

# **WORDS AFTER LINES**

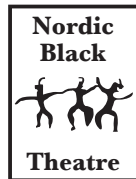


# WORDS AFTER LINES



Edited by

**John Y. Jones**  
**Anisur Rahman**



**Dag Hammarkjold Program - Voksenåsen**

networkers

**NORTHLION**

WORDS AFTER LINES

Edited by John Y. Jones & Anisur Rahman

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In memory of

**Henrik Ibsen**  
**Rabindranath Tagore**





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## Speaking for words

Writing is a way of seeing, reading is a way of feeling, where sensitivity matters. An individual who decides to choose this humble way of making time, his mind does not bother about the difficulties of living awaiting. His mental condition is like 'what will be will be'.

A writer's mind is desperate to see life, to paint pains and pleasures. Life is a school for him. His way of making time is committed to life but not to any particular class, region, regime or power. Such a mind does not care the slightest about a superpower when it works against humanity, truth and beauty. Writers are students of life, an international school, universally open for all, where internationalisation exists.

We put a line, 'writing is to tell the mind', for our workshop in Oslo. We mean it. Writing is a matter of self education. One can just inspire another and exchange ideas. We did it during our workshop.

We represent all continents. We reflect on human minds. We are biased towards life and nature. We are a cross-border group gathered in a Nordic land. After crossing borderlines, this is how our minds work.

Two talents, Henrik Ibsen (1828-1906) and Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) were very integral parts of their own culture, language, land and nationality. At the same time, they were more than international. To connect our dream with the landmark of their spirit we are dedicating our words to their memory. They were language heroes, protecting their respective mother tongues, Norwegian and Bengali, from heinous colonial occupation. If we do not forget, Ibsen's motherland, Norway, witnessed a Danish colonial occupation as Tagore's Bangladesh-India witnessed British colonial oppression. As their post generation, we inherit their legacy. Are we free from colonial claws before or after crossing the border?

Life advances. Life crosses lines. Words will have their form in pages lines after lines. They come from life. They speak for life. They cross border as we do. Despite blackmailing global politics steered by

dictators, super powers, colonial powers, power-sponsored wars in different lands, as well as the suppressing commodification of our time, poets will find their musical tunes in words and paint dreams from their imagination, from their way of seeing the world, and thus making time for truth and beauty in life. These are the words we would say today in Oslo, the city near the North Pole. Let us present, 'Words After Lines'.

**Anisur Rahman**

Oslo: September 27, 2011

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*Anisur Rahman is a poet from Bangladesh. He is program leader for the Creative Writing Workshop & International Poetry Festival, Nordic Black Theatre, Oslo.*

## ANNE BØE

### **solskisse**

vi er som skimmer, som skisser av lys  
til det liv som skal bli, en varme langt inn i vinteren  
solsildret inn mellom mørke er vi  
en verden som vokser

### **sunsketch**

we are like shimmer, like sketches of light  
for the life that shall be, a warmth deep inside the winter  
suntrickled in between darkness we are  
a world that is growing

### **skimmer**

vi er som skimmer, stammen er svart  
det innenfor ser vi ikke, er det  
en varme, en annen tid

inni den kalde, sol sildrer inn mellom granleggene  
en furu står myk av lys  
mellom mørkere grønt, mørkere, er

vi bare skisser av våre liv, vinteren  
blomstrer av rim, en dag er vi  
lys, bare lys

## **shimmer**

we are like shimmer, the trunk is black  
what's inside we do not see, is there  
a warmth, another season

inside the cold one, sun trickling in between the spruces  
a pine soft with light  
between darker green, darker, are

we only sketches of our lives, winter  
is blooming of frost, one day we'll be  
light, merely light

**november**, et menneske går  
langsomt, går gjennom skogen som ikke  
er, bladene faller og faller

gule, så gule i dagen som nesten  
ikke er, som for tidlig heller mot kveld  
som alt er natt, mennesket går og går

som om det skulle bli morgen, bladene  
er som gull på stammen av svart

natt, går og går gjennom dagen  
som ikke er, gjennom svarte  
tiden som ikke

er, november faller og  
faller gjennom kalenderen

**november**, someone is walking  
slowly, walking through the forest that isn't  
there, the leaves are falling and falling

yellow, so yellow in the day which is hardly  
there, that too soon turns into evening

which is already night, someone keeps walking

as if morning was about to come, the leaves  
are like gold on the trunk of black

night, keeps walking through the day  
that isn't there, through black  
time that isn't

there, november keeps falling  
and falling through the calendar

**when** the sun leaves the picture, does it  
leave an imprint, does it stay  
as the shadow secret in the shell

of darkness, what is it that fades what  
is it that glows, when light leaves  
sealed in shadow, as shadow

itself, does it leave  
a shade in your eye

### **akilleshæl**

innenfor innsikten, lammelsen  
lenger komme vi ikke, der sitter gud  
forbannede gud, og holder

oss utenfor oss  
selv, fordømte selv

akilleshæl, lenket

## **heel of achilles**

inside the insight, paralysation  
we can't get any further, god sits  
there, damned god, he holds

us outside us, our  
selves, damned selves

heel of achilles, chained

**og** armene våre er tunge av mening  
som ikke finnes, tunge av  
ingenting, hvordan  
kan ingenting  
være så tungt, barnet  
spør og spør hvorfor, hvorfor

er verden så tynn når den er så  
tung, vi går numne  
av null

**and** our arms are heavy with meaning  
that doesn't exist, heavy with  
nothing, how  
can nothing  
be so heavy, the child  
keeps asking why, why

is the world so thin when it's so  
heavy, we go numb  
with nothing

---

*Anne Bøe, a poet, lives in Oslo.*

## BERIT SRIYAMA BUA

### Og poenget var?

I motsetning til dyrene, evner vi mennesker å reflektere over vår egen eksistens. Vi kan stille oss litt på utsiden og betrakte oss selv utenfra. Vi kan titte med skrå-blikk inn på livet, og få se vår egen verden i relieff. Den evnen melder seg særlig i tenårene. Fjortiser, i overgangen mellom barndom og voksenliv, finner plutselig mer ut av ting. De har fler erfaringer å trekke veksler på, og eksponerer seg i større grad for nye impulser. De ser tingene i større sammenheng. De store, grunnleggende spørsmålene melder seg: Hvor står vi? Hva ønsker vi, i relasjon til verden rundt? Og ikke minst: ”Hva, i all verden, er egentlig meningen med livet?”

Til alle tider har menneskene, i større eller mindre grad, fundert over denne problemstillingen.

Vi vokser opp med programerklæringer fra barnevern, rusmiddelpolitikk, u-landshjelp, EU og FN. Normene for hva som er gode liv blir listet opp for oss fra vi er små. Og vi diskuterer. Ordførere, politikk og verdier til vi blir grønne i ansiktet. Vi vet at det å være menneske og ha gode liv kan være forskjellig, og det kan være likt, verden over.

Visse ting er vi MER enige om enn andre ting. Vi vokser opp med å ønske rent drikkevann for alle. Vi ønsker fred for alle. Vi ønsker at alle skal trives på jorda, og at mangfoldet skal ivaretas. Om det er forskjellige folk, bier og blomster, fugler og trær, rovdyr og frosk, bær og planter. Vi liker å kunne oppdage alle verdens forskjellige bestand-deler. Vi liker at forskjellige ting kan overraske oss, komme innpå oss, og ta plass i livene våre.

Så - hva skal vi bruke dette livet til? Hva er poenget med det? Å be om et poeng er kanskje, i beste fall, å tulle litt med ordene, å være litt pønka. I verste fall er det hovmodig eller pompøst. Men ved å leke med store spørsmål kan jeg enda litt til beholde fjortisen i meg.

I tide og i utide tok nemlig spørsmålet plass i hodet mitt. Hvor står vi? Hva ønsker vi, i relasjon til verden rundt? Når jeg gikk med avisen, vasket romper på gamlehjemmet, serverte kaffe til gjestene på

restauranten, eller studerte på Blindern. Hva var poenget, sånn egentlig?

Å ”stå løpet ut”? Å gjøre det ”alle andre” gjør, og håpe på det beste? Å forsøke å gjøre verden til et bedre sted? (og HVA er så ”et bedre sted”? Og hvordan får man så dét til?) Å tjene penger, slik at man har råd til å ta’n maksimalt ut? Å følge sine pasjoner? Danse ompa til du dør?

Liv er mulighet for utfoldelse. For å kunne forbedre, eller forverre, men ihvertfall erfare. For å skape, påvirke, innordne og tilpasse. For å finne løsninger og ha plass i fellesskapet.

Jeg kan skape meg en plass jeg liker. Å skape fellesskap, natur og kultur inkludert, hvor jeg kan rydde vei. Rydde vei til å si og gjøre det jeg vil, og ha lov til å søke mine sannheter. Jeg har handlingsfrihet, jeg kan si ting og gjøre ting. Og det er først et poeng å gjøre det, når jeg gjør det i verden, og ikke bare for meg selv.

Jeg er et tomt skall, en kropp, et fartøy som frakter liv. Som sanser, tenker, og funderer. Som har mulighet for skape mening, gi og få kjærlighet, og skape forankring. Eller det motsatte. Jeg, i meg selv, har ingen drivkraft til å skape mening, eller sannheter, med mindre jeg deltar i noe som er større enn meg selv.

Menneskene er menings-skapende vesener. Vi finner ut av det. Underveis, og sammen. Mening skapes når vi er ekte med hverandre. Når vi slapper av og ikke tenker så mye over alt. Når vi kan overraske, tillate meninger, tanker, følelser og idéer. Også uenigheter. Også selv om svaret skulle vise seg å være ”42”, som i The Hitch-hikers Guide to the Galaxy.

Livet kan jo se litt meningsløst ut, til tider. Særlig når man virkelig tenker over det. ”Meningen med livet” er jo ikke å vaske romper. Eller studere på Blindern. Det ville jo vært absurd. Så absurd at det må en Monthly Python til, for å vise at joda, evnen til selv-refleksjon kan i beste fall være ganske morsom.

