Poetry for a Just Future

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IN MEMORIAM

TODAY IS SUNDAY BY NAZIM HIKMET, DON QUIXOTE BY NAZIM HIKMET, TO THE SENEGALESE RIFLEMAN WHO DIED FOR FRANCE BY LÉOPOLD SÉDAR SENGhor, TO THE NEGRO-AMERICAN SOLDIERS BY LÉOPOLD SÉDAR SENGhor, SHORT SPEECH TO MY FRIENDS BY AMIRI BARAKA, I LOOK AT THE WORLD BY LANGSTON HUGHES, “THE UNITED STATES COMPANY” BY PABLO NERUDA

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LAWRENCE FERLINGHETTI (1919 – 2021)
EDITOR’S NOTE

BY AYO AYOOLA-AMALE
In a time in which we find the most vulnerable of humanity lessened further and further, it is poetry’s genius to communicate awareness of experience that reinforces and strengthens its role in the larger society.

Socialism is socialism. There is nothing like African Socialism or any other form of socialism for that matter. Socialism is applied in real-world, in the economic, social and political lives of people and in the development of the society. Even though circumstances and condition may differ but the basic productive and distributive principles remain the same in any given society.

In this issue, Poetry for a Just Future is making sense of life by featuring contemporary poetry and also poets who have gone before us, whose lives and writing exemplifies the values of socialism and service to humanity.

There’s self-reflection in this issue. There is deep, naked truth. There is unspeakable truths that we are often privy to. There is poetry. Poetry is beauty, truth and power. Poetry is so much more! Poets take the responsibility of conveying the emotions of society through their verses.

Great poets express their care not for one specific group of people but for everyone. They bring people together and appeal to the humanity inherent in each and every one of them. They stand for truth and justice. From Africa to Europe, from Asia to the Americas, indeed all over the world, we find poets honour their individual truths and identities, and also rise above prejudices and bias in order to communicate universal thoughts about social justice, connect beautiful language to social change and human rights in a world of poorness, injustice and inequality.

In the streets are our palettes: a tribute to Vladimir Mayakovsky, Widgery’s tribute is more than a commendable and engaging summary to a significant figure in radical artistic history. Mayakovsky was a poet of profound passion and intelligence who saw in revolution and rebellion not just a political transformation but a redemption of human creativity.
Poetry is a popular art form that can challenge the inhumane forces that threaten humanity from mankind early times, through the songs on sugar plantation to the civil rights movements, to the contemporary spoken word poetry movement, to Black Lives Matter and forever! Through poetry we see the world intimately. An arts-based approach to social inquiry can challenge dominant ideologies of oppressed people and provide an alternative discourse. Poetry is so poignant and have a literary; religious, social, cultural dimension. Poetry has the power to initiate social change, or in raising awareness about different issues people would otherwise remain oblivious to. As poetry is focused on communicating experience in a pretty noticeable fashion, there is an abundant potential for it to be used as a means to build empathy, and compassion and to bridge gaps of understanding between people from different backgrounds. In this manner poetry can be a means to convey messages of social justice, although, the sole purpose of poetry is not to serve as social observer.

We all know that poetry is strong enough to make powerful despotic leaders feel in secured. Poetry is powerful enough to gather the people in rallies and draw great attention for progressive social change and social justice. Speaking truth to power is a crucial role of the poet in the face of fascism, despots, and media rhetoric designed to make obscure, manipulate, or destroy. Poetry expose forbidden truths, raise awareness, and build movements. As Langston Hughes writes, “That all these walls oppression builds / will have to go!” yet Denise Levertov suggest that we seek ways to actively “make peace,” poetry is needed and sought after in moments of political crisis. We are witnessing the explosion of spoken word performance poetry particularly among the millennial poets’ as an art form assigned social change attributes in public and civic sphere, and also in political engagement. They leveraged the unique properties of art to speak truths, individually and collectively, to heal, and also to civically and politically engage centered on social change. They use spoken word to draw upon their lived experiences and their truths. They use performance poetry as a political and moral source of knowledge that guide and validate their social change messages. Poets and their art often heal themselves and others by writing and acting out their truths in the form of spoken word therapy narratives, thereby placing their community in a position to do sustainable social justice work. Poets leveraged spoken word to advocate for social justice causes, build political networks, and mobilize others into political action and movements.

In this issue we feature Nâzım Hikmet’s poems, the great poet who brought a new concept into Turkish Poetry and was imprisoned many times because of his poetry however, he held on to his belief in a bright future and his devotion to the people of his country.

Poets have faced persecution and threats from time immemorial. In 2011, Mohammed Al-Ajami, was accused of inciting the overthrow of the ruling regime based on two of Mohammed Al-Ajami’s poems. He was sentenced to life imprisonment during a secret trial. After almost 5 years in prison, al-Ajami was granted a royal pardon and was released from prison. Poet Galal El-Behairy, of Egypt and Dareen Tatour, Israel/Palestine was arrested on terrorism charges after posting her poetry on Facebook and YouTube urging resistance to mention just a few.
Matthew Arnold has made a famous, as-of-yet-unfulfilled prediction regarding the future of poetry. “The future of poetry is immense, because in poetry, where it is worthy of its high destinies, our race, as time goes on, will find an ever surer and surer stay ... Our religion has materialised itself in the fact, in the supposed fact; it has attached its emotion to the fact, and now the fact is failing it. But for poetry the idea is everything; the rest is a world of illusion, of divine illusion. Poetry attaches its emotion to the idea; the idea is the fact.” The fact that there are mighty issues that needs to be addressed

All hail the wondrous power of the mind. All hail the supremacy of poetry and the power of deep truth epitomized in this awesome issue!
NAZIM HIKMET, A UNIVERSAL TURKISH POET
BY ATAOL BEHRAMOĞLU

A Revolution in Turkish poetry

Nazim Hikmet is the pioneer of the most significant revolution in Turkish poetry.

This revolution was a ground-breaking act, known technically as ‘free verse’.

The origin of this revolution can be identified in the development of Turkish poetry in the late 19th century, the French ‘free verse’ movement and Russian modernism; all of which were synthesized into the foundation of Turkish language by Nazim Hikmet.

