

2010 - 2023



Live encounters

POETRY & WRITING

FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH
VOLUME SEVEN NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2023

DR SALWA GOUDA

Voices of Arab Poets

ALL BEAUTY IS POETRY



©Mark Ulyseas

Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.



SUPPORT LIVE ENCOUNTERS. DONATE NOW AND KEEP THE MAGAZINE LIVE IN 2024

Live Encounters is a not-for-profit free online magazine that was founded in 2009 in Bali, Indonesia. It showcases some of the best writing from around the world. Poets, writers, academics, civil & human/animal rights activists, academics, environmentalists, social workers, photographers and more have contributed their time and knowledge for the benefit of the readers of:

Live Encounters Magazine (2010), Live Encounters Poetry & Writing (2016), Live Encounters Young Poets & Writers (2019) and now, Live Encounters Books (August 2020).

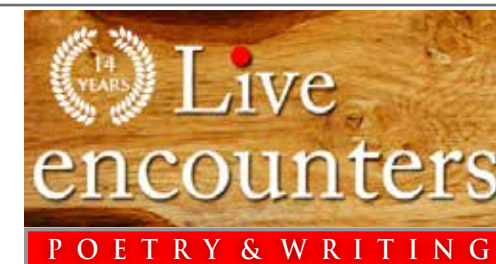
We are appealing for donations to pay for the administrative and technical aspects of the publication. **Please help by donating any amount for this just cause as events are threatening the very future of Live Encounters.**

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti Om

Mark Ulyseas
Publisher/Editor

[Donate](#)

All articles and photographs are the copyright of www.liveencounters.net and its contributors. No part of this publication may be reproduced without the explicit written permission of www.liveencounters.net. Offenders will be criminally prosecuted to the full extent of the law prevailing in their home country and/or elsewhere.



VOLUME SEVEN
NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2023

CONTRIBUTORS

DR. SALWA GOUDA – GUEST EDITORIAL
AHMAD AL SHAHAWAY
AHMED ALGAFAARY
AHMED NABAWI
AICHA BASSRY
ALI AL HAZMI
ALI AL SHALAH
ASHRAF AMER
AZIZ AZRHAI
AZMI ABD EL WAHAB
FATHE ABDEL SAMEE
GAMAL AL QASSAS
HANI AL SALWAY
HASSAN NAJMI
HATEM AL SHEHRI
MOHAMED AL-SHAHAT
MOHAMED BARAKA
MOHAMMED ALKAFRAWY
MOSTAFA EBADA
NAGAT ALI
RASHA AHMED
ZUHAIR ABU SHAYEB

Salwa Gouda is an Egyptian literary translator, critic, and academic at the English Language and Literature Department at Ain-Shams University. She holds a PhD in English literature and criticism. She received her education at Ain-Shams University and California State University in San Bernardino. She has published several academic books, including "Lectures in English Poetry, and "Introduction to Modern Literary Criticism" and others. She has also contributed to the translation of "The Arab Encyclopedia for Pioneers," which includes poets and their poetry, philosophers, historians, and men of letters, under the supervision of UNESCO. Additionally, her poetry translations have been published in various international magazines.

DR SALWA GOUDA ALL BEAUTY IS POETRY

When I was young, I used to spend two or three months at my grandmother's house in the village. The house is huge and surrounded by a wide garden, serenely located near the river Nile. I thought at this time that it was the biggest in the world. One day, which is the most important in my life, I heard the voice of the gardener, Ahmed Abu Ali, reciting poetry. I was moved by its intensity, depth and music. Being just eight years old, I was confused about the unsophisticated man's language, and the childish questions started to rise: why did my grandmother and the rest of the people in the house never speak and recite similar poetic rhymed words like the old man? Is it a language only for gardeners? Since this time, I have started my journey with literature, poetry and all creative arts as well. Questions like why some people are more creative than others, how they feel during the creative process, and what kind of environment they need to produce their works, whether performing or visual arts.

Throughout the years, I have come across the notion that this is innate, that poets are gifted with the power of words, and that their souls are stores of music and rhythm. In addition, they are more sensitive than usual to their life incidents, their surroundings and their social circumstances, which help nourish their talents. I always remember the group of poets in England like William Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Samuel Southy, who lived in the English Lake District of Cumberland and Westmorland at the beginning of the 19th century and how the beauty and the spectacular landscape have been a huge influence in their poetry. Also, I recall *Mahmoud Darwish*, the famous Palestinian poet, and how the massive circumstances in his country shaped his words, style, themes and form.

I have also discovered at an early stage that life in the shadows of literature is beautiful, and without it, it is harsh and arbitrary. It makes you rejoice in happiness even though you have not crossed your doorsteps: you fly with Salma Lagerlöf in Niels' Adventures, you enter exciting detective worlds with Arthur Conan Doyle and his hero Sherlock Holmes, your heart beats with love for *Rita Mahmoud Darwish*, and you suffer with Goethe in Warten's pain; you regain your old pulse with Al-Shahawy's poetry; and you get emotional with Lorca as he patted his friend's shoulder because the sea might get narrow sometimes.



Dr Salwa Gouda

What is poetry?

This is one of the old questions that I always ask and try to find an answer to. I arrived at the understanding that all beauty in the world is poetry. Poetry is to let words flow gently and peacefully through my soul, like the flow of the river Nile on the banks of civilizations. Poetry is, also, disturbed by screaming and violence. Poetry means to mix your pictures, your metaphors, the walls of your house, your village, your garden, your lover, your love letters, your indiscretions, the threshold of your school, and your musical instrument, in stanzas that you own. At that moment of creation, you are like the one coming from the furthest part of the city, seeking a message of love and peace in its entirety. Surprisingly, when I write about poetry, I wear the heart of a poet, and my language turns poetic:

*I will wait next to your dreams
Until the villagers return from their fields
And the ears dance in the darkness of the field
And the lights of truth shine in the travels of Ibn Rushd
And Thales comes out of his resting place
and declares that wisdom is the foundation of kingship
And my grandmother Tawhida finishes spinning the morning dresses
And my nanny Mufidah Sun braids the hair of the sun
And the gypsy women produce mermaids from the beads
And Cupid removes his arrow, and there is no separation or loss
And Lavender walks into homes with open doors
And music is administered to him, and lovers are at his side
As Lavender incites love
And hope.*

Poetry translation

I also like to share my insights about my work as a literary translator in addition to being an academic. I always feel that we need to know each other and share experiences through art productions, as this alone can create respect, mutual understanding, tolerance and peace between humans. Since I have confidence in the power of poetry as a life bridge, I decided to carry the voices of the Arab poets to people who belong to other cultures. We need our voices to be heard and our poetry to be appreciated.

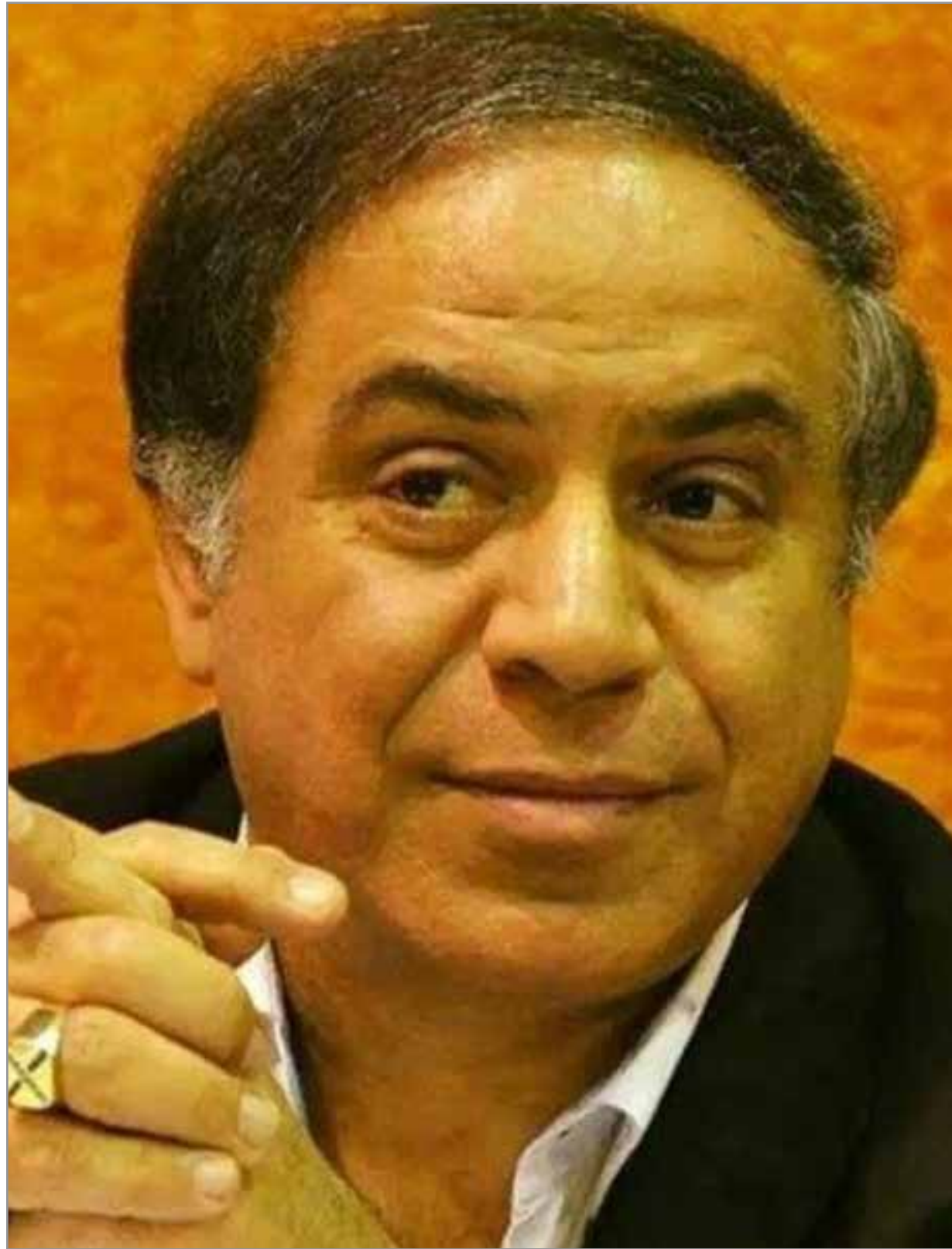
I have chosen poetry and not any other literary genre because the Arabic language is often called the language of poets, and Arabs themselves consider poetry to be the essence of Arabic—the diwan al-Arab.

Sir John Denham, the seventeenth-century Irish poet, said, “Poetry has an invisible spirit that disappears as it flows from one language to another.” In the same tone, the English Romantic poet Percy Shelley believes that “translating poetry is a completely futile attempt, like transferring a violet flower from the soil in which it grew into a vase,” while the Russian linguist Roman Jakobson opens a window to the possibility of poetry translation when he says that “the only possible translation is the creative translation, that is, rewriting the poem and producing it anew.” A good translation is the offspring of the text and part of its soul, as the German philosopher Heidegger says.

Moreover, translating poetry is not an ordinary, routine process that I can do at any time. I must prepare for it with all the psychological energy, wisdom, and serenity I possess. Before I enter the arena of the poet whom I intend to translate, who has condensed the essence of his experience into living verses with their metaphors and music, I should give up everything that bothers me in the heavy materialistic worlds, return to the blank page that I was on and which I had unconsciously forgotten, and unite with the poet’s experience and capture his creative moment. Not only that, but to be him, which is a state that I strive to create until I unite with his poetic self, and my eyes are in her eyes without the movement of a single eyelash, so that she allows me to appear in the presence of meanings, gestures, signs, references, and the interpretations between them. I am not myself at this stage, as the poet was at the time his text was born, and even when returning to the first state and engaging in it again, I need self-struggle.

This time in *Live Encounters Poetry & Writing*, I have the honor to present the translated versions of the poetry of more than twenty Arab poets from Egypt, Yemen, Palestine, Iraq, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, in addition to a short story by the Egyptian novelist, Mohamed Baraka. A big thank you should be given to Mark Ulyseas, the prophet of creative writing, and to the great Egyptian poet, Ahmad Al Shahawy for his support.