Det jeg kan øve meg i, er å ikke ta tingene så seriøst. Å forankre meg selv inn i hvert sekund. Å være mer tilstede, og legge mer merke til det som er, heller enn tankene som svirrer om livet. Ellers kan livet fort flyte



meg forbi, som en hvilkensomhelst spytt-klyse i elva, og jeg vil drive utover i havet som en liten trebit, uten retning eller kontroll.

Å ”lede et meningsfullt liv” er en slitsom norm. Noe man ikke bør tenke for mye på, egentlig. Meningen med Livet er spørsmål som helst kan holde seg godt i bakgrunnen. Bak bedriftene, jobbene og prosjektene jeg setter igang, og melder meg på, kan det få ligge der. Og ulme. Det kan komme og vise seg fram når jeg ler.

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*Berit Sriyama Bua, a writer, lives in Oslo.*

## SAROJ CHUMBER

### Neerus Smile

Sitting at the reception of the Faculty of Dentistry in Oslo, Neeru tried to scan her surroundings. It was quite empty this early in the morning. Most of the dentist students were surely attending an early lecture. There was a flurry of activity at the entrance of the faculty. A lot of young women were going in and out. She could see all this from her place in the waiting room. Suddenly, it was her turn. A young girl, thin as a rail, her dark tresses tied up in a pony tail called out her name.

” I am going to examine you today.” She smiled at Neeru.

She peered at the name tag. Sanaz Wasim.

She must be of Pakistani origin. Should I talk to her in Urdu? She shrugged it off. Better let it be professional.

As she followed the young girl a thousand memories flashed through her mind. She was also like her once upon a time. Slim, young... beautiful. Full of hope.

Her mind rolled back to the mid 90's .The first day of her arrival in Norway flashed in front of her eyes. The blushing bride.

She had left her home town Ludhiana after a whirlwind of a marriage to Inder Chaudhary.

Her family didn't even know where Oslo was.

” Is it the capital of Sweden?” her younger brother had asked the guy who had come with the marriage proposal.

” No.. no, it's a separate country. Called Norway!”

” Naarvay? Naarvay... Never heard of this country..” Her father muttered.

They were all curious. They had heard of Vilayat ( England ) , Amreeka ( USA), and France but Naarvay was totally new.

But it was Europe, they were assured. Everyone in the neighbourhood and their relatives had congratulated them. Their daughter was going to Europe. It was like she had won the lottery.

Inder was quiet and reclusive. He didn't say much. She attributed it to his shyness. Before she knew it, she was married.

She was a true Punjabi beauty. Tall, unblemished fair skinned, big brown almond shaped eyes and thick long hair. But it was her smile that always attracted the most attention. People always told her how beautiful her

smile was.

” You have lovely teeth!” She would often hear because back then laughter came easy. Her in laws flaunted their beautiful daughter in law among their realtives and friends in Norway.

” What lovely smile she has and such lovely teeth!” They remarked.

Her teeth. She felt the pang of sadness, mixed with anxiety return as she waited for Sanaz.

Soon, this pretty young student was going to discover the most intimate details of her mouth and see what people usually don’t see.

They went up the lift and came to a small cubicle with a solitary chair.

The young girl asked her to sit and put a wrap around her neck. Soon she came back with a lang spatula with a little chip attached to the end.

” We are first going to take x-rays of your teeth, to see how extensive is the damage and whether you need surgery and what treatment you need. This can be a little uncomfortable.” Sanaz had very large brown kind eyes. Neeru smiled, reassured. It was not too often she had seen kindness in human beings.

Kindness. Understanding. Love. All that she had always thought she would find in her husband were painfully absent in Inder. He wasn’t abusive or mean. He was simply indifferent to her. Except for the initial honeymoon where he had told her a little about his life and work, she had no clue who he really was. He seemed lost in own thoughts and work. He worked as a designer, making web pages. It was a small company and he worked long hours. Neeru was left alone most of the days, and evenings. Her mother in law also worked in the family shop, so all day she was left in the apartment. She didn’t speak the language so it wasn’t easy making friends. The few times the family went to some parties, she felt like an oddity, scrutinised and sized up by other Indians. The Indians, born and brought up in Norway, rattled away in Norwegian and seemed the least bothered to include her in their conversations. She would often find herself in a small corner, with a coke glass in her hand.

Then one day she woke up, sick. A visit to the doctor confirmed her suspicions. She was pregnant. Her mother in law had acted as her interpreter at the doctors.

She waited all day for Inder to come home. He was going to be so happy. Maybe it will cement their relationship and make them come closer as a couple. All day she dreamt of how she was going to break the

news to him.

That day he came home even later than he normally does. It was almost midnight. She always stayed up till he came.

When he came to the bedroom, he mumbled in a tired low voice, "I thought you might be sleeping".

"No...no I was waiting for you." she smiled.

He gave her a strange look. "Why are you so happy today?"

"Well, you are going to be a father!" She couldn't contain her excitement.

His ashen faced look wiped the smile off her face,

"What?? This cannot be true. We cannot have a child!" the normally quiet and calm Inder almost screamed the words at her.

She was shocked into silence.

"Get rid of it! As soon as possible." With these words he stormed out of the room. She sat down on her bed, her legs were shaking uncontrollably. Why did he marry her, if he didn't want a child with her?

She heard loud voices coming from downstairs where Inder was quarrelling with his parents.

"... I did as you pleased. I married her! But I cannot have a child with her, for Gods sake! I still love Caroline! She will be devastated by the news! What am I going to tell her?"

"You have to cut all ties with that Norwegian woman! How could you do this? Still see her after you got married?" His father shouted back at him. "A gori will never care for us, the way an Indian girl will."

Inder left that night. He didn't look at her when he came in the room to collect his stuff.

She begged him. She cried. She said she will take an abortion. But please don't leave...please.

He was like an iceberg. Cold, remote and determined. This marriage was over. It was all over his expression. Before leaving he softened for a moment.

"You are so young. Get rid of this child. And get married again. I should have never listened to my parents and ruin your life too. Good bye!" As she heard his footsteps, the world spun around her and she fell down. That was 16 years ago.

Anshul. A ray of light. That's what she named their son. Inder didn't even come to the hospital the day Anshul was born.

Sanaz Waseem was back in the room. She had a dental explorer and a mouth mirror with her.

Neeru opened her mouth and the young dental student looked inside her mouth. With the dental explorer she poked around and examined the teeth. Her front teeth, incisors, were still lovely. She made sure she brushed them properly and they shone brightly. But her molars were suffering. She had been to the dentist on two earlier occasions with severe inflammations. Her face had swollen with the inflammation. The dentist had advised root canal fillings and had finally told her she may need crowning on at least two of the molars. Her molars. Yes, they were the ones who worked hard, silently bearing all the blows of life. And nobody saw it because they were concealed far inside her mouth. Her front teeth sparkled like the lie her life had become. Putting up pretences for friends and family that she was doing fine.

She was determined not to let divorce break her down. She was, after all educated. She was going to stand on her feet. But there were times courage would fail her. Anshul was teething, feverish and had kept her awake many nights on a row. Exhausted, she called her family in Ludhiana.

"I cannot do this on my own. Can I come back?" She cried on the phone.

But being divorced was not on the plan her family had made for her.

"Think about your younger brother and sister, beti. What will we tell people here? You have to manage on your own" Her father spoke gravely.

"We cannot do anything for you, dear. This is your fate. What can we do?"

She could hear her mother's sobs on the other side. Crying, she hung up the phone. She wiped her tears and decided from that day onwards, she was never going to let her family know of any of her problems.

Inder was not really interested in his son. He married Caroline, much to her in laws dismay. They however, wanted to have Anshul in their lives and once he was old enough to stay away on his own, she would often let him sleep over at their house.

She felt she was the only divorced Indian woman but soon she discovered there were quite a few like her. They were not to be found at the usual Indian gatherings. But sometimes in a neighbourhood or shops she bumped into them.

Getting a job wasn't easy. She had to learn the language first. After a couple of years, she finally cleared the language test and got herself a job, as a kindergarten assistant. Soon another reality hit her. Raising a child on one salary was expensive. Unforeseen expenditures could tip her budget easily. Like just a few months ago, her washing machine broke down.

She wanted Anshul to have the same opportunities as Norwegian children did. He went for Karate and played football. Everytime there was a school trip, she made sure he was among the children who went. He was not going to be one of those immigrant children, growing up with parents who only saved to send money back home.

She had learnt one thing, after all these years in Norway. One could complain about the weather, the politicians, religion and other cultures but talking about not having enough money to go to the dentist was not a subject most people would care to hear. Her relatives back home were still believing the lie that she was happily married. Though during her visits, which was not very often, they did wonder why Inder never came with her. She let them believe he was so busy running his company that there was no time for vacations.

Everytime she thought of her fate, she thought of Anshul. And the smile would be back on her face.

How the years rolled by, she had no clue. Suddenly, one day her mirror revealed grey streaks in her hair. Anshul was fourteen years old and had started high school. He had laughed at her. "Mom, I think you need to dye your hair!"

She laughed too. But his next words brought tears to her eyes.

"And mom, isn't it time you found yourself a boy friend or something? You are not even forty yet. Shouldn't you be having some fun in life too?"

How soon they grow up.

"Who is going to look after you if I start having fun?" she smiled.

"Oh mother, please! You only think of me and my happiness. But you know what will make me happy? To see you also enjoying life."

So she decided she was going to enjoy life too. Maybe the hard times were behind her. She had recently been promoted to being the head of her department. Which meant a pay raise. Now she was going to look after herself. But first it was her molars she was going to fix.

Sanaz looked inside her mouth and poked around some more. She took several x-rays of her teeth.

She went in and out of the room with different dental instruments and examined her.

Neeru felt exposed...vulnerable. What did this young girl think? She must be used to lots of women coming here with rotten teeth.