This revolution led to the enrichment of the language of poetry with words never used before; which in turn introduced a brand new harmony and sound elements. Nazim Hikmet’s poetry can also be considered innovative with regard to its contents; he was concerned with subjects, themes and, so to speak, all aspects of human life not previously considered.

Formation of a world view

At the beginning of his grand life story, the foundations of Nazim Hikmet’s world view as a young poet were shaped by the concepts of civilization, contemporariness and liberty, which began with the administrative reforms of 1839-1876 in Ottoman history, and reached a peak with the poet Tevfik Fikret. The feelings of patriotism and humanism Nazim Hikmet experienced within his family circle during his early childhood years also shaped his world view.

To the above mentioned may also be added the sensitivity transmitted through the rooted tradition of Turkish lyrical poetry. Overall, these qualities would have been sufficient to make him a grand poet, but perhaps would not have taken him to a universal level. He possessed a number of characteristics which, when merged with the above traits, resulted in a world class poet being bestowed upon 20th century Turkish poetry.
Socialism and artistic freedom

One of these characteristics was, at a very early stage, his ability to learn and absorb scientific and socialist world concepts. Another equally important characteristic was Nazim Hikmet’s high level exposure to the creative atmosphere of 1920s Russian modernism; to every branch of the arts, from poetry to cinema, art, music and theatre.

This hitherto before unparalleled, great synthesis was the reason for his protests against dogmas everywhere and in every era; from the ‘We are tearing down the idols!’ campaign in his own country, to being the initiator for the defence of individualism and freedom of artistic creativity against every kind of idolatry in post 1950s Russia.

Several arrests and imprisonments

In the early years of his creative life, his political views gave rise to negative reactions from political administrations, although he nevertheless became very popular among artistic circles.

He was the poet who won the interest and admiration of the era’s writers and poets from every generation.

However, in this period he was arrested and imprisoned on a number of occasions during the reactionary political atmosphere in Turkey which was created by the tense conditions gripping the world in the 1930s, Nazim Hikmet started to be seen as a threat by administrative circles.

After all at 1938 he was arrested and sentenced to penal servitude; in those difficult years it was even forbidden to mention his name.

He was freed by the Amnesty Law in 1950 but became subject to another conspiracy which threatened his life, and consequently had to leave the country.

A universal poet of Turkey

There were many disgraceful campaigns against him during his exile abroad. However, after the re-publishing of his poems in Turkey in the 1960s, he met with the readers of his country again, as a greatest of poet of Turkey and was perceived as a national hero.

The first translations of his poetry into foreign languages probably started during the years he was in prison. These first translations immediately established Nazim Hikmet’s universal significance worldwide; during the 1950s and in later years, all of his work, especially his poems and plays, were translated into many languages, reaching countless readers. Today, as a universal figure of great worth Nazim Hikmet remains without doubt an object of attention and admiration.
Nâzım Hikmet, the poet who brought a new concept into Turkish Poetry, was born in Selonika. He was educated at “Mekteb-i Sultani”, “The Nişantaşı Numune Mektebi” and then “The Heybeliada Naval Academy”. But he left The Naval Academy due to poor health in 1920. He published his first poems in this period. At the beginning of 1921, he went to Anatolia to take part in the war of independence. His interest in the October Revolution in Russia took him to the USSR. Nâzım Hikmet returned to Turkey as a committed marxist. The poetry he now wrote reflected a new understanding and earned him great acclaim. Nâzım Hikmet was imprisoned many times because of his poetry. The last charges against him resulted in a 28 year prison sentence in 1938 for inciting mutiny in the navy. A campaign in support of Nâzım Hikmet’s innocence started in 1949 in protest of his imprisonment and created significant reverberations abroad. With the passing of a general amnesty in 1950, Nâzım Hikmet was released from prison. Following his acquittal, Hikmet left the country because political pressure. He was extradited from Turkish citizenship in 1951. He died in Moscow where he lived until 1963. Without departing from Turkish poetical tradition, Nâzım Hikmet was able to consistently renew his poetry. His most unchanging characteristics, however, were his belief in a bright future and his devotion to the people of his own country.
Léopold Sédar Senghor published Anthologies of poetry to manifest the existence of Négritude as an aesthetics and as a literary movement. In the “Introduction” to his Poètes d’expression française 1900–1945, Damas proclaimed that “the time of blocking out and inhibition” had now given place to “another age: that in which the colonized man becomes aware of his rights and of his duties as a writer, as a novelist or a story-teller, an essayist or a poet.” And he stated the literary and political significance of his Anthology in non ambiguous terms: “Poverty, illiteracy, exploitation of man by man, social and political racism suffered by the black or the yellow, forced labor, inequalities, lies, resignation, swindles, prejudices, complacencies, cowardice, failures, crimes committed in the name of liberty, of equality, of fraternity, that is the theme of this indigenous poetry in French” (Damas 1947, 10). It is important to notice that he meant his anthology to be a manifesto, not so much for Négritude, than for the Colonized in general, as he insisted that the sufferings of colonialism were the burden of “the black and the yellow” and as he featured in the selection poets from Indochina and Madagascar. Or rather Damas understood the concept of Négritude (in fact the word does not appear in the “Introduction” to the anthology) to encompass people of color in general as they were under the domination of European colonialism. This is a broader meaning of Négritude that the “fathers” of the movement always kept in mind. Damas’ view about the substance of the poetry he was presenting, about what the poets gathered in his book had in common besides living the same colonial situation, is generally the same as Etienne Léro’s, whose “Misère d’une poésie” (“Poverty of a Poetry”) he quotes abundantly.[2] In a vitalistic language that characterizes Négritude Léon Damas opposes, using Léro’s language, the vitality of this “new poetry” to what he denounced as “white literary decadence” (to be contrasted with the revolutionary nature of surrealist philosophy and literature). He quoted in particular Léro’s denunciation of writers from the Caribbean “mulatto society, intellectually... corrupt and literally nourished with white decadence” to the point that
some of them would make it a matter of pride that a white person could read their whole book without being able to tell “what their actual complexion was” (Damas 1947, 13). The “Introduction” was indeed a manifesto for Négritude as a vital poetic force that Damas (and Léro) identified as “the wind rising from Black America” which in turn expresses “the African love for life, the African joy in love, the African dream of death” (Damas 1947, 13).