Ahmad Al-Shahawy is an Egyptian poet and author of more than 20 books and poetry collections. His poems have been translated into many languages including French, Italian, English, Turkish and Spanish. He participated in many international poetry festivals organized in many countries of the world. Al-Shahawy was also the recipient of UNESCO literature award in 1995, and Cavafy Poetry award in 1998. Four of his literary works are nominated in the long list of the Sheikh Zayed Book Award in the branch of literature including his novel *The Magician's Hijab* 2022. Also recently, Lavender Ink / Diálogos published Al-Shahawy's poetry anthology entitled *Alone by the Nile*, 2023



I WAS ONE AND MANY

I do not claim my right to anything
 Except to my name
 And the day I was born
 And those who died from the family
 And who was born
 And who traveled
 And the books that I read
 And the ashes that are born from my fingers
 And the lies I weave to entertain the only air with me in the rooms
 Or for the ants to rewrite its surah without Solomon or his army
 And the woman I loved
 And the way to her house
 And the roses that I carry
 And my failure at swimming
 And in hunting a bird
 And in the sun that hit me
 And stole my socks at night
 I did not claim to own acres of skies
 Or carats in the lands of poetry
 I just know that I enter the oven every morning
 To knead poetry with music
 And pour the color into the dough
 And bake alone
 And do not sell my bread to anyone
 Only I am the buyer and I am the baker
 So do not blame me now
 And you do not even know my picture and my name
 I did not say that I competed to put the point under the baa' in
 "Bismillah" in surat Al-Fatihah

Ahmad Al-Shahawy

continued overleaf...

And I did not say that I compete with the sea in its languages
 Nor the river in its coquettishness.
 And the river did not give me its fish
 And it did not give my faces its water
 Why do you blame me with what I have not filled in the palm?
 Just as I say farewell
 I know I was one and many
 Who did not pollute the water
 And who did not wade into the mud of light
 And his hands carried nothing but dough of languages
 And he was light on the water
 And he flew only in the direction of the unseen
 And his hands have not touched except the permissible catch
 He lived more than what is allowed to a flower
 Or to a butterfly confused from what the eyes of his hand have seen
 And he measured the history of writing with the continues sleepless act.

I DISLIKE AND LIKE

I dislike money
 Because the golden spoon that was born in my mother's mouth
 Was lost early from her
 So that she lived rich in death
 And I like antique.
 Because it is my rare poem that I am looking for a form for
 And I am afraid to die without writing it
 I do not like loud voice
 Because it floats dreams from my orbit
 And I like the new shoes
 Because I am a fan of measuring distances
 Between my feet and the mud from which the body has been created
 I do not like singular number
 Because it reminds me of my orphanage
 And I like the farthest point
 Because it means that light, no matter how far away, comes from my heart
 I do not like the coward cloud
 That escapes from the sun
 And I like to travel alone
 To recover the secrets that I hide from me
 I do not like doubting my fingers
 Because I know it is ten that blocks the eye of the sun
 And I like the first word
 Because it reminds me of walls that know my languages
 And it travels to my hidden conscience
 I do not like an empty paradise that only shelters me
 And I love my absence in thirst
 Because I will be complete in two things:
 Poetry and whom I love

continued overleaf..

I do not like my eyelids falling suddenly in sleep
 Because I am close to delirium
 And I give the stranger a chance to see my secrets
 And I like rain falling on her name
 So that the grass grows in her hands
 To heed and open a country that will be my caliphate
 I do not like to be a copy of me
 Because one Ahmed is enough in this world
 So that tragedies do not overflow in the pots
 And I like to be victorious in defeats
 So that my sun is not enchanted in its heat
 I do not like falling from high
 Because death on earth is nostalgic for mud and has the poetry of the conclusion
 And I like her vulva to be my freedom

NO MIRROR IN FRONT OF YOU TO SEE YOU

How cruel it is to be without a shadow
 No name for you and no dream
 No place for you, no key in your right hand
 To protect you from the cruelty of the night and the confusion of the day
 How little you are when you are sleeping in ignorance
 You like your lies that the sand enlarges for you
 You carry what is not yours
 And how you are many in uselessness
 On the way, you lose those who care for you
 And shelter you
 And sit you down on words
 Which quickly kicked you out of its letters
 You will die alone without any inheritance
 Nothing but blackness that fell from your heart
 Because there is no mirror in front of you to See you
 After the days punished you, and withheld the vision from you
 And threw you in the ciphers box
 Since your belly was filled with sand
 And you became an abandoned door in your height
 And you failed in mathematics
 And you did not know the table that left you
 The sun pities you
 After it saw you naked from love
 And missing the heart and tongue
 And open to a sea of hate
 You sold who lived under the stairs
 And you sold the one who fell from the top of the scaffold
 As he too anointed the sky for you
 To see
 Poetry also pities those whose legs are swollen
 From excessive knocking on doors
 And those who sold their manhood to unseen breasts
 You know that poetry only goes to those with love in their hearts
 And have a quest towards knowledge
 And you do not realize that the sky does not give its name
 Except for those whom chosen from among The people.

Ahmed Algaafary is an Egyptian poet, dramatist and novelist. He is a member of the Egyptian Writers Union. In addition, he holds a PhD in Political Science.



MARQUEZ IS GONE

Marquez is gone
 He left without showing any interest in me
 And he never once sought to calm the raging atmosphere between my isolation and
 his generations
 I always told my friends about the details of our sessions together
 I used to narrate stories so well
 Their amazement helps me
 And their half false conviction
 I have always felt grateful to Marquez
 Who comes to the café after I leave
 And he assures my fabricated stories
 And adds details in an ordinary way
 It is not compatible with him being a novelist who sits with storytellers like me at the
 café every day!
 Yesterday
 Marquez began to water the last lie whose seed I had expiated
 The friends in the café noticed
 How he sends tears
 And distills them into a tag
 So, my story shook
 And raised
 And it grew a tall stalk
 Weak... fit for a blind
 Or a shepherd's staff
 Or a flute
 The important thing is that it is not papery
 Therefore, it does not extend like a shadow to a passerby
 A tall stem
 If it floats on my river

Ahmed Algaafary

continued overleaf...

The comers recover from cholera
Throughout the past year
If I joined my café
No surprisers
And no disbeliever!!
My customers bored
Because the usual man who frequents the café after I leave
With the normal style
He no longer performs his daily duties
In assuring my fabrications
Or watering my lies!!

WHY DO I TRAVEL

I travel
Because cities
And people
And the houses
And the streets
They all escaped the presses
And they were not lined up on the shelves for decoration or reading when the mobile
phone finished charging
I travel
Because the age is one
Only one, unfortunately
It should not be wasted on one ordeal with its geography of pain
I must involve cities
And people
And houses
And other streets as causes of my wounds
The poet should not be with one wound
And the doer must not be specific and known
Do you deny it, you habitual bleeder
They despaired you by their abundance
Wounds and the hurtful ones
Then you will come out of yourself
Looking at your body with a divine smile
Pitying your crucifiers
Praying for them to have mercy

continued overleaf...

They will all walk the path of pains
Bringing the humidity of August
And a few books
- One of them is for Adonis out of modernity -
And one for an innocent of their mispronunciation of his name
And the rest is a poor edition of their complete works.
I travel
So that my memory protects my feet from the thorns that jumped out of the wreaths
Blessed is those who wear their memory
When they reached the Holy Valley, they removed it
And they became children
And it is the trick that God smiles and accepts
And if they continue to be existentialists
Who believe in the theory of evolution and development
Cities comfort them
And people
And the houses
And the streets
They are on a path devoid of the light of faith that the divines know
I travel
To receive an earthly light
That compensates me for my failure in body and social detection
As a prophet with no intermediary other than his desire to become a prophet
His father brags about the stars on his shoulders
And the heads of his relatives extend over the other families of his village
And it does not matter what he encounters during the dawn training exercises
And the revelation's threat to toast him if he slept until dawn.

I travel
Because a phone tells me that I will meet God on a train by chance
Or in a museum ticket queue
Or next to me while I was watching a music band in the street
That charges me one Euro
While the King of Kings, the Sustainer and the Rich, watches them beside me
I travel ...
Who, other than travel, can teach me this library?!

Ahmed Nabawi is a contemporary Egyptian poet and academic. He deals with humanitarian themes in his poetry. His poetic career began early in the nineties. He has five collections of poetry: (Testimony of Love - Wounds Have Tributaries - Flames of Questions - ((Scenes from the Refugee Camp)) - The Flourishment of Colors) and two collections in print entitled (An Ant Said - The Doors). In addition, he has a collection of critical books, including The Poet's Culture and Significance Production - The Poetics of Small Details - The Contemplative Tendency in Andalusian Poetry - The Heritage Tributaries in Andalusian Poetry.



Ahmed Nabawi

THE SCAVENGER

On our street
 - East of the mainland -
 Where our homes are located
 The scavenger sweeps the street
 - Every morning -
 From above the sidewalks
 Papers
 And hypocritical wishes
 And virginity of dreams
 And evenings bleeding

He is sweeping
 From under the walls
 The shadows of withered bushes
 And the remains of ages
 That leaks from under the doors
 And the remains of rendezvous
 And tears
 Falling from balconies

The scavenger sweeps the street
 Between the cracks in the asphalt
 Falling minds
 And fingers of questions
 And ambitions
 And he packs - every evening -
 In his trash can
 Tons of visions
 And a flame of feelings
 And groans
 Oh poor street scavenger
 How tired he is
 In collecting our garbage

HELL

Sartre
You are very delusional, my friend
Hell is not others
You are delusional when you see me as hell for you
Suppose I do not exist
Do you feel ecstatic alone
That my presence is not a threat to yours
And your presence for me is not like that
Do you think that if you take what is in my hand
You will achieve purpose and perfection
You are delusional, my friend
Without my presence, this would not have been possible
So let us switch roles
Put yourself in my place
And put me in your place
Look accurately and carefully
Do you see hell well

Sartre
You are racist enough
To see me as hell for you
As for me, I do not see you like that
You are my hand
And I am your leg
I see in you what I lack
And I have something that you cannot comprehend on your own
But because you are selfish
You imagine that I am blocking you
From what you cannot achieve on your own
You cannot be everything, my friend
You are poor without me
Even if you had everything
And I am the same without you
 You are lame
You need to lean on my shoulder
 And I am helpless
I need your hand to help me
Sartre, my friend
My hand extended to you
Could you please extend your hand so that we can walk together?

CORONA COMES OUT OF HIS CAVE

Coronavirus comes out of his cave
 Who convinces sadness
 Whose armies occupied the houses of Wuhan*
 To leave in peace
 Who picks up the fear from the hearts of its inhabitants?
 And sweeps the terror off its streets
 Who convinces death
 To bring back his eagles of prey
 Launched in the skies of (Wuhan)
 She kidnaps people with her claws
 Who is the magician
 who puts Corona back to the bottle
 again
 And throws it into the sea of nothingness
 Who can convince the virus
 Not to spread his offspring outside the borders
 Who is that Solimani
 Who commands the wind
 To bear his offspring
 And throw it
 In the forest of oblivion
 O humans
 The species distressed
 From your heft on her shoulders
 When will you realize
 That you are a resident of this big house
 And you have to respect the feelings of others
 When will you comply with the terms of the contract
 That you signed with the owner
 And you realize what it means
 For the game to rebel against its maker

Corona
 O smallest population
 And the fiercest
 I beg you
 To untie your grip
 On the neck of (Wuhan)
 And return to your cave in peace

* (Wuhan: The first Chinese city where the Corona virus appeared)

Aicha Bassry is a Moroccan poet, novelist and storyteller. She published many novels and poetry collections. She won the International Prize for the Novel, Kateb Yassin (Algeria 2016) for the novel (Greta Garbo's Granddaughters), the Simone Landry Prize for Women's Poetry (Paris 2017) for her Diwan (The Bathers in Thirst), and the Prize for Best Arabic Novel for the year 2018 (Sharjah Exhibition - United Arab Emirates). Her books have been translated into English, French, Spanish, Italian and Turkish. She, also, participated in many Arab and international cultural events (book fairs, festivals and conferences.)



EXERCISES ON LONELINESS

“Every woman for herself”

To get out of bed
Without looking for an arm that embraced your night.

To go to the bathroom
Without tripping over wet towels
Or miss the single toothbrush

To look in the mirror
Comb your hair
Shake off the snow sticking in your heart
Arrange the collar of the dress
And flirt yourself
“How beautiful I am without a man's eyes”

To say to the sun:
“Good morning...”
Without drawing the curtains of chronic depression

To enjoy the monotonous rhythm of coffee bubbling
When it boils in the silence of the spacious house
Without passing your hand over the boredom of the silk, hesitantly:
- Why did not I put two cups?

To contemplate from the kitchen window
A lonely woman on the opposite sidewalk
Who soothes waiting for who does not come
Without whispering:
That woman looks like me.

continued overleaf...

Aicha Bassry

And indifferently, you look away
About a scene of two lovers sharing love
Without being ashamed by nostalgia.

To start your day with a silent cup of coffee
Without tears in your eyes.

To listen to the morning news
Without remembering yesterday's dreams.

To follow climate forecasts
Without guessing that a rain storm
Will delay an absent from the evening appointment

To sit at the desk
You blame your fingers every time you try
To open your email or Facebook inbox
You dive into the whiteness of the paper
then,
You start writing a poem
In praise of loneliness
On one condition only:
Not to cry.