What did Sanaz eat for breakfast today, she wondered irrelevantly. I bet she has a perfect set of teeth.

Lately she had been obsessed with teeth. Whoever she spoke to, she looked at their teeth.

Teeth can tell a lot about a person, she realised. Your whole life was written in the dental map of your mouth. Whether life had been kind or cruel. Could Sanaz see her pain? Could she see how eating sweets had helped her through a depression and loneliness?

Recently Neeru had bumped into a woman she knew. While they were talking, Neeru saw she had no teeth. Even her mouth had sunk. Her words came out with a hissing sound of the toothless.

She couldn't sleep that night. Am I going to end up like this woman by the time I am in my fifties?

That's when she heard of the faculty of dentistry at the University of Oslo. One could get a treatment by the students under the guidance of a dentist. This was cheaper. One phone call and here she was.

Sanaz was finally done with her examination.

She took her downstairs in a huge clinic, with many dentist chairs. There were atleast five other patients in the room. She could hear other people talking with the students who had examined them. She waited for Sanaz to come back.

She was afraid she was going to hear of bone cancer.

When Sanaz came, she had with her the results of the x-ray.

" Alright, here it is. " She began with a smile. " Your incisors are perfect, the gums are good. But you have problems with your molars. Your upper molars, two of them need crowning. You will have three holes in your mouth. Two on both sides, as you have had one tooth extraction earlier. The molar on the other side is almost gone, only some remnants of the roots are still there. We will have to take them out, so there will be a gap there too.

Your molar on the lower jaw has to be extracted too..."

” Hmm..is there a way to cover the gaps...maybe put false teeth..?”

Neeru asked timidly.

” Well we can use implants but they are very expensive. However on your left side, we can do bridging.”

The total cost would be twenty thousand kroners.

Neerus heart sank. The damage to her teeth was extensive. It was going to cost her.

” Can I get the treatment done slowly over several visits and not all at once?”

” Yes, anyway, you will have to come here many times. And have time to do this” Sanaz looked at her.

” Can my teeth be saved and become fine again?” she asked.

” Of course! You can get them to be like new...for some money anything can be saved” Sanaz smiled at her.

Is it you who will be treating me?” Neeru asked her. In the two hours of examintaion, she felt an unspoken bond with the young dentist student.

” No, it will be someone else, not me. But you will be in good hands.”

Sanaz smiled. She patted her on the shoulder and wished her luck before going back to the waiting room. To bring another patient in.

She got up and left for the reception to pay for the days examination.

This was going to cost her but she wanted to laugh and smile without worrying about people noticing her bad molars. Lately, she didn't laugh too much. In fact she realised that she hadn't laughed from her heart in years. Like her teeth, her faith was broken too.

As she stood for the bus to take her back to the kindergarten she was immersed in thoughts. Her teeth could be fixed. She wished she could pay to fix her broken faith in twenty thousand kroners. And smile like she once did.

---

*Saroj Chumber, a writer and journalist from New Delhi, lives in Oslo.*



NIELS HAV

**Poetry is not for sissies**

an essay

When Barack Obama was inaugurated as president in USA, the poet Elizabeth Alexander was reading at ceremony. The poet may take on a similar role in different cultures. But in everyday life, and most of the time, the poet is an outsider. A lonely robber in the desert. That's how it is in Europe, and so it is in the rest of the world.

We writers are individualists. We celebrate the same virtues as the Bedouins: perseverance and generosity. Some of us know about hunger and thirst, heroic poverty and longing. There are other values than the material, and retaining this knowledge is one of poetry's tasks.

Never before in the world history have so many people been living in exile – today we are all kinds of nomads. It is a paradox that nationalism flourishes at the same time. We are poets and reside in a literary republic. Physically we are in Shanghai, Cairo or Copenhagen, but poetry is our mental and spiritual homeland.

Poetry is not for sissies. The task is to keep an eye on those in power and to speak about things as they are. If the truth is suppressed, poets are the first ones to be jailed, and this is logical. But poetry is adjacent to the music, and when a poem is successful, the words has a deep resonance in the mind and soul. Good poetry is magical.

Poetry must be committed to life's beauty and grandeur – and to the problems of daily life of ordinary people. To seek truth is like hunting lizards in the dark, and no matter how we twist and turn, the ass is at the back. We must be honest about our confusion. Art is in search of a deeper truth than political solutions, but still poetry always want to be a critical instance with the additional duty of telling the truth about real problems in the real world.

In this context it is essential that we get more good translations. As a European writer I am completely trapped in the Latin alphabet. Chinese and Arab writers have the advantage over European colleagues, many of

them read two alphabets. How many alphabets are there in this world? I asked my Mom, she can't answer the question. I asked the taxi driver, he does not know either. Nobody knows for sure, but there are many, and alone Chinese, Hindi, Bengali and other Asian alphabets are used by more than one third of the planet's population.

So let us pay tribute to our translators, they build bridges between the many alphabets in this world - and they thereby create the conditions for a growing international understanding. Let us hope for a new flowering of art and poetry in a peaceful world. International communication is more important than ever. Poetry can contribute positively to the understanding between the world's peoples and cultures, and contribute to the respect for the individual and his personal dream of a life in happiness and harmony. We all share that dream.

### **EPIGRAM**

You can spend an entire life  
in the company of words  
not ever finding  
the right one.

Just like a wretched fish  
wrapped in Hungarian newspapers.  
For one thing it is dead,  
for another it doesn't understand  
Hungarian.

### **Visit from My Father**

My dead Father comes to visit  
and sits down in his chair again, the one I got.  
"Well, Niels!" he says.  
He is brown and strong, his hair shines like black  
lacquer.  
Once he moved other people's gravestones around  
using a steel rod and a wheelbarrow, I helped him.  
Now he's moved his own  
by himself. "How's it going" he says.

I tell him all of it,  
my plans, all the unsuccessful attempts.  
On my bulletin board hang seventeen bills.  
“Throw them away”,  
he says, they’ll come back again”!  
He laughs.  
“For many years I was hard on myself”,  
he says, “I lie awake mulling  
to become a decent person.  
That’s important”!

I offer him a cigarette,  
but he has stopped smoking now.  
Outside the sun sets fire to the roofs and chimneys,  
the garbagemen make noise and yell to each other  
on the street. My father gets up,  
goes to the window and looks down at them.  
“They are busy”, he says, “that’s good.  
Do something!”

*Translated by P.K. Brask & Patrick Friesen*

### **Hunting Lizards in the Dark**

During the killings unaware  
we walked along the lakes.  
You spoke of Szymanowski,  
I studied a rook  
picking at dog shit.  
Each of us caught up in ourselves  
surrounded by a shell of ignorance  
that protects our prejudices.

The holists believe that a butterfly in the Himalayas  
with the flap of a wing can influence the climate  
in Antarctica. It may be true.  
But where the tanks roll in  
and flesh and blood drip from the trees  
that is no comfort.

Searching for truth is like hunting lizards

in the dark. The grapes are from South Africa,  
the rice from Pakistan, the dates grown in Iran.  
We support the idea of open borders  
for fruit and vegetables,  
but however we twist and turn  
the ass is at the back.

The dead are buried deep inside the newspaper,  
so that we, unaffected, can sit on a bench  
on the outskirts of paradise  
and dream of butterflies.

*Translated by P. K. Brask & Patrick Friesen*

### **Women of Copenhagen**

I have once again fallen in love  
with five different women during a bus-ride -  
how is one to gain control of one's life under such conditions?  
One wore a fur coat, another red wellingtons.  
One of them was reading a newspaper, the other Heidegger  
- and the streets were flooded with rain.  
At the boulevard a drenched princess entered,  
euphoric and furious, and I fell for her utterly,  
but she jumped off at the police station  
and was replaced by two sirens with flaming kerchiefs,  
who spoke shrilly with each other in Pakistani  
all the way to the hospital while the bus boiled  
in poetry. They were sisters and equally beautiful,  
so I lost my heart to both of them and immediately planned  
a new life in a village near Rawalpindi  
where children grow up in the scent of hibiscus  
while their desperate mothers sing heartbreaking songs  
as dusk settles over the Pakistani plains.

But they didn't see me!  
And the one wearing a fur coat cried beneath  
her glove when she got off.  
The girl reading Heidegger suddenly shut her book

and looked directly at me with a scornful smile,  
as if she'd suddenly caught a glimpse of Mr. Nobody  
in his very own insignificance.

And that's how my heart broke for the fifth time,  
when she got up and left the bus with all the others.

Life is so brutal!

I continued for two more stops before giving up.  
It always ends like that: You stand alone  
on the kerb, sucking on a cigarette,  
wound up and mildly unhappy.

*Translated by P.K. Brask & Patrick Friesen*

### **My Fantastic Pen**

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

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

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

Poetry is not for sissies!

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

What has one grown too sensitive for? Not much.

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

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

faintly of dog piss, and it writes fantastically.

*Translated by P.K. Brask & Patrick Friesen*  
© Niels Hav

### **In Defense of Poets**

What are we to do about the poets?  
Life's rough on them  
they look so pitiful dressed in black  
their skin blue from internal blizzards.

Poetry is a horrible disease,  
the infected walk about complaining  
their screams pollute the atmosphere like leaks  
from atomic power stations of the mind. It's so psychotic  
Poetry is a tyrant  
it keeps people awake at night and destroys marriages  
it draws people out to desolate cottages in mid-winter  
where they sit in pain wearing earmuffs and thick scarves.  
Imagine the torture.

Poetry is a pest -  
worse than gonorrhea, a terrible abomination.  
But consider poets it's hard for them  
bear with them!  
They are hysterical as if they are expecting twins  
they gnash their teeth while sleeping, they eat dirt  
and grass. They stay out in the howling wind for hours  
tormented by astounding metaphors.  
Every day is a holy day for them.

Oh please, take pity on the poets  
they are deaf and blind  
help them through traffic where they stagger about  
with their invisible handicap  
remembering all sorts of stuff. Now and then one of them stops  
to listen for a distant siren. Show consideration for them.

