous passage from the darkness of the deep place, which is where his race was said to have been created by gods who dwelt there. At first the giants and his race had coexisted. But as Samsa's people multiplied, a great enmity developed and the giants began to kill them whenever they were found until only a pregnant female remained, hidden beneath the sink in a crack too small to be seen. It was from this female, called Mother Eve, that Samsa's race was said to have arisen to repopulate the world.

They pointed to their granary, a sack of potatoes that the nation had been living on for many generations, and to the moisture that collected on the pipes beneath the sink that provided water, as proof of the existence of the giants. Surely only the great creatures they spoke of

could have been responsible for these prodigious works, and it was true that not even the most learned could devise an explanation to dispute this, though many had tried.

Be that as it may, Samsa was content to thank God for the blessings of his nation. He was not among those who took his life for granted. Whether or not the giants ever lived, the German cockroaches that had warred with his nation twice before were real enough, as anyone could easily tell. Even a generation later, the dried and shriveled corpses of both friend and foe could still be found amid the dust in the corners of the walls as testament to the horrors of war. Since that time the nation had stood ready to fight another war, but dreaded having to do so.

One day, Samsa heard the news of a great new undertaking that sparked the imagination of the whole nation. It was to be an exploration mission into space on an order that had never been attempted before. There had been many attempts for his race to migrate from beneath the sink into space, and some had in fact reached the countertop and the cupboards that were known as the heavens above.

Such feats had thrilled Samsa's generation while he was still very young but a great weariness had descended on the nation. His generation was more interested in devouring the sack of potatoes and licking the moisture from the pipes than in engaging in bold new undertakings such as the exploration of space.

Samsa was not one of these. He longed for the old days when his people were moved by a vision of the future that spurred them on to new heights of accomplishment. He vowed that he would be part of the exploration team because he knew that it would make history.

Samsa applied to the committee established by the nation's leaders to choose the members of the exploration team, but he had misgivings. He did not trust groups and committees because they were usually frauds established to protect the special interests of privileged members of his people. They stifled opportunity and fostered mediocrity. When Samsa was young, after the war, such committees were unheard of, indeed they were considered the type of thing his nation had fought to guard against. But more and more the very evils that his people had died to banish from the world became a part of the way things were done.

The sack of potatoes under the sink was a good example. At one time this sack of potatoes was considered to belong to all the people of Samsa's nation. It was shared equally among them and anyone who questioned the right of any member of society to share in the potatoes would have been thought insane or called by the name of the leader of the German cockroaches who had spilled the blood of Samsa's people in a war to the death.

But in time there arose a new spirit in the nation. A new generation reached maturity and some of them looked covetously upon the potatoes and devised means by which access to these was controlled by their kind. Others of this new breed even found ways to restrict the water that was licked from the sweating pipes beneath the sink. Before long what had been equal and free among all was now the jealously guarded province of a select few who controlled everything. While they gorged themselves on the potatoes and drank the cold water from the sweating pipes, many went hungry and thirsty.

Those of this new breed found ways to control other aspects of life in the nation as well. They even found ways to control the minds and the souls of Samsa's people. Where once the citizenry were all free to say what was in their hearts and to think what was in their heads, these freedoms were now all but gone.

It was true that the right to free speech and free thought still existed and was extolled by the nation's leaders as though it were still intact. But in fact it had long ago been taken away by the new breed. Those who spoke out found themselves silenced, those who thought too closely about life were silenced too.

The new breed was as clever as it was evil. It made certain that just enough of the potato sack and just enough water from the sweating pipes were doled out to the nation to sustain it, but withheld the rest so that there were constant shortages. This led to discontent and unrest.

Samsa's people were perpetually at each other's throats, fighting and killing one another beneath the kitchen sink over scraps of potato and droplets of water when all the while there was plenty of everything to go around and all could be content, except that the new breed wanted it that way, because in the violence of life beneath the sink lay the levers

of their control that the few used to enslave the many in a nation that was supposedly free.