IMMUNITY TO PAIN

Do not be afraid
These are days
And perhaps months
And I will be healed from the bee sting.

Life has taught me
That I own nothing
And spite of this life
I taught myself that nothing owns me.
It baptized me as a daughter of the wind
Wherever she walks, I walk
For losses in my mouth have
The salinity of migratory algae
If I win one day, I doubt myself.

Disappointments have the scent of vanilla in the memory
-The smell of first love-
And if I win one day
I doubt life.

Do not be afraid
These are days
Or perhaps months
I will be healed from the bee sting
Perhaps I will cry a little in the long nights
Perhaps the calcification of nectar in my breasts will pain
Perhaps absence will hurt me
And the delicious honey on my lips longs for his lips
But I will surely forget.

continued overleaf...

And I will wipe away every tear
Regretting, longing
That fell under my feet.
I will forget all that pain:
The date of the first meeting
The farewell harbor
The first tremor
The taste of the kiss
And I will forgive the sky for its false promises
I will also understand the birds' desire to change their nests.

I will forget
I will definitely forget
Even the man's name.

I will only remember this poem.

And at another intersection
I will meet myself
I will shake her hand
Then I congratulate her on her safe return
I will read to her everything I chronicled this love with
And I will ask her:
Which of them was more accurate and more creative
In describing pain
Prose or poetry?



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

Ali Al-Hazmi (1970) is a Saudi poet who obtained BA from the Arabic Language Department at Umm Al-Qura University in Mecca. His poems were published in local, Arab newspapers, magazines and many specialized cultural periodicals. He participated in reviving many poetry evenings in many local literary clubs, literary festivals and forums in a number of countries around the world. He has published nearly seven poetry books. Moreover, his poetry collections have been translated into French, English, Turkish, Romanian, German, Spanish and other languages. Al-Hazmi, also, awarded national and international prizes, among them: Poetry Prize at the Uruguayan Poetry Festival 2015, The Grand International Prize of the International Poetry Nights Festival in Romania 2017, "Verbumlandi" International Poetry Prize, Italy, 2017. "Best International Poet of 2018" award from the International Poetry Translation and Research Center in China (IPRC).



Ali Al-Hazmi

ALONE - AND NO ONE ELSE

In sleep, no one sees you
Even if you screamed loudly in the wilds of the dream
No trace of your footsteps
Even if you walk on the silk of the first desire
For the farthest kiss
The earth cannot recognize
Your sparkle in the praises of absence!

In sleep, you close the door of your eyelids
In faces that you can no longer believe in
The meaning of love in her gaze
With your hands you open a window for yesterday to
Penetrate through its surroundings to the spring of those who filled
Your heart with life, singing, and hope

In sleep, it is enough to wave from your bed
For those you love to fall
From the clouds of their past and their forgetfulness
You go to the folk of your early years
With free spirit, no blurry horizon to hinder you
On the way to your distant ends

In sleep, imagination triumphs
On his defeats, and wishful thinking avenges
From his pains and from his jailer
In sleep, there is neither morning nor night
Times are equal in meaning
And in the passion of contemplating in absence
In sleep, you are farther than
The echo of your memory, closer than
The blooming of a flower in its field
You are the last, the first, the second, and your shadow
On the way to the truth, the third of two
They regained a forgotten destination for the question

continued overleaf...

In sleep, you won't need a compass
 To know that you are the intended with the stares around you
 Whenever they turn from the past to you
 You alone and no one else
 Who should watch the lightness of spirits
 Touch the feathers of her cheerful bird
 And you alone are responsible for
 Liberating the last doe of melancholy
 From the ambushes of her coming grief and from its shackles

In sleep, it is easy to search
 For a quiet place to wet
 The rose of your soul with emotional clouds

In sleep, you will no longer need
 An additional key to enter
 The house of the one you loved at the night
 She comes to you, the one rejecting you for long
 In the years of her torment
 She comes to you, the one who hid your love
 In the spring of her shy cheeks and in her eyelashes

In sleep, it is appropriate to date whomever you want
 Of women, to recognize the eyelids of
 Who captivated your youth with her village eyelash
 Who continues to love you without the desire of her family
 She walks joyfully in your imagination towards the secret of the suspicious planet
 In the gazes of those you seduced
 On the banks of silence at the last time
 You are not interested to know who went too far
 In ignoring your magic that comes from memory
 No woman can resist your male perfume
 This evening

In sleep, the companions gather
 On the carpet of your tender heart
 You will be visited by whose love you have blessed with for some time
 And comes whose step you waited for
 But there is a strange child among them
 You do not remember, he is staring intently
 In your eyes whenever you ignore him
 A strange child whenever you approach a meter
 From his features, you are alienated!
 A strange child, he kept carrying
 Within his hands, a blind lamp
 You do not know his secret, and whenever
 You tried to get close to light it
 His fuse was extinguished!
 You are tired of understanding the lost in its features
 His eyes are thorns from the past
 That blows on your eyelids
 Like predatory arrows when they turn!
 He is immersed in silence and a cloud of questions
 Lands on your lips like a mirage
 So, you are not guided to your path
 In the distance and you did not quench your thirst!
 You are tired in your endeavors, obsessed with arriving
 To the verge of his woven silence
 With the old pain and you have not reached!

Why do not you believe in your dreams every night
 That you are the forgotten in the eyelids of the companions
 And that who you called the strange child
 Is you?!

Ali Al-Shalah (1965) born in Babylon, Iraq. He obtained a BA in Literature from College of Arts, University of Baghdad, 1987 and MA in Modern Literature, Yarmouk University, Jordan, 1996. He also obtained PhD in Philosophy and History, University of Bern, Switzerland, 2007. He issued five poetry collections and five books on criticism. He was the Founder and President of many cultural institutions, events and festivals including the following: The founder and president of the Swiss Arab Cultural Center in 1995 and Al-Mutanabbi International Cultural Festival / Switzerland 2000, President of Babel House for Cultures, Arts and Media, with two branches in Baghdad and Babylon, 2003, Founder and President of the Babylon Festival for International Cultures and Arts 2010, Chairman of the Culture and Media Committee in the Iraqi Parliament 2010 and the Chairman of the Board of Trustees and President of the Iraqi Media Network 2014-2018.



BAGHDAD NIGHT

Ambers sleep in stories
And I am walking with your hands to you
A night that Scheherazade did not pass by
And Shahrayar did not listen to her.

Bridges touch us by going
Bridges touch us on the way back
Two hearts of the anxiety of lapis lazuli
Cutting the morning thread with the fever of kisses
I am wandering around the palm trees that concerned about us
Pointing at us there
Here
Come on, wake up from death
O my ascendant ancestors
From the night of Baghdad
once upon a time
In the new times
A man in love
At night in Baghdad.

Ali Al-Shalah

OLD TEXT PRESCRIPTION

There is no cure without compassion, my lady
Your heart tired of me is tired for me
And your absence is a new river of ashes
There is no cure other than old words and loaves of tears, my lady
Put what you can of your pride on your lips
and weave with the intensity of hesitation
There is no treatment other than walking towards each other and touching.
Here the fever of feelings is broken by tears, and the temptation of those
who imitate us remains moaning us
There is no cure for this life except death broken and weak
There is no cure except you because you are half modesty and half-life
There is no cure except you

LIE IN MY MIRRORS

She did not tell the whole truth
When the thief stared at her
She claimed he was dark and handsome
He looks like a man in a noble crowd
She did not tell the whole truth
When a paper lady stared at her
She carried her shadow for the soft clothes
She held her mouth to smile
She carried her voice to sing
She shouted to the female seductresses,
“Here you are in the muttering of the eyes.”
She did not tell the whole truth
When she fell from the corners of the wall, and the place remained
Informing the stories of brokenness to the sighted
I wish she had not gossiped, for the passers-by believed what she gossiped
And the false words remained in the cracks of mirrors
She did not tell the whole truth
And she cried at the lack of words
I wish mirrors were mirrors

Ashraf Amer (1985-2023) is an Egyptian poet, writer, and journalist, and the former president of the General Authority for Cultural Palaces. He has published a number of poetry collections, including: "Windows", "Butterfly Discoveries", "As if he were Living", "He is almost Certain". In 2022, he won the Sharjah Award for Arab Creativity for his collection "Several Other Verses".



1

They consume death in life
 If death approaches, hungry
 They shout out
 The cry of life
 Random people
 Let each of us go to his project
 The gods hunt free birds
 And punishing those who break the
 International law
 And collecting treasury from the house of money
 Nights
 To the military barracks
 And the houses of the rulers
 And many of them
 Let them go to the
 League of Arab States Street
 In Summer days
 Let the simple people go
 To their simplicity...
 And the tired
 To double fatigue
 According to cosmic systems
 And the results of the C.I.A.'s research
 Let each of us go to his project
 Or does not go
 But
 Do not make the women of a dilapidated country
 Lose their enthusiasm for extracting the seed from the ear of wheat!

Ashraf Amer

2

When he watches an emotional scene
 On TV
 His eyes well up
 And he feels the pain of the years
 In a near space

Emotional scenes
 Takes the soul to a past time
 And the continuation of life
 Sometimes necessities
 Searching in the bombed corridors of memory
 (He became in constant need
 For those who wake up the sleepers with him)
 The end justifies the means!
 Who said it?
 Why did he object to it?!
 Did he have goals?
 He seeks
 Or was it
 Pure play?
 And the toys he hid
 At the bottom of the wooden cupboard
 Did he take them out from under the duvets?
 And returned them to his sister later?!
 Was it Nahid
 Angry with him all the time?!
 He is sure of things:
 Too many dreams killed time
 And postponed the joy of the heart
 All friends were
 The most beautiful.

And all the women who knew him
 Did not pick from his heart
 A grain of wheat
 No
 Not all women
 He is sure of things:
 Friends are no longer
 The most beautiful
 And the salt of the homeland
 No longer stimulates his children's appetite!
 He is almost
 Sure!

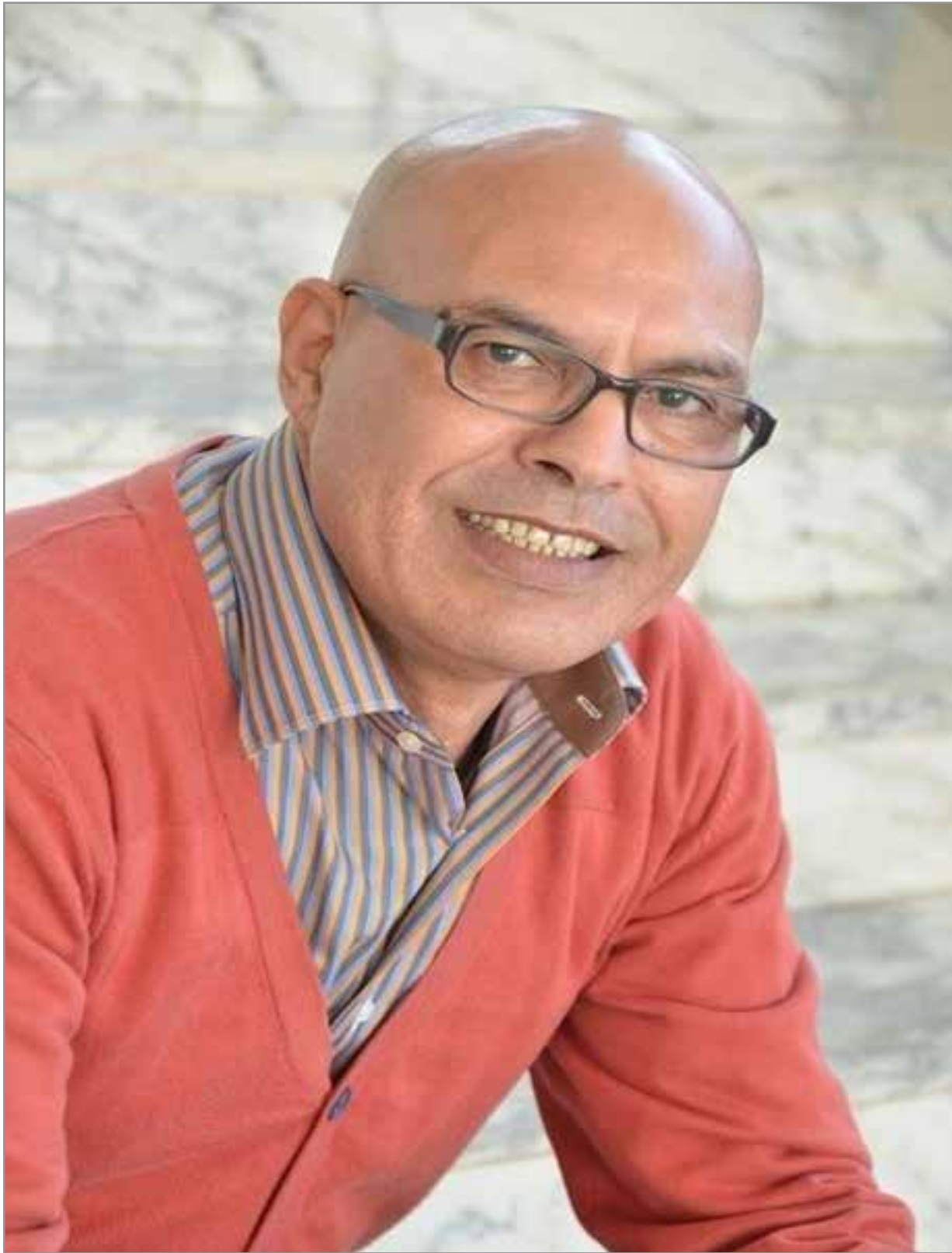
3

I called her
And at the utmost
She left me!
She sentenced me
“The Final report”

My mom
The one I love
Woke me up in my sleep
While I am dreaming about her inside the dream
I made her understand that
I did not intentionally neglect her
But
They are the concerns of life!
She gave me a look
That I did not understand
And I did not specify precisely
Did she hear me?
Did she really mean
To wake me up
Or was my passing through the first dream
And the second dream
Came at an inappropriate time
As usual with her
When we were out of dreams?
We met in the final nightmare
She was in a white room overlooking the Nile
And I was
On the way to her

Doctors advised her things
She did the opposite
But
She postponed going to my father
Until she sees me
And it was
The last time
To be late for my appointment with her!
She ate a piece of cooked cheese from my hand
And she drank a sip of water..
And she looked at the walls around her
And Her eyes are fixed
She gave me a look
That I did not understand
I did not specify precisely
Whether she heard me
Did she
Mean actually
To leave me...!