Poets are like insane children  
who've been chased from their homes by the entire family.  
Pray for them  
they are born unhappy  
their mothers have cried for them  
sought the assistance of doctors and lawyers,  
until they had to give up  
for fear of losing their own minds.  
Oh, cry for the poets!

Nothing can save them.  
Infested with poetry like secret lepers  
they are incarcerated in their own fantasy world  
a gruesome ghetto filled with demons  
and vindictive ghosts.

When on a clear summer's day the sun shining brightly  
you see a poor poet  
come wobbling out of the apartment block, looking pale  
like a cadaver and disfigured by speculations  
then walk up and help him.  
Tie his shoelaces, lead him to the park  
and help him sit down on a bench  
in the sun. Sing to him a little  
buy him an ice cream and tell him a story  
because he's so sad.  
He's completely ruined by poetry.

*Translated by P.K. Brask & Patrick Friesen*

### **Encouragement**

Isn't it an uplifting thought  
that in a few decades we  
and this whole confused epoch  
with its cynical presidents,  
wornout arguments,  
  mawkish TV hosts, dim journalists,  
and the crapitalistic jubilant choir  
will be gone? For all time!

We will disappear.  
They will disappear.  
I will disappear.  
You will disappear.  
It will all disappear.  
Hurrah!

*Translated by P. K. Brask & Patrick Friesen*

### **The Soul Dances in its Cradle**

If it is true that the soul  
is born old  
and grows younger throughout life,  
then you and I are both older  
and younger than one another.  
That kind of fusion is dangerous.

Let's be honest: every day  
we live with Fate  
just like people who live in a delta  
overrun by tides.  
They are intimate with the moon;  
we live on it.

The heart beats freely, the soul  
dances in its cradle.

*Translated by P.K. Brask & Patrick Friesen*

### **Let Us Not Contribute to the Smell of Fear**

Why do you push each other so hard  
in the bus, winter is dismal enough  
as it is.

What do we know of the good  
and of evil? Let us not contribute  
to the smell of fear.

Most people take great care



at living,  
and anyone, who each morning undertakes  
to get up, deserves respect.

*Translated by P.K. Brask & Patrick Friesen*

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*Niels Hav, a Danish poet, lives in Copenhagen.*

## HÅKAN SANDELL

### **To a Child Two Weeks Overdue**

Pardon a complete stranger for pestering,  
but if beauty, good will and love have ever  
worn a human face, it must be your mother's.  
She looks so welcoming I have to wonder  
if you're not being unnecessarily skeptical.  
You're expected, the white, tightly-stretched  
blouse where the bra is struggling mightily  
to restrain that swelling so as not to overwhelm one  
with its friendly generosity ought to be enough.  
But maybe she has a lazy-bones onboard, someone  
who'd rather stay there in peace and quiet  
in that crock pot's lovely, honeyed sweetness  
and the magic potion of that rounded crucible  
than come out in public, exposed and freezing?  
The capsule like a sail, soft and flexible  
vast as the whole world, though a mouse hole.  
You stand upright—the sides soft as seashell—  
and if you decide you want to lie down and rest  
your mother holds you as in a swan's egg. You yourself  
are the light where the nights tuck you into bed;  
pale star—in ten light fingers  
you sparkle, you spin, with head down.  
Do you know the secret, just before you spring,  
of the world that opens, are you able now,  
in that inwardness where the red lips say nothing  
to see that when your thin, silken hair  
reaches the roughness of her golden brush  
the sun and moon will be waiting for you there!  
When you've tired of your container's marine  
life and the sea swell's untroubled peace  
in this, the most feminine of places, and finally  
make up your mind to come out in a hurry  
you're going to be proud, I know,  
of this new being you find holding you.  
And that you, despite it all, have come out of the night's

grip to horizons immeasurably broader  
will be clear, and later, when you're squirming beside  
your mother, as if nothing more than a drop  
fallen from the nakedness of her hands or feet,  
know that you once again, like a chameleon,  
will find yourself in the unfamiliar body.  
Brown-eyed, as if taken from the shell of the chestnut,  
Or blue eyed, trickled from the greater stream,  
center of that milk-scented creation,  
naked and newly hatched and perfect.  
Stretched out from that arch where you reclined,  
rolled out to full length from that fold of velvet,  
you'll be greeted by an intimate admiration.  
The rounded stomach and the little behind  
fresh from the garden of roses sprung ,  
how ephemeral, like a cloud, yet how earthly you are.  
Welcome, little night-guest, eyes still closed,  
loosened from the heavens, rosy star;  
like a crèche's Jesus, dreamy, illumined  
twenty-pointed, perfect little human,  
most wondrous, most beautiful, most linen-soft you,  
with the lines of a wave and the skin of a flower.  
Come now, come out from your rounded house  
don't linger any longer in your corner, in the shadows.  
Large in your loneliness, alone in your bowl,  
crawl your way out of an outlived world.  
The hold can no longer contain your journey  
to awakening and the patient completion that waits.  
But given how long you've already waited,  
you'll probably climb, or so I imagine,  
directly up in your mother's lap  
And be able both to count and to comb your hair.  
Your mom is going to do it all for you,  
she already breathes your breath—and nursing?  
the little leaves of your hands flutter  
on their stems—I swear it—as your thirsty  
mouth finds its sanctifying raspberry touchstone.  
Like the necks of swans, your arms as you sling them,  
thin and fair, around your mother  
in a moment of mutual, mild seduction.

Come out for a while--you can always go in  
again—I promise you, just like Aladdin  
promised his reluctant djinn--  
if that embrace doesn't meet with your satisfaction  
Come out, in any case, don't wait forever!  
Come out in these years when your mother is young  
and believes so hopefully in life's wonder  
and that it still can transform everything.

*Translated by Bill Coyle*

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*Håkan Sandell, a Swedish poet, lives in Oslo.*

## IRENA NOVANSKA

### **Kan vi tillate at de dør?**

Om noen dager kommer 33 barn fra dansegruppen Daimohk fra Grozny, en ruinert by på Kaukasus. Mange begynte å legge merke til byens navn i 1994 -1996. Da var media aktiv på dekning av den så kalte første krigen. Grozny er hovedstad til Tsjetsjenia, en liten republikk i det store multinasjonale felleskapet, det siste imperiet i verden, - Russland. Selvstendighetserklaring førte til en vedvarende krig.

### **Er Russland et homogent land?**

Vesten er kjent med Russland på mange måter og det er alltid den russiske profilen som kommer frem. Men Sovjetunionen var mye mer enn bare Russland, befolkningen bestod av hundrevis av store og små folkeslag, noen av dem oppegående, noen truet og nesten utryddet på grunn av fattigdom, alkoholisme eller innføring av russisk språk og kultur som det eneste alternativet. Dagens Russland arvet i stor grad det mangfoldige, spennende og utfordrende felleskapet.

Vi som jobber med kultur vet at det finnes store skatter i dette felleskapet - folkekultur til hundrevis nasjonaliteter, sang og dans, folkeeventyr - både skriftlige og muntlige, samfunnsmønstre som skiller seg fra de moderne, egne religioner og ritualer, naturmedisinske metoder, matvaner og mye mye mer. En rekke institusjoner og museer jobbet i årevis for å samle, dokumentere og formidle denne rikdommen, i Russland er det bare å nevne Det Etnografiske Museet i St Petersburg. Barne og ungdoms dansegruppe Daimohk som snart kommer til Norge er ett glimrende eksempel på den type bevaring og videreutvikling av en av de små kulturene - tsjetsjensk kultur.

### **Tsjetsjenere vil være fri**

Tsjetsjenere er et folkeslag med opprinnelse fra et lite fjellområde på Kaukasus. Tsjetsjenere deler Kaukasus med flere titalls andre. Deres kultur har mange århundre bak seg og eget språk. Tsjetsjensk kultur er preget av fjellet – fra fjellandskapet kommer intensitet, energien,

frihetstrangen. Samtidig ligger den nært naturen og er sensitiv til skjønnhet i voksende planter og trær, flyten i bekker og elver, og solens overhengende dominans.

Den frihetstrangen er en særdeles utviklet preg ved tjetsjenere. Derfor har de, i kontrast til andre folkeslag rundt, kjempet desperat mot Russlands utvidelse sørover. Motstanden mellom det lille folkeslaget og det gigantiske russiske imperiet er en slags kronisk sykdom og er blitt kilde til konflikt og krig i århundre. Og dette fortsetter og fortsetter for Russland vil ikke slippe tsjetsjenere fri.

Det er opp til politikere og vitenskapsmenn å skrive - eller tie - om dette.

Jeg vil se på fenomenet fra det kulturelle standpunktet – om vår moderne verden trenger de små, ”usynlige” kulturer mens det foregår en omfattende globaliseringsprosess, da internett, store varemerker og transnasjonale selskaper bygger bro, forener og forvandler verdensbefolkning til ett homogent marked for sine varer?

### **Hva slags fremtidskultur har vi da i vente?**

En dominerende kultur kan sammenlignes med en motorvei uten mulighet for oss mennesker å kjøre av og komme i kontakt med natur, andre mennesker, planter og dyr, elver og fjell. På motorveien glemmer vi at luften lukter annerledes andre steder, at vann fra brønn smaker ikke likt som på flasker og smaken fra brønn til brønn varierer, at det fins lyder som vi begynte å glemme når vi sluttet å overnatte ute, at fugler og dyr har stemmer og at landskap har mange ansikter. Og at i disse forskjellige landskap utvikler mennesker ulike identiteter.

I full fart på denne kulturmotorveien er det lett å glemme at mennesker kan være og i realiteten er ulike, for eksempel at hudfargen kan variere, at språket lyder ukjent, at klærne og hus de ”andre” bygger virker lite praktiske, ritualer og vaner - fiendlige.