Of course there were still those capable of thinking, those who refused to knuckle under to the new breed, and it was they who distrusted the motives behind the planned expedition. They claimed that this was no more than a gambit to drain off the most active and least docile members of the race. There had been some grumbling lately and it was getting louder as time passed. The new breed, went this thinking, was getting worried and devised this scheme.

Even so, thought Samsa, whatever the expedition's motives, it was still the chance of a lifetime and an historical opportunity. He made up his mind that nothing would deter him from being a part of it. Nevertheless, when the names of his countrymen that would comprise the exploration team were announced by the leaders, Samsa's was not among them. Nor were there any names on the list that were not recognizable as those who served the interests of the new breed. A hue and cry went up from among the people, with Samsa's voice raised louder than the rest. The call for justice was answered, and this time the new breed was defeated. Still, when the revised list was announced, Samsa's name was still not on it.

Samsa was angered and hurt. Why had he not been chosen? Some of his friends, those for whom he had fought, had been chosen, and now they looked at him in a new way, putting on airs. None of them would speak with Samsa anymore either. They formed small groups of their own, talking excitedly about the great adventure they would undertake and

basking in the adulation from an expectant society. When they set off on their undertaking, Samsa refused to watch. He had other plans.

He had decided to set off on his own, without help or backing of any kind, and succeed in reaching the farthest reaches of the apartment. He knew that his chances of success were slim, but he knew that he had no other choice. Knowing that he'd been left behind was too much for Samsa to bear. If he died, that was fine. He was willing to pay with his life for the chance to be part of this great adventure, to fulfill his greatest dream.

One day, shortly after the others had left amid great fanfare and celebration, Samsa prepared to set off on his lonely journey. He had

managed to outwit the new breed and filled himself with as much potato as he could eat, and had drunk as much water as he could carry. He had honed and sharpened his skills, foraying out from beneath the sink to

great distances on his own, and learning many things about the space outside his nation in the process that would help him.

For example, on one foray Samsa discovered the water faucet of the kitchen sink, something he realized none of his people had ever suspected was there because there were no scent trails at all to mark the presence of previous explorers. To his astonishment he saw that drops of water were dripping from the mouth of the faucet into the basin of the sink in a slow, steady cadence.

Samsa crept down into the basin of the sink, determined to investigate despite the danger of physical harm. With each splash he was sprayed with even tinier droplets of cold water and there were more drops covering the bottom and sides of the basin. He drank from these, filling his food pouches with the water. He crept down into the wet darkness of the drain and at once it struck him that this might be connected to the water on the sweating pipes.

Another time, Samsa climbed into the cupboard above the kitchen countertop and made an even more astounding discovery. At some time in the distant past -- who could say how long ago -- members of his nation had colonized this place. He could see their remains scattered here and there and found signs of their having colonized a stack of old dinner plates in a corner of one of the shelves. Samsa was certain that no record existed of this colony, at any rate he had never heard it mentioned, even by the old ones. Could this colony have dated back to the mythical time of the giants, he wondered? If so, then it might prove that the giants were fact instead of myth.

Samsa made more discoveries as he explored the kitchen countertop, the cupboard above it and the stove adjoining it, and then crept down into the old dishwasher built into the front of the counter. Sometimes his forays into the heavens lasted for days on end. Samsa learned much about the world outside on these trips. He knew his discoveries would help him on the difficult and dangerous expedition that he was determined to make completely on his own. He had discovered that the world surrounding his nation and the heavens above it were far

different than his people had imagined them to be. He was sure that these uncharted realms posed threats that he had no way of predicting. Yet his forays had also convinced him that by proceeding cautiously, even a lone voyage of exploration such as the one he contemplated had a real chance of success.

But the expedition made up of sycophants assembled by the new breed had not put in a day of hard preparation. Instead they based their plans on theories and conjecture. The group set off while Samsa was engaged in one of his forays, and as Samsa returned across the countertop, the government's space explorers were marching across the kitchen floor, and neither saw the other pass. It would be days after their departure before Samsa made his final preparations for his own journey and set off on his own in the dead of day when most of his people were sound asleep in the crevices in the woodwork beneath the kitchen sink.