Senghor’s Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française, (An Anthology of the New Negro and Malagasy Poetry in French), published in 1948, would eventually overshadow Damas’ anthology and his “Introduction” to it as a manifesto for the Négritude movement. Senghor’s own “Introduction” is just five short paragraphs as it devoted only to the technicalities of selecting the poets gathered in the book (interestingly, unlike Damas, his choice is restricted to the “Blacks”, the Malagasies being according to him “mélaniens” (Senghor 1948, 2)). But what contributed greatly to the fame of the Anthology and propelled Négritude into the broad intellectual conversation was the “Preface” written for it by French philosopher and public intellectual Jean-Paul Sartre (1906–1980). The title of the “preface”, Black Orpheus, referring to the Greek myth about the evocative force of poetry but also about its eventual impotence in front of fate and death, fully expresses what can be called the kiss of death the existentialist philosopher gave to the movement.
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One of the delights of growing up politically lies in discovering one’s own traditions. In art they were nearly obliterated by Stalinism, declared redundant by the long post-war boom and generally buried in a “modernism” which was often apolitical and trite. It was exhilarating to unearth in Soviet Russia the most genuinely modern of modern art movements and Mayakovsky, the original “hooligan communist”.

Vladimir Mayakovsky, the poetic loudspeaker of the Russian Revolution, came to socialist ideas with the enthusiasm of youth. He began to read Engels and illegal pamphlets under his desk-lid when he was 12. When later the same year his school was closed by Military Edict because of the 1905 uprising, he became chief school leaflet distributor. When he made his first contact with the illegal Bolshevik Party, he immediately presented them with his forester father’s shotgun. Aged 15, he was arrested in Moscow for helping to organise the escape of political prisoners from jail and was himself held in Novimsky Prison where he began to write poems. For the following 20 years he served the Revolution as a poet-agitator with the same audacity and passion. And when he shot himself in Moscow in 1930, he died a Bolshevik, brandishing his poems:

> When I appear at the CCC
of coming bright decades
above the band of poetic grafters and crooks
I’ll lift up high,
like a Bolshevik party-card
All the hundred volumes of my ComParty books!

Mayakovsky’s communism was, like him, broad shouldered and larger than life, impatient, rude and necessary:

Proletarians come to communism from the depths beneath the depths of mines
sickles
and factories.

I plunge into Communism from the heights of poetry above, because for me without it there is no love!

But his passion was neither sentimental nor cosy, like the clichés of modern Soviet art; those cheery collective farmers, the harmonious choristers and the agile folk dancers. In his complex love poems like A Cloud in Trousers and About This,
passions from his larger love of the Revolution as the expression of human solidarity and vitality. Through his poems, we can gain a glimpse of boisterous spirit and feverish energy of the real Russian Communism so deeply buried under the false images of Stalinism. As his last poem insisted: he explores the nature of revolutionary love, trying to untangle his private

I abhor
   every kind of deathliness
I adore
   every kind of life.

Mayakovsky also abhored literary pretentiousness and adored being rude and down to earth:

I know —
a nail in my boot that’s hurting
is more nightmarish than all the fantasies of Goethe.

“I’ve become a terribly proletarian poet,” he wrote to Lily Brik, the woman he loved, in a letter covered with cartoons of himself as a bear, “I’ve got no money and write no poems”.

Alexander Rodchenko, Photomontage for Vladimir Mayakovksy’s Conversations with a Tax Collector About Poetry (1926)

The Russia Mayakovsky grew up in was still paralyzed by its own political and economic backwardness, its industrial potential locked up in its under-development, its possibilities imprisoned by the absolute power of the Tzar and the vast empty plains of the East with their huddled villages of thatched wooden houses. But by 1900, Russia’s very backwardness had acted to suck in new manufacturing techniques from the advanced capitalist nations of the West. Cheap mass production began in a few large factories and Moscow and Petersburg became familiar with telephones, bicycles, irons and wirelesses, the new products of the machine age. To Mayakovsky, perhaps over-optimistically, the new forces of steam and electricity represented a promise of a new future and required a new form of art. Previously the Russian Left had admired the realist novelists of the 19th century; Lenin’s favourites and inspiration were Pushkin and Tolstoy. Systematic Marxist writers on art like Plekhanov and Lukacs were aesthetic conservatives. But Mayakovsky wanted to alter the form of his painting and writing to suit an age of advertising and electricity and the altered perceptions of citizens of the Twentieth Century.

The Russian tradition of the realist novel sat in his way, “like enormous bronze backsides”. So in the first Manifesto of the Futurist Group, characteristically entitled A Slap at the Public Taste and issued in 1912, it was denounced: ‘Let us throw Pushkin, Tolstoy, Dostoievske from the steamship of modernity’. In the name of Futurism, he and fellow poets and sculptors travelled Russia, reading poems, denouncing the Tzar and unfurling their manifesto. In many towns

they were banned on sight and they remained unpublished. “Publishers do not touch us. Their capitalistic noses sensed the dynamiters in us”.

And in Italy too, which had also experienced violent and abrupt industrialisation in a backward mainly peasant country, Futurism emerged with its explosive language and fierce hostility to old forms. But while Mayakovsky’s hatred for poetic marzipan and literary dust was linked to a movement to socialise art, the Italian Futurist poet Marinetti wrote with jagged, bombastic phrases and his destructive spirit led him to press towards war as a means of artistic gratification. Italian Futurism became openly fascist. As the German critic Walter Benjamin put it “Its own self-alienation has reached such a degree that it can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order”. Marinetti and Mayakovsky met only once and hated each other’s guts.