Aziz Azrhai (1965) is a Moroccan poet and visual artist. He published eight poetry collections. He, also, held several art exhibitions inside Morocco and outside. In addition, he is a member of the House of Poetry in Morocco and a former official in its executive office.



ORPHANS

Perhaps they finally understood
That life is a maze with doors and locks

That wars are a trick of gamblers
On the treasure of deception

That enemies are not all bad

That the truce is a sleeping mine
In the pod of friendships

That bullets are spoils of
Those expelled from the tables of the minority

That the dead are dried-up harvests
In the paddocks of books

That condolences are a monotonous song
The magicians delight in it

Perhaps they finally understood this
Orphans going to school
On a difficult day
Laugh at anyone...

Aziz Azrhai

ON TWO BANKS

The secret we buried
In the last century
Stumbled at its shine
The horses of the antiquities

They came, unlike usual kindness
Armed with instincts
Smells drive them
Where doubt spreads

They were like blind people without goals
Their boats collide with the remains of the strangers

And just as we left our beds
terrified
They were looking back
As if there were lightnings
Guiding their intentions
Until the deposits cool down

In other words
We descended - together - from the tribe of tree cutters
Spread brutality for the bandits
And throw our nets into lands
Without fish

Each of us has his secrets
And the reasons

We forgot our feet in another century
When we were crossing the bridges of disappointment
Towards dictionaries of maps
And we dream of pruning bliss
With scissors that do not cool

We are now on the verge of doubt
And they, like us
On the second bank

ALMOST NOTHING HAS CHANGED

Another day with knives at the back

The same drying faces
On the slopes

Eyes with coffins
And diggers

The softness of intermittent moaning
in rooms

Paved beds
With No speculations

The sheets themselves
And the smells
And the colors

The completion of the emanating delirium
From a continent
In a vessel

Curtains and needles
And the tablets

Wood clogs
Chatters
In the corridors

The same insults
On the margins of the handshake

The flavor of coma in the air bottles

Boil spots on shirts

The sharpness of the voyeuristic look
From a hole
In a wall

Neutrality of strangers

And this same night
Its walls
Without numbers

(...)
Then
Almost nothing has changed:
Nothing
Except these “brown winds”
Which guards the snow fields
In exile for the elderly.

Azmi Abdel Wahab is an Egyptian poet and journalist. He published eight collections of poetry, and his poems were issued in most Egyptian and Arab periodicals and newspapers. Moreover, his poetry is translated into more than one language, including English, French, and Persian. He, also, participated in many poetry conferences in the Arab world and won several awards from Egyptian cultural institutions.



IN A SMALL HOUSE

In this small house
 We opened the doors to singing
 We left a tree looking out the windows
 We wiped the tiles well
 We rearranged the clothes in the closet
 We washed the shade plant with water
 And we removed the cobwebs
 In the dark corners
 We sat the sun at the table
 She was happy
 We told her about death
 In a small house
 In a distant country
 So, she cried
 The air was fresh
 And the sheets are clean
 And a scanty moon illuminates faces
 We slept soundly
 It is as if we have not tried sleeping for once
 And in the morning, we woke up
 Blood on our palms
 And the smell of rot in our bodies
 Where did all these bodies come from
 To occupy rooms crowded with life
 And leave us out in the void
 No home for us!

Azmi Abdel Wahab

WAITING FOR THE ANGELS... THERE IS NOTHING TO DO!

I traveled the road alone
 Like one of the boys sleeping in the streets
 At the end of the night
 I was as light as the wind
 When I receive my body
 (My mother buried it
 In the open space in front of our house
 Before I learned to walk
 on my fingertips)
 And as someone who is not distracted by the flowers of friends
 Which they will implant in my chest tomorrow
 I smiled
 When I take one last look
 On white paper
 (I could not write a single reason
 That makes traitors proud of knowledge)
 And calmly and with confidence
 I hanged my old corpse
 Next to the room lamp
 Minutes...then my head fell
 I laughed at an unfinished message:
 (I will be an employee, father, and I will not take the bus
 Until it stops completely, I almost died one day, down
 His wheels, Dad, do you know?! I am over thirty
 Alone in a cold room, without a wife to wipe off
 My forehead sweat during a sudden illness. Reassure my mother Father.
 I do not spy on the women of the city, nor do I tell
 Good morning to a woman who took her husband to prison
 I am sad, father. I did not write a single poem since
 Six months ago, I was afraid, so ask death
 To wait, until I laugh even once
 my father)

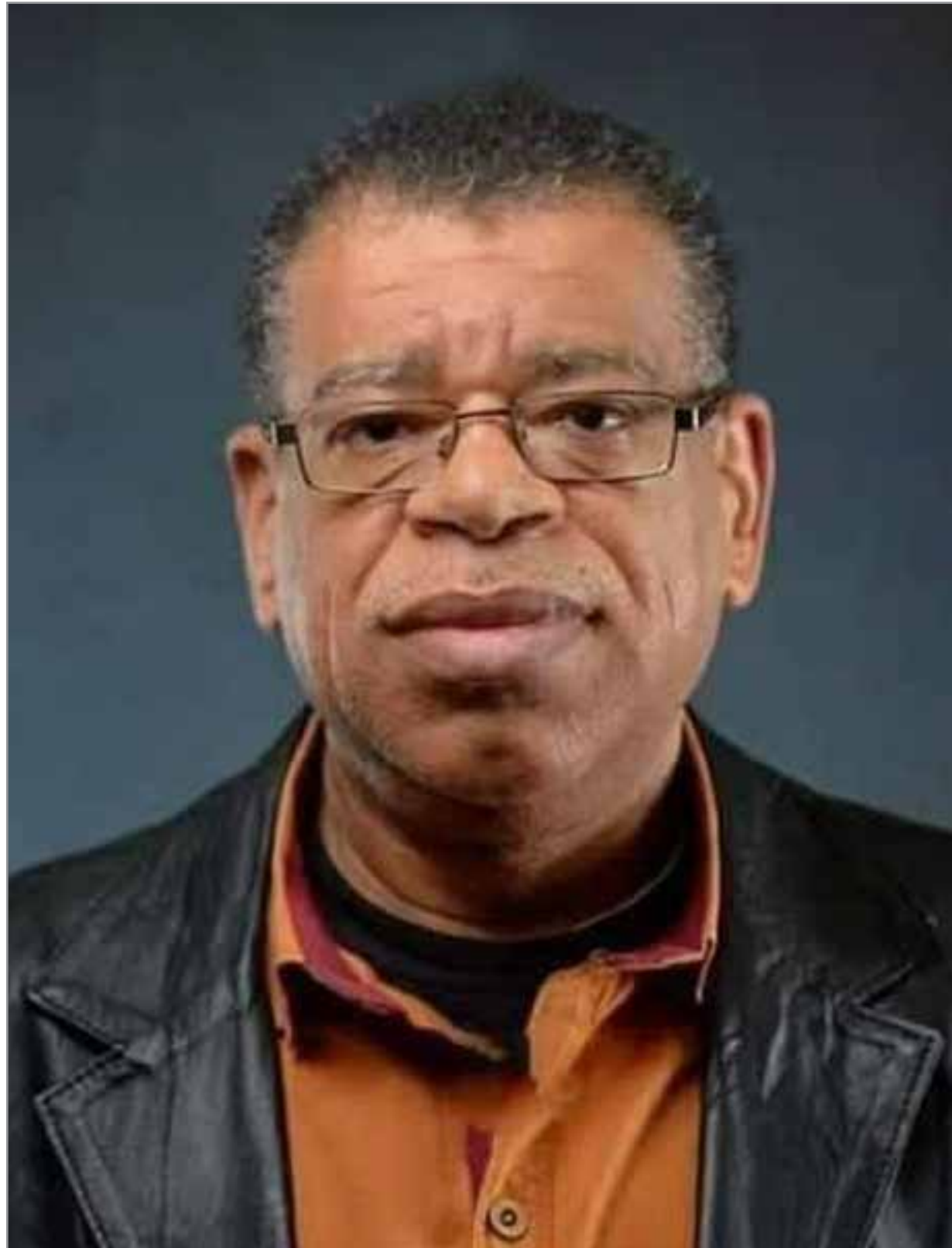
I burned everything that would give them a reason
 That makes them start talking about me
 With (he was.....)
 My body is next to the ceiling light
 Thirty years ago
 Why did they come together suddenly
 With less unfair justice
 From the café boy
 Who left my coffee until it got cold
 Without warning me
 Or gives me the opportunity to change it to another one?
 I will see them clearly
 When they descend my old body with a majesty that befits me
 So that I can be beautiful
 When I meet loved ones
 Who could not bear the obscenity of their bodies
 So, they went there
 For angels who sweeten their hair
 And warm their limbs
 To let green wings grow in its place
 I hung my body against the wall
 Waiting for the angels of torment
 They were too late
 I enjoyed taking out the women I knew
 (They keep the windows lit dimly
 And they feel their uprooted organs
 Preparing for husbands
 That trains do not carry them
 So, they accept men
 Who return their organs
 That stiffened from the cold and waiting)

WAITING FOR THE ANGELS... THERE IS NOTHING TO DO!

I am fed up with them
 They repeat boring situations
 And uglier
 So, I put them back in my head
 And I worked all night
 With waterwheels which suffer from loneliness like me
 And with rivers flowing towards eternity
 Without killing herself
 And with friends who did not achieve what the Lord promised them
 Then, they cried
 Until the weeds grew
 Between their stone feet
 Waiting for the angels
 There is nothing to do
 I will have a chance
 To search for many foolish things, I committed
 Or remember friends who abandoned me
 So, I leaned on my wooden legs
 Passing
 Empty beer bottles
 And the women who left me for them
 Standing
 Under my shirt collar
 Drying up my sweat
 The angels have not come yet
 And the city shut down its shops
 Should I go back to my house?!
 I had no home to return to
 And close it on my fatigue
 I had no one

I never had a kitten
 Waiting for me to come back
 And keep wiping me
 While eating my poor food
 I should have a place to return to
 Am I tired?!
 It looks like I will be waiting a long time here
 Until the angels come
 If only God would send other angels
 Who know exactly my disappointment
 To discover my worthlessness
 And to believe that I said a great deal
 About traitorous rulers
 And I waited long enough
 Before I turn into an upside-down shoe
 In my father's face!!

Fathi Abdel Samee (1963) is an Egyptian poet residing in southern Upper Egypt. He has published seven poetry collections, and five other books including a book on his autobiography, and an extensive study on revenge in Upper Egypt, which won the State Encouragement Award in Social Sciences.



THE ONLY FISH

They all go back to their homes
With a valuable catch

The sea humbles itself before me
What do I need to be a hunter?
My rod is good
And my boat is solid
Why, then, should I return to my darkness without a fish?
Patience?
Who knows patience like me?
I am the one who stood for more than a quarter of a century
In front of the southern bakeries
Without a single sigh?
Luck?
Maybe
But they hunt
Without luck
And without patience
And without a hook
And without sea

Why I do not want to believe
That I am the only fish
And they do nothing
Just come back with me
To their homes every evening?