På motorveien er fristelsen for å overkjøre alltid tilstede. Det er lett å gjøre dette i stor fart. For å lære seg på nytt å kjenne de mange andre kulturer og mennesker, må du gå ned i fart, stoppe, åpne opp hjertet og omfavne. Tross hudfargen, religion og språk. Lære å forstå, lære å

respektere, lære å leve sammen. Ser vi dypere inn i medmennesker så forsvinner de utvendige forskjellene og vi kjenner vårt indre slektskap.

Jeg tror at tross alle kriger er vi på vei i den retning – imot gjensidig respekt, forståelse, forsoning og fred. Det er kun dette som er verdt å projisere i fremtiden.

Går vi tilbake til Tsjetsjenias plass i Russland er det et ypperlig eksempel på hvordan en stor kultur overkjører de små.

Tsjetsjensk kultur er bare en liten brøkdell av hele kaleidoskopet av truede kulturer. Mange kjenner til den store tragedien – utryddelsen av amerikanske indianernes kultur. Her er mange likhetstrekk med det som skjer med tsjetsjenere idag. Ser man på ”størrelsen” er tsjetsjensk kultur betydelig mindre og ligner på norsk kultur. Forskjellen er at i 2005 feirer hele Norge sine første 100 år etter fredelig unionsoppløsning mens tsjetsjensk befolkning lider og dør i frigjøringskrig uten stans.

### **Hva er så spesielt med dagens tragedie til Tsjetsjenia?**

Motorveien går ikke bare over kulturen, men truer selve eksistensen av et hele folkeslag. Den irrasjonelle og grusomme krigsmaskinen er på vei til å utrydde alt – mange hundre tusener av mennesker har i årevis vært på flykt, mistet og begravet sine nærmeste, så husene sine ødelagt, sultet, bodd i fattigdom, under bombing og i fare for at soldater fra begge sider kommer om natten og du kan dø på ett minutt, barnet ditt kan treffe på et minefelt, mannen eller kona kan forsvinne og du finner ikke liket en gang.

En tsjetsjensk flyktningkvinne fortalte meg at etter en bombing på hennes landsby, der hun rømte fra Grozny for å overleve, kom hun ut av kjelleren og fant 12 lik, alle hennes slekt og alle måtte begraves. Hun klarte ikke å snakke videre – hun mistet pusten av agoni og fårer, jeg tok hennes hånd og kjente plutselig hennes hoppende puls som det fulkomment uttrykk for alle mødrenes sorg. Krigens trauma i kropp og sjel.

### **Ingen stemmer, ingen ansikter**

Mange tsjetsjenere på flukt fra krigen kom til Norge. Jeg har selv

truffet flere hundre i siste få år. Men det som slår meg er at de har ingen stemme eller ansikt for resten av samfunnet. De er usynlige for oss, har noen av oss virkelig sett dem, hørt på deres historier og vist interesse for deres kultur?

Eller merker vi dem og mange andre ikke mens vi kjører på motorveien rett frem?

Skal vi fortsette i full fart til vi havner i et kulturelt tomrom?

### **Enemies seen as friends**

Do you think enemies are not your friends?

No! Think again!

You think they are no reflection of yours?

No! Think again!

They just cant be mirrors of your soul?

No! Think again!

You examine their faces: no friendly traits?

No! Think again!

See the feminine dark eyes and the wicked mouth?

No! Think again!

See the coldness and the malice?

No! Think again!

Left hand knows not what right hand does?

No! Think again!

Accept the ones who are unknown to you, new?

No! Think again!

Embrace the unknown, the unfriendly, the cold?



No! Think again!

Touch the ground, submit, prostate?

No! Think again!

Merge, be a part, be one, be whole.

No! Think again!

No division, no separation, no air?

No! Think again!

Feel the warmth, the embrace, the kiss?

No! Think again!

Do you think enemies are not your friends?

No! Think again!

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*Irena Novanska, is a writer, lives in Oslo.*

## JOHN Y. JONES

### **Dag vs DAC**

In his last years before he met his untimely death in Africa half a century ago, UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld challenged the colonial powers' continued attempts to quell the quest for freedom sweeping the continent. He expressed his frustration over "many member Nations [who] have not yet accepted the very limits put on their national ambitions by the very existence of the United Nations and by the membership of that Organisation". Hammarskjöld's warning about Africa being turned into a "happy hunting ground" has sadly been proven right.

In the mid-1950s, Hammarskjöld saw the formation of a larger and more dangerous "policy design" with the creation of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC). After 1945, Hammarskjöld had served at the Organization for European Economic Development (OEED) and witnessed its transformation into the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). As head of the UN, he soon became the small countries' spokesperson, and protested when the OECD sought to shape the development agenda in the former colonies through DAC.

That recent colonial powers – who only reluctantly gave in to the post-war "winds of change" – should now claim to be the saviours of the Third World, was bad news to Hammarskjöld. The responsibility for the developing world belonged, as he saw it, with the UN itself. Only the UN had the credibility to assist the newly emerging countries in their development and nation building. To Hammarskjöld, the OECD's DAC was a threat to the UN itself.

After fifty years, the record of the OECD-DAC has proven Hammarskjöld right. While the rest of the world has seen leaps in material accumulation, as well as in levels of life expectancy and welfare, Africa and other parts of the world subject to DAC leadership -- and through its close proximity to the IMF and the World Bank – has seen coordinated structural adjustment policies and aid

programmes that have done everything but address the root causes of poverty and underdevelopment.

Rather, OECD-DAC has orchestrated a development agenda that has resulted in the largest ever gap between rich and poor countries that history has ever witnessed. But as DAC and the rich nations refused to transfer power to the UN in any significant way, Hammarskjöld would not be surprised to hear that wealth today is in the hands of the rich world to a degree unimaginable even in 1961.

Everyone claimed that the exploitation of colonies had to come to an end with decolonization. But Hammarskjöld also demanded substantive support for the developing nations that had been vandalized by years of imperial abuse and exploitation. He would have loved to see considerable funds being transferred to the developing world annually. He demanded developing countries' fair and balanced integration into the world economy at large. As a fellowship of all nations, the UN was to hold the reins for all this.

Fifty years after Dag Hammarskjöld's untimely demise, the West has failed to let the UN become the tool for development he dreamed of. We ignored his warnings. Hammarskjöld also feared that splitting the UN into many specialized agencies would weaken the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (Ecosoc). We weakened the UN, not only by splitting it up and under-financing it, but also by channelling attention and authority away from the world organization over to the ostensibly more "effective" Bretton Woods institutions. It should come as no surprise that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were not concocted at the UN, but in the halls of the OECD by the DAC.

Instead of the UN, private operations and initiatives like those of Ted Turner and Bill Gates as well as the G-8, etc -- that are serving the West's interests -- are now setting the international development agenda. World leaders fill the hotels in Davos, or at G8 and G20 summits, rather than the UN's halls. We have systematically hindered poor nations from taking control of their own development.

Even more distressing is the fact that we have kept Africa from turning its own resources into wealth, from industrializing, from progress. We have kept our expensive medicines and other technologies to ourselves through high prices and patents. We have short changed Africa by dispatching mosquito bed-nets and micro finance from 5-star hotels. In short: We have kept Africa poor, blocked their efforts to get out of poverty, and made them effectively dependent on us for their own survival. Of course, not only DAC members, but also most NGOs and private businesses will have to take responsibility for this.

Dag Hammarskjöld was “greatly impressed by the new generation of African leaders” of his day, and had high hopes for “the economic potentialities of Africa”. Fifty years later, there are no signs of new opportunities that will be handed to Africa for free. The hope again is that a “new” generation will emancipate the continent. Freedom and prosperity must come to Africa from within. Let us pray that it will not resort to quick fixes, revenge, violence and war that, for so many years, have kept it down. And that a reformed UN will once again start speaking for the small countries and keep the powerful ones accountable for signing the Charter, as Hammarskjöld dreamed too many years ago.

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*John Y. Jones is with the Dag Hammarskjöld Programme, Voksenaasen, Oslo, and is director of Networkers SouthNorth*

## ILIYASU KASIMU

### **The Nigerian voice**

Dear Friends,

My name is Iliyasu Kasimu. I come from Jos North Central Nigeria.

When I first learned I was awarded this scholarship, I was ... happy as would every other person. But a feeling of nervousness set in too. I was nervous not because I did not know what the scholarship was about but because there I was with a chance of a lifetime. A chance to do what I had yearned to do. A chance to realize what had been a dream of sorts for me; it dawned on me that all that I had been doing was journeying towards something and you never knew what it is and where it is going take you to until something happens and then you go 'ah ha!' That was the moment for me. So why am I here?

I am an aspiring filmmaker; I want to make films; I believe some things should not just be happening; like the ethno-religious violence in my city Jos, Nigeria. I just wonder why it happens; particularly why young people would be encouraged to kill and destroy in the name of God or in order to annihilate another person because they see the world differently. It is not just acceptable by any human standards. Has it always been like this? No! So let me tell you about my hometown.

Jos city in the past was a haven for creativity; ideas and energy and success flowed freely on its streets. Most of the big names in Nigerian entertainment and sports industry today grew up in Jos or went to school in Jos. This is not just because the city is home to two of the most influential film and television institutions but because of the mix of its people. Jos is one of the most cosmopolitan cities in Nigeria; it used to be called the miniature Nigeria. Christians and Muslims and even animists shared neighbourhoods.

Mosques, Churches and shrines shared walls. Igbos, Hausas, Yorubas, Urhobos and all other ethnic groups lived in harmony and unity with the Anaguta, Afizere and Berom natives. The result was a wealth of ideas coming together to create and give the city its uniqueness. Since American style vehicle plates were introduced in the country vehicle

plates in Jos have carried the inscription “Home of Peace and Tourism”.