But in Russia, the Futurists were the first organised grouping of artists to clearly devote themselves to the October Revolution and to express the ambition of those years. Mayakovsky became involved in a series of magazines, Art of the Commune, Lef which he edited and its successor New Lef, which championed the most avant-garde of the Russian art movements, Constructivism, which aimed at an artistic counterpart of the social revolution. The Constructivists differed sharply from the traditional defenders of realism who were grouped round the magazine Krasnaya Nov edited by a supporter of the Left Opposition, Voronsky, and the Proletkult magazine On Guard which had grown out of pre-revolutionary working class cultural institutions and stressed a fairly crude and agitational art (these tendencies had permanent bombastic quarrels and repeatedly demanded the censorship of their rivals). The Constructivists wanted an end to old elitist forms of art; the novel in its morocco binding and the oil painting with its bulbous gilt frame. They demanded instead a motivated art in new forms which related to industrial techniques in a workers’ state. As John Berger says

Their works were like hinged doors, connecting activity with activity. Art with engineering; music with painting; poetry with design; fine art with propaganda; photographs with typography; diagrams with action; the studio with the street.
They wanted to be master-executors of social command, not priest-creators awaiting inspiration. At its most extreme, it was an attempt to bulldoze down the wall between art and life, subordinating aesthetics to the actual needs of the workers’ state. As the sculptor Gabo announced in his Realist Manifesto of 1920,

In the squares and on the streets we are placing our work convinced that art must not remain a sanctuary for the idle, a consolation for the weary, and a justification for the lazy. Art should attend us everywhere that life flows and acts at the bench, at the table, at work, at rest, at play; on working days and holidays; at home and on the road; – in order that the flame to live should not extinguish in mankind.

It represented the release of artistic energy from the cages which boxed it up under capitalism, the energy in Mayakovsky’s triumphant poem The 150,000,000:
We will smash the old world wildly
we will thunder
a new myth over the world.
We will trample the fence of time beneath our feet.
We will make a musical scale of the rainbow.

Roses and dreams
Debased by poets will unfold
in a new light
for the delight of our eyes
the eyes of big children.
We will invent new roses
roses of capitals with petals of squares

The movement tended towards an over-simple anti-art feeling similar to Dadaism which had exploded in the West as a response to the First World War. And it was also magnificently unrealistic. As the Constructivist architect Lavinsky wrote:

*We are condemned to aestheticism until a bridge towards production can be found. But how can this bridge be built in a country where production itself is scarcely alive?*

But amazingly, the Constructivists managed to alter the artistic means of production in fundamental ways which the capitalist "avant-garde" has yet to come to terms with. In Russia of the Revolution amazing things were possible. Mayakovsky meant it when he pronounced, "The streets are our brushes, the squares our palettes". Tallin was quite serious when he demanded the movement "into real space and real materials".

*Sergei Eisenstein's Battleship Potemkin (1925)*

Tzarist cinema, for example, had been dominated by foreign production companies who took themselves and most of their equipment home on hearing of the revolution. Censorship had been comprehensive, even scenes of hard work and mention of the French Revolution were banned. But after the Revolution what cinema industry that remained was nationalized and new equipment procured with which to make feature and news films. The way the films were made was revolutionized. The camera was emancipated from being merely a version of the human eye and film makers explored the possibilities of editing and re-organizing the rhythms and images on the celluloid. Vertov produced revolutionary news reels; "a swift review of VISUAL events deciphered by the film camera, pieces of REAL energy brought together at intervals to form an accumulatory whole by means of highly skilled montage". Eisenstein began his series of epic feature films and Mayakovsky wrote amazing movie scripts featuring, as usual, himself as the hero. He
worked alternatively on plans to reorganise the nationalized film industry (Sovkino) and on denouncing it for underestimating the masses.

Russian architecture had previously been oblivious to working class housing and produced only rhetorical and over-decorated impersonations of Western styles. Constructivist architects, organized around the magazine Sovremennaya Arkitektura or SA, stripped away the larded decoration and disguises and used glass, aluminium, steel and asbestos frankly and elegantly. They invented the ideas of integrated design, as used on the new Pravda offices, flexible homes with interchangeable units to alter homes as families grew and shrunk and “new towns” like the one planned at Magnitogorsk. They stressed communal designs which aimed at maximum pooling and collectivization of domestic duties and the socialization of housework. Ginsburg stressed

The Constructivists approach the problem with maximum considerations for those shifts and changes in our way of life that are preparing the way for a completely new type of housing... that is to say for us the goal is not the execution of a commission as such, but collaboration with the proletariat in its task of building a new life, a new way of living.

The Soviet Pavilion in Paris in 1925, on whose design committee Mayakovsky had sat, staggered the bourgeois world by the use of Constructivist principles. In the theatre, Constructivists produced mobile stage settings, hung the auditorium with placards and bombarded the audience with leaflets during the interval. Mayerhold produced Mayakovsky’s play Mystere Bouffe, a Pilgrim’s Progress-like account of the Revolution for the international delegates to the Third International. The storming of the Winter Palace was re-enacted and the streets, squares and monuments were dyed and re-decorated to celebrate revolutionary anniversaries. Printing presses were hugely expanded and poetry jostled with posters and edicts to be printed in cheap editions with experimental typography and photo-montaged covers. Art academies were turned into polytechnics and student numbers increased. "We have taken by storm the Bastille of the Academy," the students claimed. But, as if to strike a note of realistic warning Tatlin announced in 1925, ‘We must look neither to what is old nor what is new but only to what is needed’. He was to follow his desire for the fusion of art and industry into the design of "maximum heat, minimum fuel" stoves, collapsible furniture and utensils, reflecting the needs of a virtually nomadic proletariat.

The Soviet Pavilion in Paris (1925)

Of course Mayakovsky was in his element, “the work of the revolutionary poet does not stop at the book; meetings, speeches, frontline limericks, one-day agit-prop playlets, the living radio-voice and the slogan flashing by on trams”. He travelled and declaimed on the agit-prop trains and boats which linked Moscow and Petrograd with the war fronts. He wrote slangy poems abusing the Whites and rhymed advice against drinking unboiled water and kissing ikons. He drew and wrote simple and direct story-poems (which echoed the old Russian ‘lubok’ picture and text street literature) to be displayed in Post Office windows. These ROSTA posters were printed daily in 34 towns by poster collectives and became immensely popular. He wrote advertisements for state-produced matches and sweets, held auctions of his manuscripts to raise money for the Volga famine, planned a book to answer the 20,000 questions he had been asked when reading, wrote 19 children’s books, conducted incendiary debates with rivals and fell in love several times.