Fathi Abdel Samee

THE JUG AND THE RING OF THE ANKLET

{To a fly comb that I used to place before my eyes
And look at the sun through its long holes}

The mud wall fell
And scattered from its shattered cracks
Locks of my mother's hair
We collected it in a bag
And threw it into the Nile.

She sits among her domestic birds
And she combs her hair
A white cloth on her lap
And a tender sun flutters around her
My mother did not need anything more
Of water and fly comb
To renew her feasts.

The fly comb teeth are sharp
And it often scratches the skull
My mother's face hurts me when it contracts
Her little cries hurt me
When it falls to the seventh land
Without anyone hearing it.

My mother trained to respect cruelty
And patience when the fly comb falters
In the curly hair
Her face contracts greatly
But she believes in transformations
And here is the fly comb
Gets infected of her straight hair
And it becomes water.

The feast begins
When the fly comb's movement softens
And the sun enters between its delicate teeth
For the roots to drink it
My mother exaggerates in styling her hair
While singing for the ring of the anklet
Or for the kettle at the door
She sings and looks
From time to time to her birds
Her birds are her mirror.

There is joy running through the house
When she collects the fallen hair
As she collects eggs in her scarf
Or she carries the chicks in a cradle of straw.

She does not leave a hair on the ground
Very carefully
She removes the hair accumulated in the fly comb
Wrap it in a small piece of cloth called hijab
And stick it in a crevice
She is afraid of an evil step
That passes over it and causes baldness
She never burns the hijab
So that the burn's scent
Does not get stuck in her braids forever
He just can
Leave the veil at the Nile
To keep her hair healthy and soft.

NAQARRA IN THE HAND OF THE MAJZOUB

Your mouth is with us
 Your eyes are with us
 But you are with your amputated leg
 That sleeps alone with strangers
 Who came with their complete organs
 Do you envy her
 Because she preceded you in seeing the angels?
 Or you are afraid of her call for her brothers?

What will she do now
 With the emptiness
 They amputated your right leg
 And they left it beating
 Like a Naqarra in the hand of the Majzoub?

Do you agree with me
 That it is a believable tragedy
 For a man who linked his life to the art of grief?
 He goes around the mud houses
 And whenever he finds an old woman who speaks to the dead
 He puts her mouth in his sock.

You will need a crutch, my friend
 Not to rely on it
 Rather, to keep the mosquitoes away
 When they extend its hoses
 In a void the size of a skinny leg
 It lies close to you
 It speaks and no one hears it except you
 And the more you move a little
 It does what you do
 But it becomes a hole
 When you are about to stand.

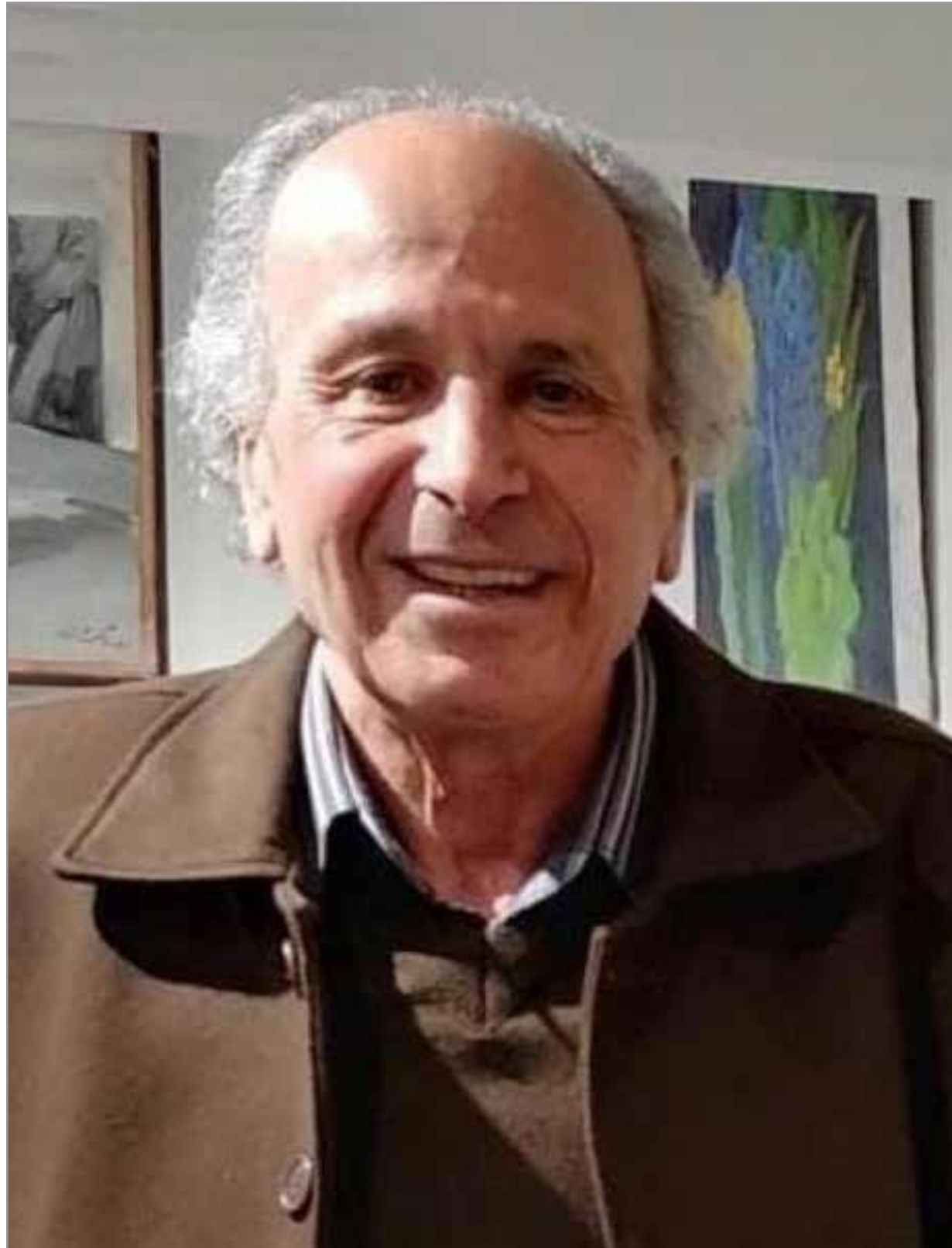
You were lying down when we came in
 And it was polite to open our mouths
 For our astonishment to appear in front of a pair of pants
 Half of it is suffixed and ends with fingers
 And the other withered
 Vanishes into the bed sheet
 It was polite to take our features
 In a demonstration against the cruelty of life
 As if we are doing something with our lives
 Except looking at our organs as they wither

The hem of your sleeping pants
 Like an unfurled flag
 Looks at me and whispers:
 There is no emptiness in the world
 There is no emptiness except in damaged souls.

What will you do now
 With a part of your body
 The doctor stripped it of its flesh and bones
 And let its blood flow into the hospital drain?
 He stripped it of everything
 Except feelings and memories
 What a good bait to catch the soul
 How long will it take you to the world of emptiness
 And the company that does not accept resurrection
 In words and statues.

*The naqarra is a type of small drum beaten with a stick or a piece of leather,
 used in Sufi processions.
 Majzoub: Darwish*

Gamal Al-Qassas (1950) is an Egyptian poet and journalist. He has published fourteen poetry collections, the most recent of which is "There was Music here" published in 2023. Selections of his poems have been translated into English, Arabic, and Greek. He also won the Cavafy International Prize in Poetry in 1998. He is considered one of the most important founders of the "Illumination 77" poetry group in the 1970s.



THERE WAS MUSIC

We had a fight yesterday
 Our voices rose in the café
 And in the street
 We were not normal in the dream
 We did not notice him gasping in our eyes
 Looking for a shelter
 Afraid of being bitten by an ant
 That lost her way to the opera
 Or a rogue star that is not good at drawing a heart Messes with his lips

I thought music was enough
 It unties the knot of your infinite body
 And I revolve around you
 Looking for a wiser exile
 For a word that splits this evening in two
 For a more gentle struggle
 Between two clouds that know that the borders
 Are gallows
 That passion is a reckless thief
 That does not know how to bear a rose
 That waits for the lake to clear up for its birds.

We had a fight yesterday
 The grass burned
 Before the garden finishes its prayers.

continued overleaf...

Gamal Al-Qassas

THERE WAS MUSIC

Never mind
 Perhaps when the revolution dyes its hair
 When the poem seizes power
 When the night settles in a fleeting kiss
 We can interpret the text
 Distribute it equally among the poets
 And the poor
 And the addicts of abnormalities
 We can come up with another slogan for the era
 Fight with more love
 In the cafe
 In the street
 At the metro station
 On the one who lights the firewood at night.

** From my collection (There Was Music)*

UNDER THE WINGS OF A BIRD

I am dependent on love
 I always make excuses for it
 That the road is crowded
 That the thieves stole the square clock
 There is a mess in the coffee bag
 There is a star skirting the river
 To give her a teaspoon
 Thus
 I got used to the feel of an empty plate
 How do I become two?
 A man and a woman
 A poet and a dove
 There is wisdom to hunger
 To be alone in yourself
 Biting your fingers at the crumple of the bed sheet
 You imagine it as a shadow of a lover
 Getting ready for bed.

** From my collection (Under the Wings of a Bird) 2020*

UNDER THE WINGS OF A BIRD

I stay home
 Kisses are in the freezer and on the shelf
 Hugs without wings
 Life is on hold in the café
 And the supermarket
 And on the sidewalks.
 It is difficult to breathe your serenity or your boredom
 I double my desire for you
 Everything is remote
 I stay home
 It is okay to make a mask for the body
 Give it a watermark
 Perhaps he will untie the ropes of his labyrinth
 It is okay to arrest the air
 Determine his residence on the sofa
 Or in the balcony.
 Teach him how music thirsts
 How does the melody dry...

This is the time of Corona
 We have to look for other exercises
 Similar to sleeping
 Or the dream
 Or sex
 Perhaps we remember how cruel we were
 When we breastfed by this earth
 And disguise as humans.

** From my collection (Under the Wings of a Bird) 2020*

UNDER THE WINGS OF A BIRD

The poet must rest
 Goes farther than the poem
 Than the language
 Than poetry
 Does not talk to anyone here or there
 Only declares his solidarity with a bird
 The sky broke its game
 When fluttering on his wings like a child.

** From my collection (Under the Wings of a Bird) 2020*

Hani Al-Selwy is a Yemeni poet, writer, and academic at the University of Taiz. He is a member of the Union of Yemeni Authors and Writers. Also, he is the founder of the New Text Forum - Beyond Prose Poetry - Cairo. He has published nearly nine poetry collections, in addition to narratives and other critical publications. He has won a number of awards, including the Sanusi Prize. His poetry has been translated into some languages. A number of studies were also written about his experience, including the book: *The Aesthetics of Poetic Modernity* (Hani Al-Selwy as an example).



WHAT THE SLEEPER DOES NOT SEE

Let us say, it is a game
And we go flying
It is known that drowsiness did not rob anyone
And the eyelids are not a bank or a necklace

.....

My fortieth grandfather who died drowned

.....

My grandfather who slept for a long time
- On the shortness he was born with in the following -
He found his inflated robes on the beach
After his resurrection, it was as if he had drowned only two days ago
He found them warm with proper trousers
He found his pockets and snakes full of jewels and documents
His bond turned into wine. His beloved's head was a white candle
Waiting, her tears are rubies
And her stories are bread

Let us say:
No one doubted
The integrity of sleep as faulty or biased
And that my grandmother did not stand for years
On the beach until her head caught fire
That the carpenter's door was removed in the cold darkness
By someone that did not leave behind
A smelly clue.

continued overleaf...

Hani Al-Selwy

Let us say:
 Governments do not know banditry and pickpocketing.
 Presidents are unable to sleep because they are awake
 For our interests and the people...people are always safe
 The media always distorts efforts and achievements
 With the relentless support of those stalking us
 Enemies of the nation and prosperity
 Let us do what is right
 Sleep has never caught the eye from the kohl jar
 And it did not pop with its secret key a lock.

.....

Trust this child

His waters are innocent and transparent
 Rely on his nectar
 And drown smiling
 Satisfied
 In confidence
 As sleep
 Did not rob
 Anyone.

** From my collection (Under the Wings of a Bird) 2020*

A PROPHECY “THEY WILL RECOGNIZE US”

Even, even me, even. Even I
 Even when I put my hand on the Qur'an
 And swear, in my cheap homeland, I will not swallow dogma
 The giblets of the Republican bird and bow to civilization.