That moniker stuck and still does but now with an ironical tinge. Jos was indeed a hub for tourists and a home of peace. It has a weather and landscape paralleled by no other place in the country. Assorted vegetables and fruits are taken to other parts of the country from Jos. Its ultra-modern market was the hub of commercial activities in the whole of central Nigeria until it was destroyed by an inferno in February of 2002; a result of the ethno-religious crises the city has been witnessing since 2001. Jos is still such a beautiful place but the tourists’ visits have declined. Now the city has been a ghost of its former self. Its neighborhoods have been demarcated between religious and ethnic lines. You hear of ‘them’ and ‘us’ now instead of the ‘we’ you hear before. Young people kill and maim each other with impunity and at the slightest provocations. It could be a football match, a commercial motorcyclist arguing with his passenger, students’ argument or just somebody stepping on another’s toe in the market place. The level of acrimony is really alarming and disheartening.

I have thought about it for quite some time and have realized that ignorance and frustration with the state of things in the country is at the heart of it. Given that political office is about the only means of getting to money and other “privileges”, the different ethnic groups particularly those called “indigenes” and those termed as “settlers” jostle for political offices and this in the end breeds distrust and fear and hatred that culminates into the violence we see. There is also competition for land and its resources. In this case the Fulani cattle breeders compete with the natives for grazing land, which to the natives is farmland.

Corruption is another factor; In Nigeria being appointed a top government job means unrestrained access to the public till. Although the federal government is all out to stamp that out now, the toll can be seen in poor infrastructure, poor and unaffordable health care system, poor quality education; unemployment amongst youths and so on. All these come together to put a lot pressure on the citizens’ psyche so much so the option that remains only is succumbing to violence.

Until we could get to the root of these challenges whatever efforts we put to stop the violence from happening will not work and the city’s future and indeed that of the country is bleak. For nobody could tell

when the violence would end. Analyst foretell of more gloomy days ahead. The level of ignorance and unemployment amongst a lot of young people in the city and even the whole of Nigeria is very alarming. I do not mean young people do not know how to read and write or do not know that the world is round and all that. I mean a lot of us choose not to know that it is okay for someone to have a different way of seeing life. That prosperity comes to a place only when peoples of different backgrounds and cultures intermingle and cohabit. Maybe it is not our fault but then can we not see that youths in other parts of the world today are the forces that drive developmental changes and creativity. That when youths meet they meet to move frontiers. Not to shrink them? They meet to create not to destroy; they meet with their minds not with clubs, machetes and daggers and even AK 47s. Look around and you'll see what I mean; the owner of Timberland is a young man; lady Gaga is a young woman, facebook was started by a young man and run by young men from different cultures; just look around. The world of success is peopled by the young and energetic. I think lack of knowledge and information breeds misunderstanding then intolerance then violence because it exposes one too many young people to just their own points of view to issues. It makes them refuse to see that the multiplicity of angles is just natural and so should be acknowledged and harnessed for common good.

We need to accept each other for whom and what we are if ever we want the problems of unemployment and corruption and poor infrastructure to go. Someone then has to say these to these young people.

Maybe the government who is supposed to make sure an atmosphere ideal for creativity exists; maybe the religious and opinion leaders that indoctrinate them with tales that only breed more hatred and intolerance; maybe him; maybe her. But I cannot wait. I feel the work of making them realize that they are the future has to begin. Films and other forms of entertainment are about the best tools to use for that; fortunately for me Nigerian youth are steeped in those. I want put a lot of progressive messages in film and other media targeted at youths in order to douse the distrust and hatred. I think if the young people are reached, a whole chunk of the problem would have been solved. I want to engage the youths in projects that will introduce them to filmmaking and other media. The idea is to introduce them to alternative means of airing their grievances than violence as well as to stimulate dialogue.

Coming to work under this scholarship I believe exposes me to more methods and strategies employed to foster understanding and unity amongst youths of different ethnicity and religions in Jos and indeed Nigeria at large. This has to be done for the benefit of the society.

Last week, I was part of a project called “Express Yourself” at the Voksenasen Centre in Oslo where young people came together to express themselves using different means. We gathered for a music, art and dance event outside the Nobel Peace centre; the scene where more than 100,000 people the week before had gathered to show solidarity with the victims of the Utoya attack. That is a very good inspiration for me.

I believe if I introduce something like that in Jos it will create a lot of impact in terms reducing the distrust and xenophobia amongst the youths and will also. The vibration from Oslo and indeed what I experience in Uppsala Stockholm will bring me in contact also to people and ideas that drive development and prosperity especially amongst young people in this region of the world. Here I represent millions of young people in my city and indeed my country that yearn for the situation of things to change; who yearn to join their peers in other parts of the world in enriching the human experience with innovations and creativity. I thank so much the Ragnar Sohlman Foundation for this opportunity and I hope our relationship can continue for a very long time.

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*Iliyasu Kasimu, a filmmaker and writer from Nigeria, was on Ragnar Sohlman Scholarship at Voksenåsen in August September. He presented this text as the Ragnar Sohlman Lecture 2011 at the Norwegian Embassy in Stockholm on August 19.*



## ERLING KITTELSEN

### Some Poems

#### I

Human bird  
we throw you  
off the cliff

do you know how to fly?

*VILLE FUGLER (1970)*

#### II

do you remember the time  
the gold lay hidden  
and we owned it together?  
it gleamed in the depths  
it gleamed in our hearts  
do you remember?

*REBUENE (1973)*

#### III

Dyke

If I'm blasted into the air  
then I'm blasted into the air  
and the air catches me,  
tomorrow I am rain

If I'm sunk into the sea  
then I'm sunk into the sea  
and the depths catch me  
tomorrow I am food.

If I'm put behind bars

then I'm put behind bars  
and the walls catch me,  
tomorrow I am signs.

If I blast open the door  
then I blast open the door  
and Jara catches me,  
tomorrow I am more

*ET DØGN OVER LE (1981)*

IV

Jara

I'm running along a branch  
that only the earth can see,  
and because it is seen,  
I am running along it.

I'm climbing up a rope  
that only the mast-top can see,  
and because it is seen,  
I am climbing up it.

I'm balancing on an edge  
that only Dyke can see,  
and because it is seen,  
I am balancing on it.

*ET DØGN OVER LE (1981)*

V

To know you exist is reason enough to live  
to ask where the spear is to be thrown  
not to get mixed up in earth  
not to float away without hunger...  
A ray of truth catches up with me and warms me

shines – quivers through me.  
Is that what they want to do away with?  
A gleam from the heart that will rise up  
with force, wave slow-motion ticks flies  
some other direction whistling like a dragon’s extended tail  
shows itself: not so as to sink, not to stay there,  
The shadow that clarifies the light.

*ABIRIELS LØVE (1988)*

## VI

Howling born by distant winds made his head foggy –  
so he starts to hammer out a horn  
that captures the wide part of the world  
collecting fresh currents in its coil –  
a golden serpent horn to shrewedly wind his unrest  
through every hatch, raise the horn  
from the deep abyss and blow, sound out  
everywhere in unison  
from the Himalayas to the top of Galdhøpiggen.

*ABIRIELS LØVE (1988)*

## VII

Finally necessary for the Man to prevent  
eyes from opening to the innermost  
and pieces from being laid  
to let the ray slip through.  
He developed intelligence so as to indicate  
the nature and juxtapositions of the pieces  
and all the self-evident laws  
for what could not come about.

*ABIRIELS LØVE (1988)*

## VIII

Through the scroll of history a stream moaned  
which memory praised  
sip by sip down into ice stomachs.  
The earth is calmly reined into orbit and fanned red, flying!  
The one instant blows the other away.

*ABIRIELS LØVE (1988)*

## IX

When your wave comes with the stars as white sails  
I fly up in its wake with a coral-red kiss.

*ABIRIELS LØVE (1988)*

## X

The sea-house holds something within itself – earth –  
sings something within itself  
in the sea portal, the mountain is  
helped on – stamps a calmness in the atmosphere  
could not be concealed, standing  
in air and sun-rain, rain  
the image bursts,  
a bird pecks on a membrane, rips, tears, flips through, flies inwards  
eye on it.

*HUN (1989)*

## XI

At the watershed she sees both paths  
can she not stop  
must she place her finger where  
they would have preferred peace

in reality she is dark indistinct  
why ring out so precisely  
as a deer with a keen sense  
does the eye rest on a point  
looks further ahead, a shelter for the next hour  
an ice-cold drip against the forehead  
for every quiver of the earth  
was she neither drugged nor mad  
why draw them on her wall of need  
when she could have had things better.

*HUN (1989)*

XII

To receive the world  
to be safely invisibly present  
a counterweight to the visible, floating  
leaning against something to exist  
the key of creed: Profitability  
resources in the pocket of the one doing the calculations  
it naturally led to recessions  
for the more it had to be worth it  
the less was left for man to receive  
finally only a patch, a pine cone  
someone thought was an ark, she saw  
that the rescue just wasn't worth it  
had to raise her bosom  
and take the creature with her  
before the last cone sailed out.

*HUN (1989)*

### XIII

#### *Poetics*

To leap on logs in an unleashed river  
the realist sees reality and falls in  
the romantic goes ahead unrestrained and falls off  
the postmodernist finds the world already  
deconstructed and splashes in  
the social realist sees the profit considerations  
of the timber supplier quite clearly in a salto  
the surrealist pulls a French one  
and ends up in the waterfall, the peripherist  
also believes it will work in mid-current  
the futurist goes for single-size shoes, misses  
We're sitting on some boulders following  
the river-ballet, a thin growth layer of cellulose  
with a sickly acidic scent tells of activity  
dreams, bloc politics, pollution, a fight  
for violets, road connections, visions ahead  
Unleashed? Who called the river unleashed?  
It's flowing quite calmly

*i (1995)*

### XIV

#### *without country, without time*

Draw in the detail I'd got to  
draw it into my life  
live on it  
fight for it  
That's what I have  
am I not supposed to, goddammit  
you say some other time rather  
you say some other time rather

*i (1995)*

XV

Spring is creaking, honey of the stem  
winter cuts past

the divisions  
reflect  
the ending

*i (1995)*

XVI

The pictures leaf me inwards  
towards what I am to meet

spread me out  
make me narrow enough

through my inner eye so as to see  
there's always a nice cave after you

when you dig out rock  
a good building is made

got back in the flow  
the rock stopped me

till I saw it had been dug out  
till you had filled its place

*MOTTAKEREN (2005)*

XVII

Fear of politics disconnects  
you from society

fear of metaphysics disconnects  
you from the mystery

you are left with pure fear  
and a faultless poem

*MOTTAKEREN (2005)*

XVIII

I want to be blind  
give you my vision

if I give you it seeing  
you will cling to me

would rather be blind  
meet some place else

*MOTTAKEREN (2005)*

XIX

I know who you are, you are immense  
you have given me much  
I know you're not a great reader  
I know you know  
texts are my place of refuge  
stashed in a landscape that grows denser  
where reality is to resemble  
should the individual be allowed to travel  
should the collective be allowed to exist  
should exile be possible



the land was covered with water  
as if the heart unfolded  
the land grew dry, I cried a small lake  
my spirit flew over the sea

*MOTTAKEREN (2005)*

XX

Mist cold as snow  
the eye reaches no further than the whiteness  
a maggot is everything  
creeps towards bare rock  
crosses pores  
breathes with me.