The scent trails left by the government exploration team would have been impossible not to notice on the walls of the apartment, which was the route Samsa decided was the safest to follow. He suspected that they had taken the route across the floor, which he considered far more dangerous and less likely to yield new discoveries. Samsa made his way cautiously and patiently, probing ahead with his antennae and marking his trail with scent from his thoracic glands so that he could easily find his way back when the time came.

Frequently he paused and stroked his antennae along the surface of the wall, listening for vibrations that might mean danger. His antennae picked up many strange sounds he had never heard before; thudding, grinding, slamming, grating, ringing, scratching, chirping, clicking sounds, and ones even stranger too that rose and fell in odd cadences. He could not imagine the things that produced these peculiar vibrations, but he was certain from their faintness that they came from distant things that he need not fear, at least for now.

Sometimes Samsa also thought he picked up the faint vibrations made by members of the exploration team somewhere in the distant reaches of the apartment as they trudged across the floor. Those faint sounds brought on an instant feeling of loneliness and homesickness and a wish to be part of a group of others like himself. At those times Samsa steeled himself to his task and moved on, putting such thoughts from his mind as best he could.

He was gone almost a week, which in the time of his people was equivalent to over a month, when his antennae detected what sounded like cries of distress from somewhere below him. Samsa turned and followed the vibrations downward toward the floor, and as he went lower and lower, he also picked up a terrible odor of death from below. The lower to the floor he got, the louder the cries of distress became, until Samsa found the source. Clinging to the wall just above the wainscoting by the sharp spines of his legs, his antennae excitedly probing the air, Samsa stood in shocked amazement above a scene of unimagined horror. In front of him was a glue trap that was filled with the dead and the dying.

Moving cautiously despite his impulse to rush to the aid of his fellows, Samsa made his way to the one end of the glue trap and peered inside its dark, foul-smelling interior. He could not believe what his compound eyes showed him and thought for a moment that he had gone mad. But he was not mad. What he saw was all too real. His people were caught on the sticky stripes that lined the interior of the glue trap. Most were already dead, their corpses rotting, while a few others writhed in their last, feeble paroxysms to escape the glue, the torn-off limbs and feelers that littered the inside of the trap testament to the struggles that had taken place.

Then Samsa heard someone call out his name. He recognized the voice. It belonged to Goliath, his friend and a member of the expedition. Goliath cried out for help and Samsa saw that there might be a chance to free him. Goliath was not as badly mired as the rest of the those caught in the glue. He was stuck to the glue by only the ends of two legs. The rest of him was free, and he was near the outside of the trap. If Samsa grasped him by his mandibles, he might succeed in pulling him out, but at the possible price of one or both of his hind legs. Goliath was ready to pay any price to escape the certain death awaiting him inside the trap and begged Samsa to help him. Samsa crept as close as he dared and locked his mandibles with Goliath's, pulling backwards as hard as he was able until he felt something give and Goliath tumbled from the lip of the glue trap onto the floor, minus one entire hind leg and half of another.

Grateful to be alive despite the loss of his legs, Goliath told Samsa the story of what had happened. The team had been making good

progress for many days when a scouting party that had been sent ahead returned with news of an exciting discovery.

Only a few hours journey ahead lay a rectangular object against the baseboard of the wall that gave off the faint, though unmistakable odor of rotting vegetables. The scouts surmised that it might contain potatoes, or something like them, that the team could use to replenish its food supplies, for by then their food pouches were becoming empty. Eager to see this discovery and hoping to establish a base camp, the team rushed to the site along the scent trails left by the scouts.

But when they got there, some had doubts about whether or not the team should try to go inside the rectangle despite the sweet smell of rotten potatoes that it gave off. There was something amiss about this thing, whatever it was; something that just didn't seem right. Goliath was the most outspoken of those who felt they should encamp near the rectangle and take a fresh look at it after a good day's sleep, but he was overruled by the leader of the team who was a prominent member of the new breed. As sound as Goliath's arguments about the dangers were, the new breeders wanted to have the glory of being first to make the discovery. They talked of founding a city on this spot with the leader's name. The most Goliath could do was prevail on the leaders to leave a small group outside the rectangle in case of trouble.