They will recognize us by our shaved moustache
 By our noise and silence: You repeat the whistle, the trap is
 Affectionate and I eat the acidity of the apple and spit out my liver
 You are chewing Issa Ibn Hisham while I am listening
 You count on flies and I am busy eavesdropping
 They will recognize us. I told you repeatedly that
 They will get to know us. They will immerse us in duty

You think they would not recognize me chewing
 Issa Ibn Hisham and you are listening
 I repeat the trap and you spit out your spleen along with the apple
 If my pubes had not sprouted last night, they would have only recognized me.

Like you, I would love to go to the army
 But my mother wants me here. She wants me a university professor
 Do not be surprised. My mother wanted me in many jobs:
 She wanted me a sculpture and after a year of seeing
 The shattered nose of the Sphinx, she changed the plan
 And this is not the first time she has gone off script
 -Let it settle into your consciousness if you are still interested-
 She first wanted me a video engineer, then a teacher
 Then an Abbasid caliph in Andalusia, then a space agency
 When a loan thorn pricked her thumb, she wanted me a woodcutter
 When she missed the dawn prayer, she wanted me an automatic alarm clock

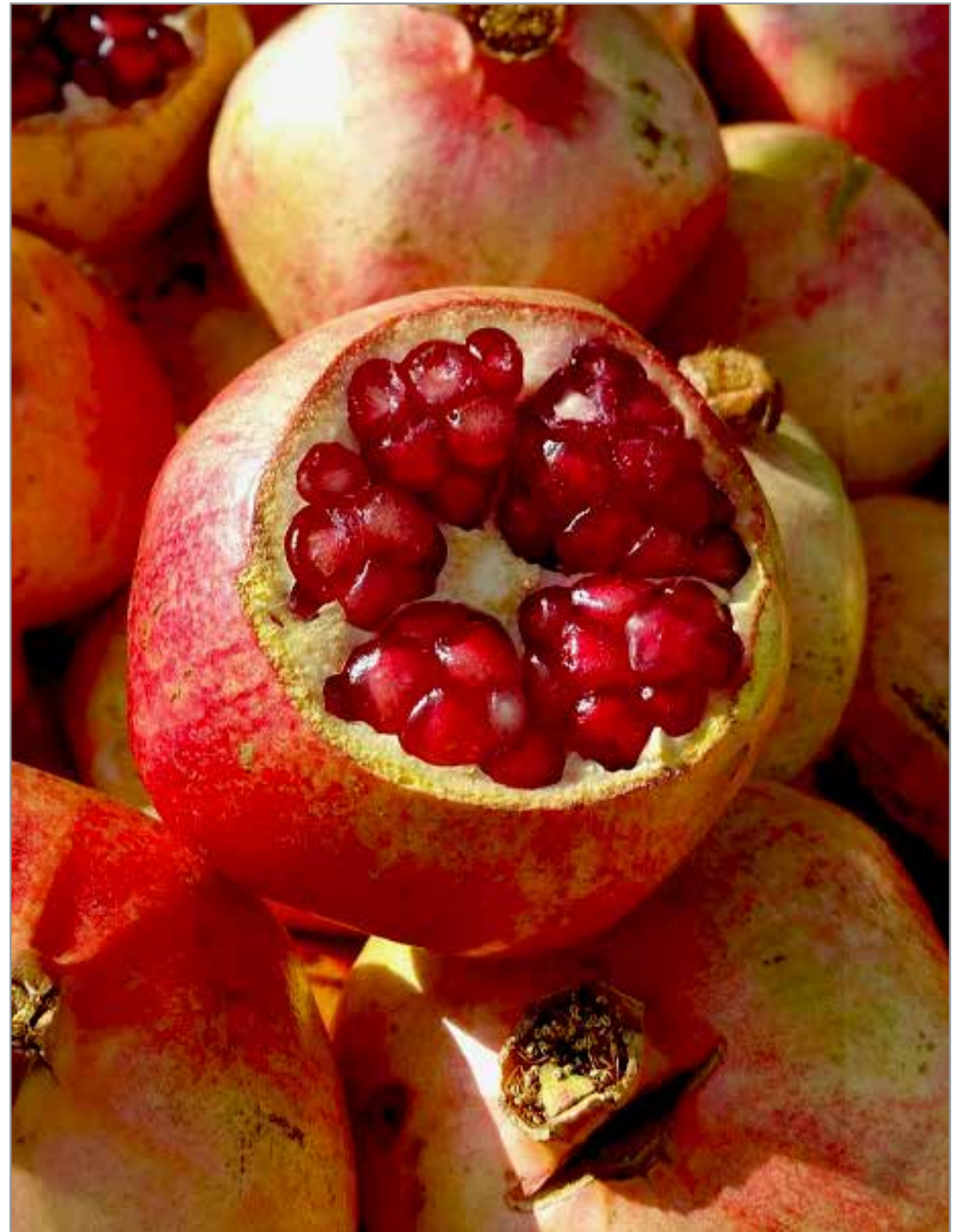
continued overleaf..

Even, even me, even. Even I
 Even when I put my hand on the Qur'an
 And swear, in my cheap homeland, I will not swallow dogma
 The giblets of the Republican bird and bow to civilization.

But she did not think about admitting me to the infantry or the hospital
 She often changed my desired profession and changed my appearance with it
 She wasted the family's supply of tar on my body
 She often treated what I painted of leeks on my beard randomly and sarcastically
 Rushing to blackness and manhood
 She repeatedly scolded my father's eyebrows. She Revealed his dreams:
 He wishes a president of the republic would emerge from my shirt
 At least a general who moves ministers like pawns
 A prime minister first or a fortress that protects the castle
 He wants me all of that and she wants me to be a romantic poet
 A prophet lining his socks with his hands

I told you:
 They will recognize us, you loud talker
 But you refused except raising your voice and speaking out.
 I told you
 They will get to know us
 We do not want her body to ossify in plaster, the eloquent shivers
 He is not broken to immerse him in convulsion and tie him in the stiffener.

Engrave his ID on marble please
 Baptize him in books and gardens not in television and shuttle
 Tours of tyrants: She opens her mouth flushing.
 This soldier is not unknown. Not a nobody. And not a thumb
 This dirt is known. Common this majestic
 Not a monument this soldier
 Not anonymous.



<https://pixabay.com/photos/yemen-pomegranate-fruit-food-4525152/>

Hassan Najmi (1960, Ibn Ahmed, Settat province) is a Moroccan poet, author, and journalist. He was The President of the Union of Writers of Morocco between 1998 and 2005 and former head of the House of Poetry in Morocco. He is also the President of the Moroccan Center for the International PEN Club and Secretary General of the Argana Prize for Poetry. He founded the House of Poetry in Morocco, along with a group of Moroccan poets (December 1995) and was elected vice-president and spokesperson for the House. He received many Arab and international awards, and his works have been translated into more than ten languages. He has also translated into Arabic the poetic works of a number of the world's leading poets.



SLEEPER

*Do not open the window
If there is no moon.*
(American song)

If you come and find me asleep -
Do not wake me up
Just check out the children's room and the pots of plants on the balcony
Water the mint a little to greenen the taste of the tea
Look at the henhouse and pay attention to the eggs -
And the dog's den
Offer the cat an evening meal
Stop to hear what the foolish parrot will say again
And do not forget, look at the night for me.

If you come back and I'm asleep -
Do not say that I am dead
Just, I gave up everything
Especially the life that was not quite perfect
And myself.
And open the window -
The moon must be there.

Hassan Najmi

MAUSOLEUM OF ANNA AKHMATOVA “PRAY FOR ME” (ANNA, 1938)

No winter is longer than this one
Only the little gods know -
Why have we stayed here, until now, guarding the mausoleum?
(Even at night, we do not part from you.)
Books said that the Tatar would wake up from her eternal sleep -
And you will go with us, with a green heart, back to the court of life
That is why we are here -
Our poem prays for you.



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anna_Akhmatova#/media/File:Kuzma_petrov-vodkin,_ritratto_di_anna_akhmatova,_1922.JPG

Hatem Al-Shehri is a Saudi poet and writer. He is the author of fifteen books, all in the literary field. His works were included in the Dictionary of Writers of the Gulf Cooperation Council. Some of his texts have been translated into English, French and Spanish. He won the second place in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the Narration House Award for short stories, first session 2018, from the Culture and Arts Society in Dammam.



EVERYTHING COMES OUT OF MY LIFE

Everything comes out of my life
Friends
Love
The family
I must learn to leave
More than once I leave the house
And I found myself at the window waiting for me
Waving to me from afar
Those who close the door very quietly
When they leave, they never come back
The tired rest of the journey of existence
To their friends

There is nothing I can do; I have scissors in my hands
I cut short relationships
I went carrying the corpses of the years on my shoulders
I smell barbecue, it is my dreams burning
Since the birth disaster, I have been a gull searching
For fish
My history, like ours, is full of stupidity
And defeats, the title of my journey: A man who defeated death
And life defeated him
My pens in the pencil case are overflowing with stories
There in the distant forest I decided to bury
My face
I decided to fly
I will fly and when I do
I will never come back
never

Hatem Al-Shehri

THE CHRYSANTHEMUM AND THE TWO EAGLES GAME

I play the game of chrysanthemums and vultures with myself
 I remove its leaves one by one (I love you,
 A little, a lot, passionately, madly, I do not love you)
 And the count ends at no love
 Even the eagles do not like me, and neither does the chrysanthemum.
 I fall like autumn, and in all seasons
 I call out to beautiful luck: wait for me
 Wait for me in the afternoon hours
 I have been screaming since birth
 The children fall silent after the birth shout, and I
 I am still screaming
 I spit every time I see myself in the mirror
 I wore a mask of fear to hide my face. The mask fell and my face melted
 I walk faceless in the streets
 I cannot wander, for I have no face
 I shout into existence and the echo comes back, but it is
 A voice that does not sound like me
 What a loss my voice also escapes from me
 I will die and when I die you will eat meat
 In my condolences
 I will betray myself and erase my memory
 I will destroy all evidence that leads to me
 At night when I die:
 The game of chrysanthemums and vultures will die.

BLACK SHEEP

I turned into ice; I wear ice to live
 Ashamedly, I am sad
 All the events that I passed over remained on my features
 My laugh is a repetitive game
 I want all of this, so I paid for it
 Life expands according to the extent of a person's courage, why it
 Is as tight as my shoes? I am not afraid
 I am a black sheep among white bulls
 Blood flows from all my healed wounds
 I am still standing like a statue, I could not say goodbye
 I said goodbye in twenty words and failed
 My friends left and I was alone, poking the flock of my dreams
 When I asked my friends for a gift, I would remember them with after
 Their departure, they gave me: dark circles under my eyes
 I ignite my memories and warm with them
 I blow on the ashes of our sad story
 I kick the door of nostalgia with my feet
 When I look back, I see that my greatest achievement is standing up
 In the face of my sadness
 They took away the sky when they gave me wings
 They plucked my feathers and thought I was a "falcon"
 Perhaps I will be back to being the same as I used to be
 When you are an open wound, calamities are salt
 I wash my face with tears, this ruin cannot be repaired by crying
 What am I missing?
 A full life
 They do not want my reality, they want my mask
 I try to buy things that are not found in the grocery store
 (tranquility/love/loyalty)
 Until now I am still searching for someone who told me that life is beautiful
 I want him in a "head word."
 Currently: I drink my anxiety and sleep:
 because I am a black sheep between white bulls.

Muhammad Al-Shahat (1954) is an Egyptian poet and journalist. He published twenty-five poetry collections. In addition, six critical studies are written about his poetry. He is also a member of the Egyptian Writers Union - and a member of its Board of Directors in the previous term. His poems are published in most newspapers and cultural and literary periodicals in Egypt and the Arab world. He has participated in literary forums and cultural conferences since the early seventies, and has won several awards, the most important of which is the Egypt Youth Award in 1978.



FROM A PRISONER'S DIARY

He kept resisting his desire
 To leave his prison
 He thought that night bats
 Have wings
 They will surround him when they see him
 He will beautify the prison walls
 He arranges some pillows
 That he was collecting
 From newspapers
 And he draws on the wall
 Some faces
 For women
 He was flirting in his dreams
 So, she runs away when she sees him
 He mastered drawing birds
 And flowers and houses where he does not know who lives in
 He only got to know them on the prison wall
 He was crumbling pieces of dry bread
 And spraying water
 So, he hears a chirp
 And he smells scents and feels the warmth of breath
 The jailer sees him and gets angry
 When he opens the doors
 To tempt him to leave
 He kept resisting his desire not to leave his prison
 He felt like the walls were surrounding him
 And he sees the jailer's eyes in his bed
 And he feels his palms turning him
 To make sure that sleep encircles him
 The jailer was
 Trying to steal his laugh
 I calmed him down

continued overleaf...