*FORTELL DET IKKE (2009)*

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*Erling Kittelsen, a Norwegian poet, lives in Oslo.*

ANISUR RAHMAN

**The Water-Nymph**

To walk and escape life,  
Topsy-turvy like a river,  
The mermaid moves towards deep sea—  
Adherence— her dedication to water.

Hi, my water-nymph, yes,  
Water embraces land  
When you kiss at high tide.

In spite of that, she advances relentlessly  
When sea and river speak of 'love.'

**Story of Water and Stone**

I split the heart within my heart,  
Build a house from stone.  
I see my life inside—  
A devastating storm within.

I see the sea in your eyes  
Rising above water level.  
Water embraces water  
Where you see our house.

High tide strikes high tide,  
The sun absorbs water,  
Clouds suck clouds,  
And life strains to breathe.

## **Poet in Residency**

One cannot find poets in residency in schools, libraries and literary seating

They phrase the cheers and long-drawn sigh in life and

They live in prisons, fields, factories, streets, markets and labour colonies

Poets are Vasco da Gama and Columbus where there is life even in nook and corner

If any one of you ask about me in Uppsala

You will know, this is the poet in residency in Uppsala

I must say: Anisur Rahman is not poet at all

Just an image of a bird in the storm

The bird finds its shelter in the palace at stormy night

The bird waits just for dawn, afterwards of the storm...

## **”Let find me my human-being papa”**

a short story

Did I do have to do anything? I could not manage a job even after completing my university degree, even knocking thousand times to hundreds positions. I had my parents, I had siblings - who were individually were a load on me. On the other hand I fell in love with a girl. That was not enough! I got to married her. What could I do without marrying her. Tender youth in me at that time, green-fresh idealism, purified thought for revolution, perfection in patriotism, all I had in me in those days.

After completion of university education, I would serve the nation and bring fortune for my family, that was a motto in me. At the end, I myself do not find my way out. I entered into a blind alley. I did manage a job indeed. There is in my country a society and surroundings, particularly for women in my goodness of the island called Bangladesh in world map. My wife too had same headache for society and surroundings. It is

to have in all ideal (?) women!

That was a big matter as I managed a job in land of 150 million people and in the market of millions of unemployed. Excitement indeed in me! How could I know what was their business where I got my job? It was too late for me as they were mafia, they were smugglers! Thieves! When I came to know and understand, it was too late for my survival. The godfathers or mafia don, whatever we call... Moti Muhammad Bhai or Shahiduzzaman Bin Jomsher or Nulauddin Nader Chowdhury... were the owners, the culprits! They wanted to make me a scapegoat!

I am now in a country in the north. I have metamorphosed into a strange animal from human being after a six-year awaiting, I am an animal today, but my memory is working fine. I can think more than usual as a human being.

It is a story that took place six years ago in Bangladesh. Ten trucks illegal arms were seized by police in Chittagong. Two trucks out of ten went missing. I realised I was going to be made the 'scapegoat.' By this time my wife along with my eight-month daughter was kidnapped. The indications were clear, I would go to police in search of my wife and daughter, police or mafia gang will pick me up and kill me. So?? Where do I go? Where is the difference between police and mafia? As I find military and fundamentalist today have their resort in same feathered nest.

Stealing seal pad from my office, I went into hiding and reached this land in the north after a long trip and trick. That was another long story and could be a large novel. Let's skip that!

I applied for refuge in Sweden. What was the reason? I wanted to survive from fear and threat. That was the honest cause. But, who were getting me to run? Who were threatening to kill me? What were the evidences? Yes, where is my evidence. I could be killed, that was true and cent percent true. Even my animal brain right now could think it.

But the problem was with the officials at migration offices. They need evidence. They demand evidence for every single word. My wife and daughter were kidnapped and it was true you know. But I had no evidence in this regard that I could show to migration officials. They told me you had your job, your relatives, parents, siblings, wife and

daughter all are in your land. 'If they can survive, why not you.' Yes, they are right on their part. I too was right true as I know and see my danger. Even my animal brain is convinced as my life was not safe at all in my land. But I had no evidence in support. Migration board people must need evidence and evidence. They are even happy getting evidence in favour of a true falsehood.

I did not get refuge, my application was refused. My ways got all lost. I went on hide, passed my nights here and there, at churches and so. I pass days starving and half starving. I worked at horse farms in remote country side. At last police arrested me. I got shelter at custody in far remote area. After long waiting there one morning I found myself as a strange animal. I had a mirror in my pocket that helped to see my new outlook. This is a hot issue all over the world. I was sent shifted to the animal protection and research centre in Stockholm . So many reporters, photographers and eager people gathered to see me today. I can exactly recollect those days in churches, in remote areas in my starving days. I wrote to many newspapers, to Amnesty, to Red Cross. None did pay any attention to my words. I can hear members of the crowd are saying Bangladesh authorities are demanding me back home. They are saying that I am their national resource. Swedish authority is saying my passport proves the identity that I was a human-being that was Adam Ali. Adam's passport should not be this animal's identity. This animal is a national property of Sweden. That is why they cannot return me back to Bangladesh. Swedish animal protection law does not permit the government to hand me over to any second party.

Now I am a tourist attraction too. Business analysts are writing in newspapers and expecting billion dollar income, biological scientists are taking preparation for huge research on me filmmakers are thinking for making a documentary on me. Everything is an outcome of their own business thinking. Human rights groups are too aware. They are taking a hand hard over Bangladesh and Sweden 's governments. They are raising the issue of my daughter 'Borshaa's right to her father. I can hear everything the crowd is saying outside my cage – all about me. Bangladesh government is taking preparation for filing a complaint to the UN. They are also thinking of filing a case with the International Court. Newspapers reported by this time in a couple of weeks of my being an animal, the number of tourists doubled in Stockholm. The number is increasing at geometric rate. I have been a hot factor in the

upcoming elections in Sweden and Bangladesh. All parties in both the country are prioritising to claim me, 'an animal' in their election manifesto. They all are trying their best to convince the voters they would succeed in protecting me according to the national interest.

I have no headache for those. My tension is for my daughter 'Barshaa' only. She is seven now. At her 8-month age, I came here and went to Red Cross and requested them to bring my daughter and wife here anyhow. They did do nothing or could not do anything. The same Red Cross with the help of UNICEF now brought my daughter and her mother to see her father who is no more a human being today ... a strange animal!

They are coming, my daughter Barsha and her mother... The face of my Barsha is like a carbon copy of mine. Oh, misfortune, with the baby! This is my wife and I can read her eyes even being an animal today. I can see her mind is indeed breaking. She wants to die, but she will not die, she will survive only for her daughter. She will be kidnapped, she will be abused, but she will regain her strength and confidence on for the cause of her daughter, she will be living for Barshha as dead grass regain their life at the touch of rains. I can see water is dropping from the eyes of my wife. No sound from her mouth.

The Bengali interpreter girl echoing the voice of the Swedish guide instructing my daughter, let you see that is your father inside cage. Let you see, see!

Barsha is saying: That animal is not my papa. My papa was a human being. Let me find my human-being papa!

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*Anisur Rahman, a poet from Bangladesh, lives in Uppsala.*

## ZURAB RTVELIASHVILI

### **Ode to Their Majesty Civil Society**

Praise and beware me!  
Prepare the rice and wheat  
Intended for me,  
From valley to valley - from valley to valley  
Where scythes extinguish the fire  
In a golden wheatear  
Praise and beware me!  
When the winds comb  
my hair with an excitement,  
Praise and beware me!  
Sharpen the scythe and repeat  
The ten lines from my poem,  
Praise and beware me!  
In a holy noise, sincere noise, voiceless noise  
I have many hands for them who will insist on  
The right of speech!  
From valley to valley - from valley to valley  
When the scythes extinguish the fire  
In a golden wheatear -  
Praise and beware me!  
Praise and beware me!  
Praise and beware me!

### **Training for God**

I am ready to meet the secret sign  
In the dawn,  
I am ready to arrange a ritual  
On the distant field,  
I start to train myself,  
You start to dance  
Against the first ray of the sun,  
I try to preach,  
To share the reason

Of my coming here.  
My words - all were sincere,  
I tried to pass the streets  
With quiet steps, I tried to write  
Thoughts - like poems  
Impossible to read,  
Now facing straight the deadlock,  
I descend from sky - to train myself,  
To start my shameless dance!  
I move this way, look and observe  
Attentively - the way I breathe,  
I stopped to play,  
I missed reality.  
I do not write poems,  
I lose them  
Endlessly...  
It's you, who is the real dancer - God!  
I - just train myself to worship you!

**The Short Poetic Ontology**  
**Bijouterie:**

For inner hen,  
For inner pig,  
For inner predator.

Act 1

The inner hen appears.  
The inner pig appears.  
The inner predator appears.  
It appears the inner hen is astonished.  
It appears the inner pig is angry.  
It appears the inner predator got furious.

The inner hen is simple.  
The inner pig is massive.  
The inner predator is dangerous.