Highly popular among workers and the young, he gained enemies elsewhere. Lenin disliked Futurism and did his best to halt publication of The 150,000,000. Since the Commissar for Culture Lunacharsky protected the Futurists (he had called them "the
vتخوزوو drummers of our Red Culture”), Lenin sent a memo direct to the Head of the State Publishing House “Isn’t it possible to find some dependable anti-futurists?”

But Lenin seemed to warm to Mayakovsky, who he had called on first meeting “a hooligan communist”. In a 1922 speech to the Communist Faction of the Metal Workers Union, he mentioned a Mayakovsky poem “In Re. Conferences” which satirized Bolshevik obsession with meetings. Lenin said, “I don’t know about the poetry, but as for the politics, I can vouch for it that he is absolutely right”. In some of Lenin’s more lyrical phrases, “Socialism equals Soviets plus electrification” and “Revolution is the festival of the oppressed” one can almost sense Mayakovsky’s presence.

But as the heady days of war communism were followed by the compromises of the New Economic Policy, Mayakovsky became bitter against “the academics, singly and in bunches beginning to knock at the door” and suspicious of “the old familiar face of the aesthete peering out from under the mask of the engineer”. His plays, The Bedbug and The Bathhouse satirized the arse-licking and pomposity of the NEP men and Red bureaucrats. “From the philistinism of living comes the Philistinism of politics” he wrote. He hated the dishonest obituaries, writing after the death of a friend “Stop once and for all these reverential centenary jubilees, the worship by posthumous publication. Let’s have articles for the living! Bread for the living! Paper for the living!” In his extended political poem Lenin (soon to be published in a new translation and design by Pluto Press), he warns that if Lenin is turned into a God figure:-

I’d have found enough curse words for blasting ears
and before they could smother my cry and drown me –
I’d have hurled to heaven blasphemies,
and battered the Kremlin with bombs -
‘Down with!’

And in 1923, a poetic leading article in LEF speaks concretely against what was to be called “the cult of the personality”:

we insist
Don’t stereotype Lenin
Don’t print his portrait on placards, stickybacks,
plates, mugs and cigarette cases.
Don’t bronze-over Lenin
Don’t take from him the living gait and countenance

And in a 1929 poem Mayakovsky characteristically imagines himself delivering a poetic report to the jovial ghost of Lenin:

Many
without you
    got right out of hand
So many
different
  rascals and blackguards
Prowl
  round and about
  our Soviet land
There's no end
  to their numbers
  and aliases
A whole assembly belt
  of types
  are unloaded
Kulaks
  bureaucrats
  and red tapists
Sectarians
  drunkards
  and toadies –
Chest sticking out
  they arrogantly strut;
pocketfuls of pens
  breastfuls of Orders

The Bathhouse was attacked and boycotted. New Lef came under fiercer criticism, most sadly from the poets of RAPP, the newly formed Writers Union which Mayakovsky eventually agreed to join. His photograph was cut out of the printed copies of The Press and Revolution for April 1930. He was prevented from visiting his new love Tatiana in Paris and could not persuade her to come to Moscow. He told an audience at a Mayakovsky Exhibition "I demand help not the glorification of non-existent virtues". He wrote:

I'm fed
  to the teeth
  with agit-prop, too
I'd like
  to scribble love-ballads
  for you
they're profitable
  charming and haleyon
But I
  mastered myself
It was as if he realized what the future held, that the Constructivists’ enthusiastic application to “social command” and the principle of utility would be used by Stalin and Zhdadov to trim all which was revolutionary and truly modern down to tidy slabs of a “socialist realism” which was in fact a 19th century naturalism. For by 1930 the Constructivist impetus was faltering, a safer art which was prepared to lend dignity to socialism in one country was better received by the artistic authorities. While constructivists’ designs were halted on the drawing board, their new towns remained unbuilt and their journals were closed down, an ornate and pompous “Palace of the Soviets” was constructed to house a “Soviet” which no longer met. Dignitaries were now taken to the Bolshoi Ballet and the Grand Opera instead of Mayerhold’s theatre and the street exhibitions. Oil paints, smocks, easels and Professors of Fine Art found their way back to the studios. Stalin ruled. On 14th April 1930, Mayakovsky shot himself with a revolver. In his suicide poem he said simply enough:

... the love-boat of life has crashed upon philistine reefs ...

* The article below was originally published in 1972 as “Mayakovsky and Revolutionary Art” in the journal International Socialism. Years later it appeared in a collection of essays published as Preserving Disorder. In the piece, Widgery pays homage to the influential Russian revolutionary poet Vladimir Mayakovsky. The article is also available at the Marxists’ Internet Archive.
DAVE WIDGERY

BiO

Dave Widgery (1947-1992) was a British Marxist, journalist, activist and physician. Widgery co-edited with Michael Rosen The Chatto Book of Dissent (1991) and authored several books including Beating Time, a history of Rock Against Racism.
Éluard reste aujourd'hui, avec Apollinaire et Prévert, l’un des poètes les plus aimés des francophones. Il y a un miracle Éluard. Mais le mystère Éluard est un mystère fait de clarté. Il est dans ses poèmes un peu comme sur ses photos ou sur les portraits que Picasso a dessinés de lui : le front haut, le regard bleu clair fixé sur l’horizon. « De l’horizon d’un homme à l’horizon de tous », comme il l’écrivit, formule qui définit son parcours humain, aussi bien poétique que politique.

Né en 1895 à Saint-Denis, près de Paris, après une enfance heureuse, il connut l’épreuve de la maladie. Jeune homme, la tuberculose le contraint à faire un long séjour dans un sanatorium suisse. C’est là qu’il rencontre une jeune Russe, Helena, son premier grand amour, qu’il surnommera Gala. Brillante et cultivée, elle va le pousser à écrire et à devenir poète. Ils resteront ensemble jusqu’en 1928 ; puis Gala vivra avec Dali.


Mais, malgré ses liens avec Breton, il apparaît un peu à part dans le mouvement surréaliste. Il n’y a guère chez lui de goût pour la violence verbale, la provocation gratuite, la volonté d’épater ou d’éffaroucher le bourgeois.