Most of the group marched straight into the glue trap. The head new breeder was the first to get caught in the sticky glue. The rest of the group was mired in seconds. With the others outside, Goliath watched in horror as those inside struggled and squirmed, unable to free themselves from the embrace of death, and while some did manage to tear loose at the price of their limbs, they were quickly mired even worse than before on fresh stripes of sticky glue. Goliath was caught as he selflessly tried to free one of those closest to the mouth of the trap, which is why Samsa found him where he had. Those outside lingered until there was no hope left. Goliath counseled them not to return yet, but to press on so that the deaths of the fallen would not have been in vain. The others were now somewhere ahead of them, along the scent trail they had left behind.

Samsa listened to Goliath's story as he used his mandibles to chew off the traces of glue that remained on Goliath's leg stumps, saving this alien substance in one of his food pouches to bring back as proof of

what he had seen. Then he and Goliath set off along the scent trail left by the rest of the team. Despite Samsa's misgivings about using the floor route, he wanted to overtake them as fast as possible, suspecting that worse dangers awaited them. But slowed by Goliath's injuries, the two of them only caught up with the survivors of the glue trap after a day's march, and when they found them, Samsa's worst fears were realized.

The first corpse of the group was found lying on its back, its many legs folded almost prayerfully inward, its feelers limp and spread wide in a classic death posture. Samsa rushed to the body and was saddened to see that it was completely lifeless, although he recognized it as a member of the inner circle of the new breed who had boasted of the ease by which the expedition could be conducted. He was afraid too, because there was no sign of injury to the corpse. It wasn't the sticky material from the rectangle that had killed this one, but something else that might at any moment claim his and Goliath's lives too. For that reason Samsa led Goliath along the wall, keeping as close as possible to the scent trails but avoiding any new pitfalls that lay along the floor. As they progressed, they saw more corpses strewn along the floor, their number increasing the farther they went, until finally they came to a place where the floor changed from wood to tile and their feelers picked up the unmistakable sound of water running in hidden pipes.

Here they found what had killed the others; two huge black saucers with an opening between them. Around these disks were scattered the corpses of the remainder of the team. The mouth-watering odors of rotting vegetables that wafted out of the disks clued Samsa to what had happened. There was nothing sticky here, but bits of foodstuff between the mandibles of the dead team leaders convinced him that they had eaten of the food inside the disks and died as a result.

Nevertheless, the place they had come to was also the scene of the greatest discovery yet, as Samsa and Goliath cautiously explored its wonders. Here was another sink, very closely resembling the kitchen sink beneath which the nation lived, with pipes that sweated water. Nearby were entirely new things, one round and containing a lake of cool, delicious water, and the other much larger and empty, yet having a drain like the one Samsa had discovered in the heavenly reaches about the nation.

The tragedy was obvious -- despite their errors, the team had in fact discovered an entirely new world, one where Samsa's people could live and breed for many generations. But they had made the mistake of eating the food of death and had paid with their lives.

There was still more to explore beyond the new world, but Samsa and Goliath knew that they must try to make their way back home or they might never return. This time they took the wall route, following the scent trails Samsa had laid down on his outbound journey. Weeks later they returned without mishap, tired and hungry and filled with strange and perplexing memories, but otherwise alive and well.

At first the people thought they had gone mad, and even the bits of sticky material that Samsa produced from his food pouch failed to entirely convince the skeptics about the miracles and terrors he and Goliath had encountered on their travels. But in time they were believed, and a second expedition was mounted, this one larger, better equipped, and guided by Samsa's scent trails. With Samsa, now a national hero, leading them, they arrived safely at the glue trap and went on to the bathroom where the corpses of the others still lay where they had been left long months before. These places were declared national shrines in honor of the brave ones that had fallen.