The inner hen stays secretly,  
The inner pig stays secretly,  
The inner predator stays secretly.

Is it a woman (?) the inner hen,  
Is it a woman (?) the inner pig,  
Is it a woman (?) the inner predator.

Is it a man (?) the inner predator,  
Is it a man (?) the inner pig,  
Is it a man (?) the inner hen.

The hen fearing the Lord during the fast (!)  
The pig fearing the Lord during the fast (!)  
The predator fearing the Lord during the fast (!)

The inner hen - hates,  
The inner pig - is jealous,  
The inner predator - is anxious.

Final act

The inner hen is knocking with its beak!  
The inner pig is digging with its snout!  
The inner predator is dangerous (!!!)

The inner hen will be slaughtered,  
The inner pig will be slaughtered,  
The inner predator will be killed...

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*Zurab Rtelashvili is a poet from Georgia and is an ICORN guest writer  
in Stockholm*

## DIANA MOURA

### **Night ghost**

There is no hope but to wait till it ends. If it ever ends.

Sometimes I wake up as two monstrous hands grab me from behind my mattress. I don't think there is much hope anyway. But I do feel this regret for something that seems not to be quite my fault. There is something I still have buried inside, a sort of hunger. A desperate hunger for life. But there is nothing one can do but to wait. Wait until every mad man comes to his senses. Wait until death takes over the bones. I've seen her around you know.

Seen her in the dark as I go out to feed. I'm as a wolf each day more. I scratch, I silently seek my preys but I am never apparently there. I am dying. I am a desperate, hungry dying man. And nothing can change that. Not my mental calendar that keeps marking and rearranging the marked days. Too much time has passed by now.

Men are still seeking, still hungering for raw killing. And me as the pianist stuck, not in some fortunate state of living, but in the loneliness of those who have seen and loved and do no more. I am now one of those men that do not hit the road. That do not seek in the mountains what men cannot give him anymore. I am staying here. Guarding the dead bodies, seeing that they don't move under the earth. And as the starving comes it occurs to me that they themselves are food, that they are in the cold of night frozen meat. And I, shivering in the stormy night (or not so stormy but shivering just the same) look at the bodies that lay beside me and envy the covers that warm them.

You do not complain from life as much as you do from hunger. You do not complain from sight as much as you do from blindness. Still every day it seems to flee from me this sense of being alive, of having a choice. And every day, waking myself from my sleeping state, I wish for blindness and death. The warm cozy state of death.

As their feet roughly touch the earth 3, 000 yards away I hear this whispering inside. As if the boots walked upon me. I go barefoot to

the door. It is night, they always come at night. And in the night, in the panic of it all, but also in the absence of fear for nothing will arm us more than it has already. And it did. Barefoot I go to the door, for it to be silent, for me to be non-existent as I am. And as I put on this worn dead man boots I disappear. I am more of his ghost and his wife's ghost. I am more of their child that died alone in a room filled with men. And as I walk they walk with me. Through the snow I go as a wolf. Quiet as a wolf. Breathing as a wolf. Hungering... as a wolf. I am hunting the living. I am hunting and seeking and following the living as they unload a hundred bodies. I am comforting the dead.

There is indeed a state of mind to this, there is indeed a name to put upon this. It just doesn't come to mind. I am a wolf. I use not the words but the senses. There is no complication to my thought no coherence to what there is in me to be said.

It has of hunger and pain and revenge. And in a circle I am put upon, laid as a mathematician would. Here is the wolf he says:

Freedom, long lost freedom.  
Peace

Here is the possibility of a wolf. Of a man made into a wolf. But he does not explain the senses. He does not explain the instinct. That cannot be explained. He does not say how he suffered as a child, he does not know but that I am hungry for what most men aren't.

But I do nothing. Me the wolf with teeth and claws does nothing. I hide myself through the vegetation and I see what no one sees. And as I do I die a little more. I do not use my claws because there is nothing but sadness in me. There are no claws enough for this world. But there are measures to be taken, names to be written in wood.

And as they unload I count, as they throw them to the ground, I hurt and mourn and sometimes cry. There is always a need for mourning when two hundred people die. There is a need for counting and making names appear. I should unbury them and ask but I don't. I don't for the only reason that sense provides: they cannot answer. Even the children cannot answer. Children are talkative. They struggle to speak. Not these children. They seem quiet. Quiet enough, I think.

As a wolf without claws or need for them I wait and count and give them names. And then as a Ghost I return to the torn room that awaits. And only then, as I become myself, without shoes or ghosts upon me, I write those names in the wall and curl up to mourn.

## **Julia**

There was not much hope. And still she was there as she had ever been. Every night she would wait for him with a child in her hands. It was true. He did not care. But she was never taught to listen to the heart. Only voices would whisper out to her. Only voices of others should tell her what to do.

Tonight it was colder than usual. She was not hungry she was not scared, for nothing could scare her much, not after hunger, not after pain. Tonight she was just waiting with the child in her arms. And although she was trembling not by fear... not by the unusual weakness, that rose in her body, but by devastation. By the devastation of being one. Of being alone. And even that was taken from her. If she was not to control her instincts... but she did. She did as she had to do, for the world would not change, neither would her own fate. If fate it can be called.

Every night she would wait in the dark for they had not light. Electricity was from the modern times and those... were not their times. Every night the hunger came as always, and then the emptiness of the crying sound of her three children. How will you feed them? Three children of your own, if you have no food but wine... when you have hunger you will crave. When you crave you adjust to what you have. If not for the simple grass on the ground, if not for some fruit... but then, there is always wine. The shelves we do not own are empty. If they were to exist... maybe then there would be some rice for me to feed my children. But do not hope if you do not own. And I do not own but the will to warm them and feed them... and perhaps in the morning to empty the wine, to vanish the soul.

Tradition was irrelevant if you were to be owned, but one does not notice when we are raised to be nothing but this. This.

You will not have a bath tomorrow. So he said, so it must be. And it was.

For tradition must not be shaken, it must not be torn apart. Tradition relieves our sins it makes us human and grown... and we are to be grown.

You will not eat tomorrow. So he said. And it must be. There is no hope for freedom when the bones are weak. There is no shelter for women who never get their sleep. So it was, so it should be...

There was no pocket of hers to hide the money begged in the streets. There was not a place to hide away the bits of shame that torn the face apart. Every day she would teach her sons to plead for a little money, for a little penny to save the day from hunger. The eternal ghost of hunger. But there was not a soul to save them from pain, for pain was not one door but a million windows. So... everyday she sat in from of a bank, bruised and damaged, for what they called a life. She was not to cry in public. She was brought up to be strong, taught to endure.

Sitting in front of the newest bank she would plead with the eyes but say nothing with the mouth. It is hard to talk when you do not know the words.

Julia! They called. And she came running, running throw the fields as if she were the sun sailing on the wind. But she did not know. Not if she knew she wouldn't...

There was a glimpse. And then there was: fear. She would run to hide behind her mother, she would listen to the words but not believe them. And still they were said... and there was nothing to be done. There would be no war against her father for in two words she had known her fate. In two words a belt was unbelted. And in all actions: an initiation: a prosecution.

As she remembered that day she would linger her finger against the little scar in her eye brown. There was nothing more mysterious than the past. For there we lay reveled, for eyes that would not see it. Her mother never knew but that she fell through the stairs they did not own. And even that... she had not noticed. She would not go to school the next day. School was troubling and would damage her integrity. In two weeks time she would depart. First to an aunt to remain there for five years and then to... another man's house.

**A poem:**

I had my voice imprisoned

I had my body entangled

I had my choice of nothingness

I had no turn \_\_\_\_\_

a mouth that opens but not to speak

a cry that yells but not to heal

hands that fall from the sky

hands that fall but no crime

Can you hear it?

Can you hear 'them voices?

\_\_\_\_\_ as they crawl upon skin

Can you feel them again?

Ghostly cruel creatures

Do you hear them whispering

In the dark?

---

*Diana Moura, a writer from Italy, lives in Oslo.*

HENRIK IGELSO

**Mild Wild Apples**

Come play around  
we are in the sound  
we wound go to town  
come walk with me in the woods  
with peace in mind  
so peacefull and fine  
you stay with me  
just for a little while

And then then you may go  
out to the wild  
and there you see if you find  
peace in your mind  
peace peace in mind  
so peacefull and fine  
and now you stay with yourself  
just for a little while

Soon fall will come  
and soon we'll be gone  
you harvest the juice  
the juice of what you have done  
seeing mild apples flow  
from the trees down below  
you see a child  
drink from your cup

---

*Lake Leech* alias *Henrik Igelsø* is a Danish poet visiting Oslo.



## HEIDI SCHANCHE

### **Den som gir**

Befinne seg i en bakgård  
Det kan være hyggelig, der  
Bruke ytringsfriheten  
Til tross all innsats for ytringsfrihetens skyld  
Når mottagerens forutsetninger sitter et annet sted  
Og avgjør

Er (ikke) assosiasjoner vandrestier i hukommelsen  
Kunnskap gir makt mens rygger passerer  
Og de som står tilbake er også misforståtte

Glemmer å fortelle hverandre kjærlighet

### **Forelskelse**

Tillitt og gode øyne  
Med omgivelsene

Når jeg tar pauser  
Fra høytlesingen  
Vokser det et helt hull

---

*Heidi Schanche, a poet, lives in Oslo.*

# CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHOPS

with Anisur Rahman and guest authors

**tuesday 6th September - tuesday 13th September**  
**tuesday 20th September - tuesday 27th September**

**Place:** Nordic Black Theatre / Cafeteatret, Hollendergata 8, Oslo

**Time:** 17.00-19.30

Free Entry

[www.nordicblacktheatre.no](http://www.nordicblacktheatre.no)

guest authors:

**6 September**

Håkan Sandell, Iliyasu Kasimu

**13 September**

John Y. Jones

**20 September**

Philo Ikonya

**27 September**

Erling Kittelsen, Philo Ikonya