Au collier du surréalisme, avec des recueils comme Capitale de la douleur ou L’amour la poésie, il a ajouté quelques-unes de ses plus belles perles, certaines de ses images les plus marquantes, comme « la Terre est bleue comme une orange », qui a fait couler beaucoup d’encre.

Mais alors que pour Breton plus une image est inattendue, plus elle est forte, il y a, dès cette époque chez Éluard la recherche de ce qu’il nommera « l’évidence poétique ». Derrière l’arbitraire apparent des associations d’idées
transparaît un souci de vérité. Oui, en effet, la Terre est bleue comme une orange. Pas seulement pour la vision qu'on put en avoir les cosmonautes, mais aussi pour la promesse de fécondité et de bonheur que recèle la vie terrestre.

Dès les premiers livres il fait ainsi entendre une musique singulière et unique dans la poésie amoureuse, une musique qui tend vers la simplicité.

« Tu te lèves l’eau se déplie
Tu te couches l’eau s’épanouit »,
dans Facile, en 1935.

Le même ton que l’on retrouvera dans « Le baiser », du recueil Lingères légères, en 1945 :

« Toute tiède encore du linge annullé
Tu fermes les yeux et tu bouges
Comme bouge un chant qui naît
Vagement mais de partout »

Tout sa vie, Éluard a cherché à pouvoir « tout dire ». Il n’est pas le poète un peu éthéré et impavide que l’on imagine parfois et que ses portraits donneraient à imaginer. C’était un homme de chair et de sang. Un homme de passion capable de colère et d’emportement. Un être sensuel qui aimait la vie, l’amour, les femmes. Sa poésie amoureuse le montre à l’envi. Mais il porte en même temps en lui une recherche de sagesse, une exigence morale. Il tend toujours vers l’essentiel et tente de dire l’unité du vrai, du bien et du beau, parler pour le futur possible de l’humanité.

Il y a chez lui une noblesse, mais à la différence de certains grands poètes que cette volonté d’élévation conduit à se retirer du genre humain, chez lui il s’agit de la grandeur des hommes simples, la noblesse du peuple. Et tout en ne délaissant jamais sa recherche poétique, il s’est toujours mêlé aux combats de son temps. Dès les années vingt il s’oppose à la guerre du Rif au Maroc. Avec Breton, Aragon, Pierre Unik, il rejoint le parti communiste en 1927. (Il en sera exclu quelques années plus tard). Comme pour beaucoup de poètes de sa génération, la Guerre d’Espagne et la montée du fascisme ont été le moment décisif.

Dans « Novembre 1936 », il écrit :

« Regardez travailler les bâtisseurs de ruines
Ils sont riches patients ordonnés noirs et bêtes
Mais ils font de leur mieux pour être seuls sur terre
Ils sont au bord de l’homme et le combinent d’ordures
Ils plient au ras du sol des palais sans cervelle. »

Et dans son poème « La victoire de Guernica », dans lequel il réagit au bombardement du village basque, il redonne sa place à l’espoir :
« Hommes réels pour qui le désespoir
Alimente le feu dévorant de l’espoir
Ouvrons ensemble le dernier bourgeon de l’avenir »

Pendant la deuxième guerre mondiale, il entre dans la Résistance. En 1942, il demande à ré-adhérer au Parti communiste. Le 14 juillet 1943, il publie, aux éditions de Minuit clandestines, L’Honneur des poètes, qui rassemble, sous pseudonymes, les plus grands voix de la poésie de la Résistance, Aragon, Pierre Emmanuel, Francis Ponge, Guillevic...

(Le poète surréaliste orthodoxe Benjamin Péret, en exil au Mexique, qui reproche à ses anciens camarades leur engagement, réagira par un pamphlet intitulé Le Déshonneur des poètes). Mais quoi qu’il ait pu en dire, les poètes de la Résistance ont contribué à maintenir allumée la petite veilleuse de l’espérance, bien que les moyens dont ils disposaient pour diffuser leurs vers aient été très confidentiels.

Mais dans le cas d’Éluard, son poème sans doute le plus célèbre, « Liberté », fut quand même diffusé par voie de tracts au-dessus de la France occupée, en 1942 par les avions de la Royal Air Force. Ses vingt-et-une strophes, écrites au départ pour un poème d’amour qui eut dû s’achever sur le nom de la femme aimée, et dont il changea au dernier moment le titre, chante ce à quoi pour lui s’identifiait cet amour : l’aspiration à la liberté.

Après guerre, il fut été mis en musique par Poulenc. Et il a récemment été repris en chanson par un groupe connu en France.

Après la guerre, l’engagement d’Éluard le conduira à la rencontre des combattants grecs, pendant la guerre civile. Puis à jouer un rôle actif dans le mouvement de la paix en participant notamment aux Congrès mondiaux pour la paix.

Dans cette période où sa gloire poétique, auréolé par le prestige de la Résistance, l’amitié de Picasso et d’Aragon, est à son apogée, sa vie personnelle est marquée par un drame dont il aura du mal à se remettre : la mort brutale et inattendue de sa seconde femme, Nusch.

« Vingt huit novembre mil neuf cent quarante-six
Nous ne vieillirons pas ensemble.
Voici le jour
En trop : le temps déborde.
Mon amour si léger prend le poids d’un supplice. »

L’amitié des camarades, les combats communs, la rencontre avec Dominique et un nouvel amour l’aideront à reprendre le dessus. La vie des poètes est souvent à l’image de leur œuvre. Or, il y a dans la vie d’Éluard comme dans sa poésie une expérience proprement orphique de la mort, de l’enfer traversé et de la confiance affirmée dans la capacité de l’esprit, de l’amour et de la beauté à revenir malgré tout.

Déjà dans une conférence qu’il avait donnée en 1936, à Londres, il déclarait : « La poésie véritable est incluse dans tout ce qui affranchit l’homme de ce bien épouvantable qui a le visage de la mort. »

Malade du cœur (il souffrait comme Nazim Hikmet d’angine de poitrine) il meurt d’une crise cardiaque le 18 novembre 1952.