Muhammad Al-Shahat

Moments of stillness of the soul
 He bargained with him to own his prison
 Thus, he tempted him
 To leave him and loosen his chains
 Or to exchange their places
 He tried to steal him
 And he tried to take him out
 He resisted him
 So, the walls moved
 The chirping turned into the sounds of vultures
 And flowers turned into thorns
 His room expanded
 He resisted him
 And he managed to close his prison
 He defended courageously
 The jailer is irritated
 And he tried to destroy
 What he left behind on the prison walls
 His room resisted
 And the voices of latent anger rose
 From the residents of homes whom he does not know
 And the prison tightened for the jailer
 So, he went
 His revolution has begun.

REMEMBER ME WHEN I AM ABSENT

Promise me
 Do not let my face grow old
 And draw his appearance in your eyes
 And try not to stay far away
 I am still trying to live
 To touch your offspring
 Will I see him?
 Or will my train pass quickly?
 So, you yearn for my face
 When you bring him out from among the fragments of memory
 And you tell your children
 What I was trying to do
 Do not tell them anything except the joyful things
 And if any of them tried to ask about me
 Do not tell him about me when I left you crying
 I was trying to capture your desires from you
 Do not bridle him
 And let him grow up
 Like clouds
 That rain where they want
 Will you tell him
 What was I trying to do?
 Promise me not to make him sad
 And let him be proud
 When he sees me on the wall
 Oh, I will not be able to carry him
 Or I do
 What I was trying
 When I was young
 Do you tell him?

continued overleaf...

How did you draw millions of things with your eyes?!
And you blew the mud of the earth
And you made lamps
And houses
And you planted flowers and ears of corn
So, remember me with your children
Remember me with your children
If I am gone
And do not forget



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

Mohamed Baraka (1972) is an Egyptian novelist, storyteller and journalist. Critics classify him as one of the voices of renewal and modernity in modern Arabic literature. His works raise controversy on the literary and social levels, and his writings receive remarkable attention. His novels include "The Lady's Tavern," "Ghosts of Brussels," and "Ice Heart in the Other World." His short story collections include "My Grandfather's Mistress" and "Sadness is a Sleeping Child."



Mohamed Baraka

MY CRAZY BELOVED

The cool, refreshing breeze is a gift from heaven, when she watches with curious eyes a small caravan moving along a narrow strip of dirt alongside a silver-colored lake whose fascination has no bounds. The pedestrians do not know where the march ends, but their quick, earnest steps and their sneakers that happily pop the eyes of young grass suggest that they are soldiers. They are committed to the instructions of their field commander.

Bernardino!

A former general who did not want to give up the dictatorship of the military leader during his long years of retirement. He has a face that resembles Mussolini and a loving dog named Patricia, whom everyone calls Pia.

-Our destination is a nature reserve that contains 150 types of rare flowers and receives hundreds of migratory birds during this season every year that take the place as a stop and rest stop on their journey from South Africa to Northern Europe. I know that the sun is shining brightly today, but we must conserve drinking water. Do not consume it quickly, as we will not be able to supply another water for at least five hours.

In a circle with him as its center, he stood and recited the final instructions before setting off. She was leaning over my ear to translate the summary of what he was saying. I whispered in her ear:

-Should we now shout the military salute: Perfect, Your Honor?

My sarcasm was a mistake that heaven did not forgive. She suddenly laughed, as was her eternal habit, without care or responsibility. The blonde who was sculpted by the Creator of the Heavens from the clay of seduction and sprayed with the perfume of indifference, so her height became slender like a pine branch, soft like the morning breath. Her interest is to break all the rules like a gazelle in a china shop. I was destined to collect the scattered fragments behind her. The more she tried to control herself, the more she drifted until she almost fell to the ground. Looks of disapproval and curiosity gradually turned into sympathy and then smiles on the faces of most of the group members.

I intervened, trying to apologize in the easiest and most common Italian words...

- Escosa!

However, Bernardino said in his brassy, condescending voice:

- Isn't it enough that you and your Arab friend violated the instructions sent to you via your email and did not bring a cap or hat?

- Firstly, he is not an Arab, he is an Egyptian who belongs to the civilization of Cleopatra, before whom the leaders of Rome knelt, and then he is.....

He interrupted her irritably:

- Isn't Arabic his language? Hell, he is an Arab. Moreover, I did not say that he is a terrorist or a misogynist, even though some may see that as a Muslim from the Middle East, he may have been like that.

The intervention of the group's elders prevented the situation from escalating further, and my grateful intervention prevented it from baring more teeth like a tigress protecting her den. I was the one accused as soon as his name was spoken, the condemned as soon as he took off his sunglasses and showed his features, the exiled behind the walls of language, geography, skin differences, and timing. I imprint my kiss on the forehead of her anger. I kiss the lips of her little monster screaming in the wilderness. I press my fingertips on the crater of the volcano until it softens and calms down due to that accursed chemistry that causes a thousand fiery flowers to bloom on the maps of our bodies.

The march was organized. There were about twenty of us. We are scattered in duos and trios. The sun sends its harsh greetings in the form of increasing drops of sweat on European foreheads that are accustomed to clouds and rain and are not yet accustomed to the surprises of climate change creeping in its heat from the south of the Mediterranean to its north.

The majority are retired. As soon as they reached sixty, they said. Now the real fun begins and we move in our relationship with life from the stage of feeling the pulse to taking off the last piece of clothing.

While I left behind their counterparts in my country who, as soon as they reach that age, close the doors and windows and say: Come, O Angel of death, we are waiting for your blessed steps, so hurry and do not delay.

It was not difficult for me to notice that she was deliberately slowing down our steps until we gradually became the last of the group walking. And my heart did not think well. We slowed down more and more until there was a significant distance separating us from the others, and without warning, she pulled me by the hand to the forest on the right of the road, which was furnished with a huge carpet of wet shadows interspersed with luminous balls of sunshine. She took down the new shorts that she had bought for me from the "Gypsy Market." Immediately, she unleashed her weapons, the likes of which the heart had never known: a loud noise in my ears from her tongue digging deep, and successive "love bites" embroidering a blue bruise on my neck. The letters came out with difficulty:

- They will look for us, and Bernardino will go crazy.

- He really went crazy, but from my ass, which he did not take his eyes off of, you fool, do you not yet know the real reason for his problem with us?

Her hoarse, breathy voice was crushing the last remnants of my nerves, and her little rose stabbed my dagger, which was always ready for her. Our screams rang out together, and the sky woke up, and the last sleeping branch in the desolate fairy forest woke up.

I never knew exactly what God had in mind as He put the finishing touches on that creature who would later be known as Carla. I swim with the sleeping fish for a little while after we spent last night waiting for the sun to rise in ancient Ostia, and their fingertips made of crystal shake me:

- How do you sleep when it is raining?

Under the rain that falls violently, as if something has angered it, we run like the chariots of Lady Zeinab and the saints of our Master Hussein, without an umbrella, in the narrow, black-tiled alleys and ancient, adjacent buildings of a capital that once ruled three-quarters of the globe.

We return home, and as soon as we hang the rain jacket on the wooden stand engraved with flowers and deer in the entrance to the apartment, she chants:

- It is not usual for it to rain at this time, but it seems to welcome my beloved coming from young Brussels to my old city.

This occasion had to be celebrated. And like every time, the celebration has only one meaning: pouring a glass of wine

“Brunello di Montacino” on my naked body, then sipped fine red wine to the last drop, with the slowness and patience befitting a ninety-year-old Buddhist monk on the high-lands of Tibet.

I ignore the disturbance of the garbage collection truck that invades my sleep through the wooden window directly overlooking the street, and I return to sleep again. Her lips cutting a new stream through my neck awaken me. I open my eyes, and they are standing erect like a police officer on his first day of service in

The traffic of Cairo :

-Are you ready for your morning drink?

She points to a huge drink in her hand that contains a yellow liquid that looks like lentil soup, but its bitterness, like castor oil, is unbearable:

You should finish your entire cup and stop complaining about its taste like a child.

And she does not tire of repeating its benefits to me. It seems like just a cup of warm water, but with this amazing amount of turmeric and ginger with a little milk, you get a secret mixture that protects you from all diseases, from the common cold to cancer.

-Leave this talk to someone else who does not smoke two full packs of cigarettes in one day!

- He was... be precise, please... he was smoking... and thanks to my beloved...

She knelt at my feet and hugged my cheek:

- I started smoking a quarter of the amount and paying only a tenth of the cost since you introduced me to the world of loose tobacco and parchment paper.

She felt grateful for the simplest things that came from me, and she would not stop talking about them proudly to her friends:

- Mickey bought me English White Drum tobacco with parchment paper and an OCB filter. Yes, that is what it is called OCB. It is more natural and therefore less harmful, and of course your consumption of it is much less compared to a regular cigarette that does not require preparation.

- I do not go to the gym much anymore since Mickey convinced me of the benefits of natural running in the streets and public parks.

- It is a 100% handmade papyrus handbag that Mickey bought me from Egypt.

She always insisted on pointing out to me, that I was tired of commitment and no longer knew the meaning of belonging, as an essential component of her existence. I repeatedly tried to convince her that I was just another wave that would soon crash on the shore and that she could not relate to a passing ghost, but I stopped my attempts when I noticed that it only increased her stubbornness and determination to prove the opposite.

She took care of me like a practical mother who does not forgive her child for any mistake. Not only do you show me once how to clean teeth with bicarbonate powder using those thin blue sticks, but you do it daily with the rigor of a German nurse who does not tolerate excuses from patients in the convalescent stage.

- Soon you will get a Hollywood smile!

Tried my nails. She devotes herself to sculpting them with a file. She watches the growth of my hair strands to remove any longer than necessary as soon as possible. She surprises me while I am in the shower, drowning me in a barrage of creams, shampoos, and liquids that I do not know first from last.

In the evening, colored with violet clouds resembling Picasso's madness, she opens the trunk of her red Motorino motorcycle and puts on the helmet designated for the passenger accompanying the driver with her hands, before putting on her own helmet. The time has come for what she used to call "fun," and I see it as nothing more than a rehearsal for suicide. She takes off on narrow, paved roads that suddenly descend sharply. I scream in terror while she screams in excitement, imitating her black cat with frightening yellow eyes:

- Miyawa

I ask her to slow down a little while she is flying like an angry eagle between the cars that do not stop cursing their drivers, so she says that I should not worry and that it is enough for me to cling to her more so that we can maintain our balance. She enters into spontaneous races with any young man who owns a larger motorino and thinks he can overtake her, and she does not rest until she outperforms him by a clear distance. Now he can cry at his mother's breast.

Among her friends, photographers, plastic artists, and musicians, she chooses the company that guarantees the minimum level of English speaking "so that you do not feel alienated." Because this was not available all the time, she constantly turned to me to translate the content of what was said and to make sure that I was not bored. I tried to convince her that this would spoil our meetings with others and turn them into a press conference similar to the summits of leaders of the Arab world. She never understood that I was good at following the language of the eyes, reading features, and enjoying the dancing music on the banks of Italian words, especially since I was, in the end, a guest who would not stay for more than another week. She did not realize that I did not want to be a burden and that true alienation lies in the constant translation that reminds others that there is a stranger in their midst who needs, like an infant, something to feed him all the time.

In order not to give a false impression that everything was fine otherwise, I admit that the areas of agreement between us were shrinking a lot for other reasons. It is enough for my call to my daughter's mother in Cairo to be a little long, or to glimpse an emotional icon with which a virtual friend reacted to a post I published, or the laughing caress with which I ended my inquiry with a saleswoman in an old furniture store.

It explodes like the crater of the "Stropoli" volcano, which we plan to visit next summer in the south of the country. She destroys everything that falls under her hand, and from her small mouth carved with crystal delicacy shoots out like Chinese daggers in the movie "Crouching Tiger and Hidden Dragon." The wildest words were baked in the furnace of authentic Roman anger: Katsu, Astronsu, Fan Colo.

- Your ex-wife uses your daughter as an excuse to communicate with you with the aim of returning to you in the end. Was not she the one who prepared a romantic dinner in honor of your visit to them at home?

My old, renewed sin: forgetting that when you speak frankly and without caution with one woman about another woman, you are digging your own grave. She stops calling me with the pampering name "Mickey" so that I become just "Makawi." Therefore, I know that her anger has reached its peak this time. I quickly intervene to extinguish what can be extinguished from the burning fire before it destroys the remaining dishes piled up in the kitchen sink from yesterday's dinner. I hug her tightly without uttering a single word, and she immediately calms down like a wet, trembling bird:

-Do you promise to never leave me?

Mohammed Al-Kafrawy is An Egyptian poet, born in 1978. He has been writing in cultural journalism and literary criticism since 1998. He has four collections of poetry: "A Pink Dream That Raises the Head" 2006, "Shortly After the Dead" 2018, and "A Suspicious Place" 2020, and a fourth collection entitled "scraping nothingness with his nails and giggling" is under print at the Egyptian General Book Authority.