The months passed, and then the years. A new generation had arisen, one that colonized the new world in the bathroom behind the toilet bowl and in the cracks in the walls, and in other places in the apartment. Samsa had been elected their leader but the reforms he had instituted were unpopular. Despite all his efforts to make the supply of potatoes and water available to all, the new breed found ways to evade the letter of the law and actually increased their control of the nation's resources. When Samsa cracked down, the new breed tried to assassinate him. Although he survived, he was disgusted of his people and pledged that he wouldn't try to reform them any longer. He resigned his office and retired to his private crack in a secluded niche in the cupboard where he could devote time to his archaeological studies of the ancient ancestors who had populated its shelves.

In time, Samsa became convinced that these artifacts represented not only one ancient race, but probably two, going back in time to unimaginable periods. The more he delved into his studies, the more Samsa became convinced that the myths of the cosmic war between his race and the two giants was not a myth at all, but based on fact.

And he even went a step further. Samsa suspected that one day the giants might even return, and if so, then his people needed to prepare to deal with that possibility.

But Samsa's theories were by then dismissed as the ravings of a crank who in his youth had made great contributions to the nation, but who was now nothing more than a nuisance. Samsa's Jeremiads about the giants' return continued to be dismissed even after a troubling event that none could explain; one day the slumber of the nation was disturbed by the sound of thunderous thuds on the floor below and other terrible sounds that rose and fell in regular cadences. There was more thudding and then an even louder explosion, followed by two sharp, snapping sounds that some interpreted as the heavens loosening from their hinges; then all was silent again.

Samsa spoke out once more. He had heard these sounds before, he claimed. They had been faint, on those days long ago when he'd stroked his feelers over the walls, listening down into the depths of the world, but they were the very same ones he remembered from that time. Now he feared that they had been made by the sleeping giants who had now returned, and would return again, perhaps to stay before long. At first, filled with the terror of this unearthly event, the people listened to Samsa. But then his warnings began to be dismissed again. Much time passed and there were no more sounds. After awhile the nation grew complacent and the event that had once caused so much fright diminished to what many called mass hallucination.

Samsa knew that to believe this was suicidal. He also knew that if the giants were returning, there was no way to fight them. The only course was to escape. And so, as in the days of his youth, Samsa went exploring on his own with only his intuition to guide him. He knew there was only one place of refuge should the giants come: the deep place. It had been regarded as a myth, like the giants themselves, but Samsa's archaeological studies of the cupboard peoples convinced him that it existed far below and that the route to it lay along the sweating pipes that extended down into the depths of the world. If his people mapped out an escape route along the pipes, they might be able to flee the giants if they came back.

Aware that every day was precious now, Samsa engaged in his lonely explorations, helped only by his staunch friend Goliath, who went

with him. They discovered that the pipes indeed extended far down into the very roots of the world. But before they could convince the nation to mount a major expedition to chart a path down to the deep place, Samsa's worst fears materialized. One day while the nation slept, the thunder was heard again, and this time it never stopped, only grew louder and louder, and this time there was no doubt that the giants were real and that they had come back to stay.

Almost from the first, cries of distress arose from all over the apartment, as the ancient war between the giants and Samsa's race was renewed. Soon there were reports of a holocaust in the new world colony, followed by the appearance of strange objects under the kitchen sink. These were the same as the deadly black disks that had been discovered in the bathroom long ago. Samsa now had no doubt that his race would be exterminated quickly. It was time to take drastic measures. Already his people were eating of the delicious tasting food inside the saucers and beginning to die, and though scores perished, more ate the food and died in turn. Samsa knew there was no time to waste. Standing at the top of the sack of rotten potatoes, Samsa rallied the survivors of the nation. He told them that it was time to leave their world behind and search out the deep place of legend. It was his race's only hope. Soon even the sack of potatoes would be gone and they would all be dead.