Il n’aura pas connu les « révélations des crimes de Staline, en 1953, selon la formule consacrée du rapport Khrouchtchev, ni le trouble
qui en résultera chez nombre de communistes français.

Reste une des œuvres les plus lumineuses et les plus solides de la poésie française. Poète de la liberté, Éluard est aussi et peut-être avant tout le poète de l’amour. Rompant avec un certain discours amoureux qui a si longtemps chanté le « malheur d’aimer », il anticipe sur l’idéal et la réalité d’un amour à la fois réaliste et magnifié, un amour partagé et nécessaire où homme et femme sont à égalité. « Je t’aime, dit-il dans un de ses derniers poèmes d’amour, pour toutes les femmes que je n’ai pas connues ».

Éluard, c’est la simplicité de la merveille, le chant de source des mots comme un pain partagé, la recherche de ce lieu futur que serait le bonheur commun.
Francis Combes was born in 1953, in South of France. He is an activist and a poet. He founded in 1993 the publishing company Le Temps des Cerises. As a poet, he has published twenty books, and his poems have been translated in English, German, Arabic, Spanish, Italian, Macedonian, Albanian, Hungarian, Turkish, Chinese... Among his books: Cause commune (Common cause); La Fabrique du bonheur, L'Aubépine, Poèmes du nouveau monde, La France aux quatre vents... He also wrote novels, essays and published with his wife, Patricia Latour, a book of conversation with the French Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre.

He also translated poems of poets: Henri Heine and Brecht, from German, Vladimir Maiakovski from Russian, Pierre Vidal from Occitan and Attila Jozsef, from Hungarian.

For fifteen years, he was in charge of a public campaign of poetry posters in the subway of Paris. He has also been for seven years the director of the International poetry festival of Val-de-Marne.

Presently, Francis works with the Merle moqueur, the French section of WPM, and is setting up a new press, with young poets, Manifeste!
BESIEGED

By Ataol Behramoğlu

Under siege I am obliged to make
Decisions that will shape my doom
Not in secluded gardens
Do I live love, but in flimsy rooms

As soon as I find the loveliest line
The sound of a car horn disturbs my reveries
In my mind thoughts about my life
On my pants a spot of grease

A smirking, importunate ad-spot
Tacked onto an emotional movie
Love is losing its meaning
And vengefulness growing slippery

Side by side with a child’s corpse
A laughing child lives within
How to feel unadulterated joy
And how to sorrow...both we have forgotten

Once there was a thing called sky
Endless, vast, and blue
Now, ratty clouds like sickly hounds
Are skulking aimlessly around

And the sea enchained by breakwaters
Bit by bit becomes a stagnant pool
Letting flow its poison into nature
Is the swamp within us all

Under siege I am obliged to make
Decisions that will shape my doom
But nothing can dry up the love
That green in arid soil, I make bloom

Translated by Walter G. Andrews
Ataol behramoğlu's first collection of poems was published in 1965. Behramoğlu is graduate of the University of Ankara Department of Russian Language and Literature in 1966.

In 1970 he published his second book of verse “One Day Definetly”. Reprinted many times until today, this collection of poems was well received as a synthesis of the poetic tradition of N. Hikmet (1902-1963) with elements of symbolism and surrealism. In the Autumn of 1970 he left Turkey to travel abroad to broaden his studies of language and literature. He lived in London and Paris until the Autumn of 1972. In Paris he met with Pablo Neruda and Louis Aragon. Fragments of “One Day Definetly” was published in Les Lettres Françaises edited by Aragon. He participated in the founding of Theatre de Liberté based in Paris and wrote texts to “Legendes à Venir”, the first spectacle of the group. During this period his translations were published in Turkey: Pushkins Collected Novels and Short Stories (2 Vos.); The short stories of M. Gorky; plays of Chekov.
THE GREATEST QUESTION

by: Scott Bird

My generation faces, for the last time,
the loaded gun of corporatism
and we are staring down the barrel
cocked and loaded
safety red button
unlocked
and trigger-haired finger squeezing
off--BUT! not of birdshot,
no scattergun blast, no
ignition point .50 caliber,
no cork & string either--
Loaded with the first of ten million
Suns, capable of
wiping our terrible, beautiful memory clean.
The universe weeps
Yet we sing
Tanks roll in and we play
the world’s largest game of
Red Rover.
Send your CEOs over!
and they charge arm & leg. Send your
bankers over and your lawyers too!
we link arms of all colors and nations
against the private property few who
too, too long went wheeling & dealt
our labor away, gambled our fate on a check with
too, too many zeros to count.

Will the grand human experiment be allowed
to continue? Or will their
fate be ours lashed and tied
whole, hard, and fast
to the mast of a sinking ship
Called Kapital?

We’ve but one chance to get the answer right.
or else face a never-ending night-dark age
& candlestick dwindle.

Listen to the poets’ message floated
and windborn in brushstrokes
dancing the dance of the last
for the last of manufactured consent.
We who dissent the algorithm
do so in the steam of its white wake,
our poems lower the gunman’s eyes to shame--
gun still loaded, barrel aimed--
and we snap it in half
over our knee
rejoicing in splinters!
Scott Bird is a poet, painter and musician in San Francisco, California. He is a member of the Revolutionary Poets Brigade of San Francisco and one of the editors of their latest international poetry anthology Building Socialism. In 2019, he founded the Maybird Project, an ongoing work dedicated to wholistic expression through art, poetry and music. He is originally from Paradox, Colorado.
A TREE STANDS BY A CROSSROADS
By: John Curl

Here in the city, every street is a crossroads. But out where houses are few, the crossroads is a place of power, where the desperate go to pray, where on moonless nights spells are cast, lovers are stolen, people die suddenly for unknown causes.

An ancient tree stands by one corner, observing, watching.

Just yesterday that crossroads was a hub of endless migrants, millions on the move around the world, fleeing poverty, oppression, war, people whose families had lived sustainably for generations, but whose beloved homelands have been made barely livable by what we pathetically call civilization, all are now just folks looking for shelter, for a home.