TORRENT

All these loads and you move lightly
You must be an angel
All these years are implanted in your body
Are you a wrestler or an animal?
All these illusions you nurture with inexhaustible patience.
How miserable and unhappy you are
All these laughs piled up in your chest
You wait for an opportunity to explode
So, the loads flow
And the years
And the delusions
And the blood.

Muhammed Al-Kafrawy

DAYS

The days when rodents attacked us while we were sleeping
Our green limbs were growing so fast
Our feelings are voraciously nourished by the inspiration of nature
The smell of grass was nerve-wracking
It leaves us numb in the wilds
Spots of light that shaped our features were
Whispering the secrets of galaxies in our ears
The sweet songs that have been implanted in our consciences
Taught us to reconcile with defeats
The stupid stars that covered our dark nights
Left us feverish at the end of the evening
Green children who look like us are
descendants trampled by the hooves of years
We have nothing left to do but regurgitate a painful past
Engraved in our minds like an eternal scar
In the days when rodents used to have fun biting our limbs
While we were sleeping.

RESCUE ATTEMPT

Tell me, for God's sake
How many trucks have run over your dreams on the highways?
How many foolish parrots have scanned the floor with your dignity
just for entertainment?
How many feverish desires ravaged your body in the middle of the night?
Remember with me
How many stray clouds have betrayed you and rained on the heads of others
And left you alone and defenseless, dreaming of the smell of winter?
How many socks do you have in your worn-out closet?
How many weak roses have you picked from the garden of your days?
How many shadows did your arm cover as you stepped towards your stricken fate?
Tell me and do not be afraid
Have you ever breathed as freely as a yogi?
Do you know what pain really means?
Do you enjoy the laughter of children and their absurd games?
Tell the truth
Do you know what awaits you tomorrow?
Do you care at all about the passage of time or the persistence of days?
Are you awake?
Do you want more love?
Do you count the curses tattooed on your limbs?

All these years have slipped away from you
And you are confused...lonely...unhappy...heedless
Be honest with me and tell me
You are humiliated to the bone
Why do you want to save the world then?

Mostafa Ebada (1965) is an Egyptian journalist, poet, essayist and critic. He works as the Deputy Editor-in-Chief of Al-Ahram - Arabi Magazine. He is also the cultural advisor to some of the most important Egyptian publishing houses, such as: The Egyptian Lebanese House, Al-Mahroura Center, and Dar Batana. He published more than 10 books in different creative genres such as poetry collections and cultural and literary studies.



A LETTER...JUST A LETTER

I want to write you a letter
A very ordinary letter
To tell you
That the story - also - is very ordinary
And we are lost
And I have become what I hate
I became the man I hate
And I should apologize
For the whole world
And we are with hurtfull clarity
Two frustrated bodies

Yesterday
I looked at your old photos
And I cried
This is what actually happened
I am not that romantic
To claim anything

I wanted to tell you that
This is our favorite day
And my unfavorite weather
Rain outside
And I hate rain
I let you down that day
Because the mud of the south is dusting my heart

I want to tell you about
my old wells
About half a century of hope
About thirst and hunger
And a postponed poem on your back

continued overleaf...

Mostafa Ebada

I wanted you to know
The Southern clay
And that you are beautiful
You do not need the illusion of my dreams
And to know
That sin is my sword against death
My anxiety and indulgence
And that I prefer solitude and forgetfulness
To remembrance
And that getting the smell back hurts

I want to address you
With this call:
Oh, the right throw of the stone
My whole life is a ruin
And what leads me to you
Is instinct
I am not that romantic
To forget your back

I am the wolf
I am a walking Quran
I am the deadly indignation
And the overwhelming longing
And the bitter silence
I am the slapped on both cheeks
I am the raised on my palms
I am the empty stomach
And the messenger of evil

My father and I slept outdoors
We were guarding the people's sheep
And their harvest
And ooze patience from the eyes
I am a country that is falling apart
If two hands touch it
And the people rose to the cry of rain
If a female appeared
It became forgiveness
Who composed this perfume?

OUR LOST WORDS

The missing words between us
The words swallowed by darkness
Which wake up like a flash of blood
How will I be able to
Breathe again

I think of that summer night
With half closed eyes
And a heart like a reservoir of delights
And a bright smile above
Your back
I think about that night and say:
I wish I were a wolf
You are familiar and soft
As sweet as a breeze
Behind a lonely tree
You are here
Collecting the missing words between us
And the sweat fill
The corners of my heart
And I can almost differentiate
Between a departed and a resident.

It was not normal
It is not, really, normal
I look at you
And I smile
It is like a war that broke out suddenly
A smile
That I feel the sunset behind it
And the fear and fascination
Desire, heartbreak, and fatigue
And I love you

In specific proportions
It changes every day on its own:
Broken
And corrupt
And in good health

Subdued in the best possible way
I usually say:
I am very happy
Or very sad
I never said:
I do not know
Or
I cannot do this anymore
I love you
That is my extinguished cry
And my dark waters

Suffering is inevitable
The only thing to choose
Is memories
Which will give us solace

I am the worst lover in the world
You are not the best person in the world
Your refusal to be ordinary
Kill everything
To be normal
Is unbearable

continued overleaf...

I am crazy
At best, eccentric
Laughing for no reason
Sad for a million reasons
In other words:
Our relationship is a charming trap
And optional
And as a victim
It is allowed
To act as I want

In our unshared past
Great miracles
Cannot be apologized for
And crimes that cannot be forgiven
There must be a war
A battlefield and a theater
And repressed desires
And physical bleeding
The idea of being normal
Is really unbearable

My arms are prepared
And ready
To take my share of the world
And my heart is full



<https://pixabay.com/photos/hand-freedom-worship-man-4661763/>

Nagat Ali is an Egyptian poet who obtained a Ph.D. with first class honors from the Department of Arabic Language, Faculty of Arts, Cairo University in 2014. Her poems have been translated into several languages: English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Swedish, Kurdish, Portuguese and Romanian. She has published four collections of poetry, in addition to two books in literary criticism. She won several awards, including the Best Poetry Award for the Egyptian Ministry of Culture, 1998 and Tangier Prize for Young Arab Poets, Morocco, 2009. She was selected among the best young Arab writers at the 39th Beirut Prize in 2010. In addition, she won Naguib Mahfouz Award for Literary Criticism and Literary News Award in 2017.

SAILORS

Boycott the sailors
 As their dead here are many
 And every time I raised my eyes
 To look at them
 I saw traces of my blood
 On their fingertips
 Do not tell them I am here
 And I crossed the ocean
 Just for them
 Now I am doing nothing
 Except that I write
 Their names on my wall
 Then erase them
 I do not want them to mess with my soul
 My very tired heart is enough for me
 And my days that became heavier
 Than my dreams.



Nagat Ali

FAR AWAY

They say that you do not look like my father
In anything
For me to be fascinated by you
But I was fascinated by you
So do not straighten your gaze
Towards me
Like two cannons piercing my chest
I am not The Young Nagat*
To draw me with
Two sexy lips
And hang my picture
On your crumbling wall
Your room is really narrow
It will not accommodate my shadow when
I cast it at night
Alone here I collect what is left
From your traces near my window
From which I look out
On my defeated heart before you
How dare you sleep
And there is a burning ocean between us
By my longing for you
I am alone here talking
To your picture
Perhaps it will tell you about my maze
And that the fifth cup
Was the one which made me feel easy
To reach your bridge!

But Brooklyn is very far away
I just want you to see me
When I wave to
You above it
With my trembling hand
To know, you crazy man
How much I love you.

**The Young Nagat is a famous Egyptian singer*

THE ROAD TO THE CEMETERY

This cold land
How can it be a homeland
For a soul exhausted by successive defeats
But you did not plan
To come here
And the road to the cemetery
Was haunted by the noise
And with the voices of those who remained stuck to you
And you buried them all
In a body heavy with
Ghosts of loss
So you started asking desperately
Why did your father choose
This faraway place
To lie in it alone?
Now they have erased his name
And stripped him of every identity
That indicates him
And they did not leave you
Even a small tree
To hide childhood scars underneath
So you searched for a long time
About the chemistry of pain
That fits your punctured lung.



<https://www.wsj.com/world/>

Rasha Ahmed is an Egyptian poet and cultural editor. She has published several collections of poetry, including "The Boredom of Losses," "It Was Nothing but the Water of My Heart," "With a Pale Light," and "An Empty Seat Weary by the Light."



THE HARP OF ABSENCE

The beginning was flowing wine
 It was wrapping me in the fog of your metaphor
 It draws me a field of butterflies
 How could I have noticed
 That the metaphorical fog was my combustion smoke
 And the wolf of the end is hungry
 And the beginning is gentle
 It was waiting for the words to flow from your heart
 To grow from the ashes of my chest
 A new heart
 In love: nothing but prophecy
 No above, no below
 There is no in between
 O fire, be peace and coolness upon him
 O fire, cover me
 When she finished the story
 There was a silence filled with hidden sadness
 This is how our most beautiful paintings
 Is what the wind scattered
 A step forward, a step back
 We breathe in and then we fly
 We soar, glorifying the sky
 For a little while, then we fall on the dust
 Disappear silently
 Thus on tiptoe
 Disappear drop by drop
 Dance slowly
 To see how much this absence has affected your body!!

Rasha Ahmed

TO MY MOTHER WHO IS NOT ABSENT

Good morning, mom
 Are you well
 Is the door of your heart still open
 Do you sleep without worry
 Did the bullet miss me and hit you
 Did death defeat you?
 Did he fall from the heights?
 Why did not you run away from him?
 Did he ask your permission before leaving?
 What does death do?
 Does he walk without fear?
 Why did you create death, oh God, why?
 Mom. I have come to look a lot like you
 Do you still check my bed every morning to kiss me?
 Do you still hear me?
 Mom, I cannot bear to say goodbye
 I am not good at Abandonment
 You know me completely
 Why did you make me reap tears?
 What should I do to erase your kisses from my memory?
 And my heart, you know, does not believe in forgetting
 What should I do with love when you are all love?
 What should I do with roses when you are the rose lady?
 What do I do with a heart consumed by sadness?
 Will I leave him howling alone..!



Photograph by Mark Ulyseas.

Zuhair Abu Shayeb (1958) is a Palestinian poet and writer. He obtained a BA in Arabic Language and Literature from Yarmouk University in 1982. He was a member of the administrative board of the Association of Jordanian writers for several sessions, and a member of the Association and the General Union of Arab Writers. In 2012, he received Mahmoud Darwish Award for Creativity. Among his poetry collections: The Geography of Winds and Questions 1986, The Book of Statues and Maqamat 1987, The Biography of the Grass 1997. In addition to a play entitled: Blind White (1987)



I MENTIONED YOU

I mentioned you while the sky is close to you and me
 I can almost touch your moonlit face as it shines from all sides
 I see no light except you
 I do not crave rain with the scent of dust that lends me a body
 I have my old body
 I have his first bottle of wine that I hid for you
 I do not need except everything of you
 So that I can only be your place
 When I return from my exile without a poem
 And my heart knocks the door
 And it almost falls into the void
 You will open the door
 You will ask the heart: What is your name? Whose heart are you?
 Confess so that you do not return to emptiness
 You will send light to me
 You will teach my fingers the correct playing
 You will be born and be born and be born for no reason
 Like a secret butterfly
 That came from the holy flame
 To return to the flame.

Zuhair Abu Shayeb

TELL THE ROSE TO BLOOM

Tell the rose to bloom in darkness
 And come close to it to smell the scent of God
 As the knowledgeable Sufi approaches the door of the Absolute
 Tell your secret butterfly
 To swim like a wave in the sea
 And to paint her image with blue flame
 Tell the fire trapped at the bottom of the valley of death:
 The clay remains sick and heartless
 Until it is burned!
 Tell the wine dripping from your lips:
 Ripen!
 Tell the lost river here:
 I threw myself into you
 To know myself.

THERE IS NO TOMORROW

There is no tomorrow that will come and take us
 We are stuck in a void with no past and no future
 But we did not know where
 Do we exist
 Or we are ancient people filling memories?
 And who are we?
 The nomadic Bedouins of Heaven
 Fighting over the veins of water?
 The night shadow over the earth?
 Or our fatherless lost orphaned children?
 Who are we?
 Who are our ghosts?
 What is this land that is us?
 What is this void?
 There, in the distant light
 The coming from our dreams will know
 That the visions are us
 That those who are awake in our dreams are us, not our darkness
 As for those here here
 In all this night
 In the clay that they call night
 Are not us
 Not us
 Who are they to be us?
 Come, night
 So, when we look for each other
 He completely forgets how he came
 And where did he lose himself, and when
 And how much he will die while walking inside himself!

2010 - 2023



Live encounters

POETRY & WRITING

FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH
VOLUME SEVEN NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 2023