Even now, when death was imminent, most scoffed at Samsa. They continued to believe that nothing would happen to them, that the giants would disappear and leave them in peace with the water on the sweating pipes and the sack of spoiled potatoes, just as their world had always been from the beginning of time. Samsa knew better, and with a handful of those who could still see and think clearly, he prepared to lead the remnants of his people down into the deep place, along the pipes that ran straight to the roots of the world.

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Contributors

Albert Russo who has published worldwide over 85 books of poetry, fiction and photography, in both English and French, is the recipient of many awards, such as The New York Poetry Forum and Amelia (CA) awards, The American Society of Writers Fiction Award, The British Diversity Short Story Award & the Prix Colette, among others.

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Gustavo Vega has resided in Barcelona (Spain), since 1972, specializes in theoretical investigation, pedagogy and creative activity in three fields: Philosophy, Poetry and the Plastic Arts. Vega's books include *Inhabiting Transparencies*, *The Pleasure of Being*, *Prologue for a Silence*, *The Border of the Infinite*.

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Jonathan Bennet is the author of five books including the critically acclaimed novels, *Entitlement and After Battersea Park*, two collections of poetry, *Civil and Civic*, and *Here is my street, this tree I planted*, and a collection of short stories, *Verandah People*. He is a winner of the K.M. Hunter Artists' Award in Literature. Born in Vancouver, raised in Sydney, Australia, Jonathan lives in the village of Keene, near Peterborough, Ontario.

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Paul Tristram is a Welsh writer who now lives on the Southern coast of Britain and has had around 700 Poems, Short Stories and Sketches accepted/published in the last few years, mostly in the U.K. in print magazines.

Steven Sher a native of New York City, currently living in Jerusalem, Steven Sher is the author of 14 books including, most recently, the following new poetry collections: *Grazing on Stars: Selected Poems* and *The House of Washing Hands*. His poetry and prose have appeared in more than 300 publications on 5 continents since the 1970s. He has taught at many universities and writing workshops for more than 35 years.

Tammy Nuzzo-Morgan is the first woman to be appointed Suffolk County Poet Laureate (2009-2011). She is the founder and president of The North Sea Poetry Scene, Inc., publisher of The North Sea Poetry Scene Press and the editor of Long Island Sounds Anthology. She is author of six books of poetry, one of which was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. She teaches at Briarcliffe College.

Tammi Rothman a native New Yorker, is a Lecturer at Queensborough Community College. When she is not teaching English, Tammi is perfecting her backstroke at the local pool and daydreaming about the possibilities of time travel and the mysteries of the universe. Currently, she is working on a science fiction novel called *Cipher*.

Tònia Passola is a Catalan language poet born in Barcelona. She is the author of *Cel rebel* ("Cadaqués a Rosa Leveroni prize"); *La sensualitat del silenci* ("Vicent Andrés Estellés prize"); *Bressol*; *L'horitzó que no hi és and Margelled'ètoiles* (bilingual French-Catalan). Tònia Passola's work takes the form of a personal diary. Using memory, imagination, and dream she transcends the limitations of language and creates an extraordinary poetic world.

Vida Nenadic was born in Uzice, Serbia. So far she has published one novel and four poetry books. Her first novel *Zoo Called London* won the best unpublished book competition run by the Graphic studio DERETA in Belgrade (2008). Some of her poems were translated into English, Macedonian, Bulgarian and German. She is a member of the Association of Writers of Serbia.

Zvi A. Sesling has published poetry in numerous magazines both in print and online in the, United States U.S., U.K., France, Belgium, New Zealand, Canada and Israel. He is author of *King of the Jungle*, and a chapbook *Across Stones of Bad Dream* and a second full length poetry book, *Fire Tongue* to be published by Cervena Barva Press in 2013.



Upcoming Publication
The Second Genesis : An Anthology of Contemporary
World Poetry
A venture of ARAWLII

A.R.A.W.L.I.I. (Academy of 'rait?*(s) And World Literati) is our modest venture that has long been working to promote literature and creative writing and to strengthen cultural ties between India and other countries of the world. In our Advisory and Editorial Boards we have eminent poets and writers from all over the world. We have been publishing a number of books, newsletters, poetry collections apart from regularly bringing out the official journal of the Academy- *Prosopisia*.

The Academy has taken up on itself the mammoth task of compiling **The Second Genesis: An Anthology of Contemporary World Poetry**. We invite you, therefore, to be a part of this grand celebration of poetry and creativity.

The small write-up about the anthology may furnish you with some more details about the thematic concerns the editors may like the poets to address to. Our initial plan is to include at least five poems of each poet but ARAWLII reserves the right to decide which and how many poems of a particular poet will be a part of the proposed anthology.

The copyright of the poems will remain with the poet. Furthermore, there is **no publication fee** for the submissions.

This is an enormous project and we sincerely regret that with its limited resources ARAWLII cannot afford to offer any honorarium. ARAWLII will send **complimentary copy/copies** of the published anthology to every poet included therein along with **5 complimentary printouts** of his/her contribution to the volume. If the poet requires any more copies of the published anthology, the Academy will provide them at cost price + mailing charges.

We hope to bring out the anthology by December 2013. The Academy would hold the Board meeting in July-August 2013 to discuss and finalise the proposal.

Moizur Rehman Khan
Project Manager
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THE SECOND GENESIS: AN ANTHOLOGY OF
CONTEMPORARY WORLD POETRY

A quartz clock on the front wall displays a commercial logo of Saroop & Co. in its middle — apart from the ticking of time. It is past midnight.

An incident of Lord Krishna's infancy is immediately recalled/ once when he was a little child, he happened to put in his mouth a lump of clay was suddenly caught by his mother – Yashoda who quite disturbed and annoyed asked the baby Lord to open his mouth and show what was inside. After much haggling, he finally opened and what the mother saw was the reflection of the whole Brahmanda (the Universe) floating inside the Lord's mouth. The mother unable to bear what she had in a flash seen almost fainted for a while! And so the story goes on. . . .

As a matter of fact if we follow the Jungian theory, the concept of Genesis is a point of time is meaningless. And as a point in space worthless! The distinctions and demarcations of the micro and the macro are simply the jugglery of words or at best just the tools for normal minds to know and define the world of limits. Beyond this all are one – oned in all.

Then, the word or number 'second' is also rendered redundant as it supposes the existence of some first or some third and fourth and so on and so forth. . .

Genesis is after all genesis. It is either a genesis or the genesis. It is 'a' since there are so many 'a's' and it is 'the' since, once again there are so many 'a's'. Genesis is a beginning with a long 'pre' and an impending 'post'. But a 'pre' seems to nullify a beginning for a beginning is that

which has nothing before it. But it has something which is nothing. A beginning in its own turn is the end of that something which is nothing. Then what nullifies which? Which negates what?

The 'second' is the answer. The first answer. The only answer.

The clock has struck 2 a.m.

The second moon is hooked and hanging on my window pane. An adolescent coyish smile twinkles the stars in a cosmic Valentine night!

It is the second which is the first for the first has sneaked into a 'pre'.

The idea to bring out an anthology of contemporary world poetry – though quite ambitious and adventurous it seems — is nevertheless the need of the hour and demand of the Century at its threshold. In an era of globalization, shrinking boundaries and expanding bounds, the struggle is for stature, the tug is to tongue out, the agony is for a space of one's own. One needs to be heard — be it an individual or a nation. (Is not India still struggling hard to get a permanent seat in the UNSC?)

An anthology, above all, is the best way to canonize literature. It is with this belief and hope the present anthology is hereby proposed and planned. For after all, all agony must end in an ecstasy.

A dawning whimper in a quartz night.

The clock has struck 5 a.m.

Om bhur bhava swah tat savitur varenium bhargo devasya dhimahi dhiyoyonah prochodayat. . .

The kids are assembled in an infant class and jointly sing – 'Johnny Johnny/Yes papa. . .'. Baby Lord opens his mouth.

The second Genesis is at hand.

ANURAAG

(President)

A.R.A.W.LII