It's not our fault and yet it is. We destabilized the world. The sign of the times is disaster. Forces unleashed that none can now control. The powerful and their minions stuff as much as they can grab into their bank balances and try to escape, thinking themselves safe behind thickest walls. But there's no place to hide in a broken mirror.

And now this sudden viral pandemic cataclysm has shut all borders, and the crossroads is even more perilous than before.

Uncounted millions far from home suddenly without work or income, stranded, trapped, packed into tiny rooms, tents, or on the street, easy prey for predators, human and viral. They now want desperately to return home, if they only knew how. Meanwhile their families, dependent on small remittances from the north, surrender to despair, no longer even dreaming of escape.

That ancient tree beside the crossroads watches them. Ragged women and girls, aged and ageless, boys, men, their shoes fall apart at the seams, even the infants look exhausted.

I watch over them.

Shuddering families pause beneath me, laying down their burdens for a brief while, then rise wearily, stagger to the crossroads' center, the core of power, the very point of convergence, where, no matter how exhausted, they always pause and gaze in each direction, prayers whispered through trembling lips, a tear rolls down a cheek, but most are beyond tears, time is short and death lurks everywhere, they look longingly toward the burnt-out paradise that once
was home, take a quick glance over
their shoulder, then sigh, and carry on.
And when they’re gone, others take
their place, and endless others after them.

I stand here as witness.

On every moonless night when it is
too dangerous to walk and even the
nightbirds and crickets are silent, an
aura rises and encircles the crossroads.
Only a few can see it, only a few know
it’s there. It is always gone by firstlight,
dissipated in the morning mist. Nothing
remains but a shadow, a circle of protection
for all travelers, all migrants, all refugees,
all strangers who dare to step trembling into
the point of convergence and pass through.
John Curl is the author of twelve books of poetry, as well as a novelist, historian, translator, and editor. His poetry books include Revolutionary Alchemy and Yoga Sutras of Fidel Castro; his translations of Inca, Maya, and Aztec poets are collected in Ancient American Poets.
The boy sniffs the back of the family’s driver, 
sniffs the back of the housekeeper. 
They all smell the same the boy proclaims 
he having spent an hour with his art therapist whose odor he 
also inhaled, 
his self-portrait hanging on the wall smelling of genius. 
The rich father in the back seat of his black sedan 
sniffs odor wafting from his driver, fever of the subterranean 
The driver eyes his boss through the rearview mirror, lowers 
his chin, sniffs his own shirt, his body 
his eyes glinting knowledge, odor of subway and his cramped 
basement home. 
My wife has no talent 
in cooking or cleaning, brags 
the father, triumphant, 
to the driver. 
But you love her, the driver offers to his boss who snickers, 
“Let’s call it love.” 
The father remains upstairs, as does his wife, daughter and son, 
never 
venturing downstairs nor having to, 
saved by the housekeeper who makes breakfast, lunch, dinner, 
and afternoon snacks of fresh fruit, 
who whoops like an American Indian to the boy’s delight, who 
manages the three-tiered hill-top home, filling glasses 
of plum extract for the art therapist and the rambunctious boy 
that she tutors, technology she absorbs 
from the internet to masquerade 
as a wizard of art. 
Nothing more beautiful 
than a garden party, chirps the lovely wife, for her son’s birthday, 
after 
drenching rain, 

the aborted camping trip, 
a tipi imported from America, guaranteed 
not to leak, at the center 
of the pristine lawn 
arced in the shape of crane’s wings, of lawn tables and chairs and 
champagne flutes. 
The hyperactive boy, his father and the driver wear headdresses of 
beads and feathers 
indulging in the boy’s fantasy of American Indians 
imported from the wild west of Hollywood. 
It’s your job, the father scolds his driver whose gaze is downcast. 
You’re being paid extra, 
silencing the driver who needs his pay. 
The art teacher in floaty dress, she the sibling of the young man tutoring 
English 
to the high-school daughter of the family. The daughter 
of the driver and the housekeeper, with birthday cake in hand, bounces 
across the rain-fresh lawn, all conniving to survive, 
rising they believe from their dank basement apartment with a view 
of a drunk pissing against the wall in torrential rain, satisfied 
to have shifted from work 
of folding highrises of pizza boxes 
to languishing on plush carpet 
and six-foot sofa, drinking four brands 
of whiskey in the house of the rich. 
Chaos of contempt filters through the noses of the father, wife, daughter 
and son, 
their needs met through hiring a family 
of empty pockets, 
the driver, housekeeper wife, tutor son and art therapist daughter, 
delirious 
with dreams of living upstairs even if only for a weekend or half an 
evening. 
Further, downstairs, beneath those first downstairs, lives 
a man crazed with debt to loan sharks, living free on food pilfered by his 
wife, the first 
housekeeper, pushed out by the family of chauffeur, second 
housekeeper, English tutor, art therapist, climbing 
from depths of their home.
housekeeper, pushed out by the family of chauffeur, second
housekeeper, English tutor, art therapist, climbing
from depths of their home
at the bottom of the hill
where the sniffers live, unaware
their first housekeeper was a thief, feeding
her husband from the overflowing fridge (the rich family does
not miss the stolen food because they don’t cook), her ample body
protecting
and nourishing the rich
and the poor, unaware that her girth
as a wife and house manager was par for the course
of parasites living upstairs.
Nellie Wong: Oakland Chinatown-born, Nellie Wong has published four books: Dreams in Harrison Railroad Park, The Death of Long Steam Lady, Stolen Moments and Breakfast Lunch Dinner. Her poems and essays appear in numerous journals and anthologies. Two pieces are installed at public sites in San Francisco. She’s co-featured in the documentary film, “Mitsuye and Nellie Asian American Poets,” and among her recognitions, a building at Oakland High School is named after her. A poem of hers was nominated for the Pushcart Prize. She’s traveled to China in the First American Women Writers Tour with Alice Walker, Tillie Olsen and Paule Marshall, among others. She’s taught poetry writing at Mills College and in Women Studies at the University of Minnesota. She’s a long-time activist with Radical Women and the Freedom Socialist Party and feminist, people-of-color, labor and anti-war movements. She’s keynoted at conferences of Women Against Racism, Third World Feminism, and National Women Studies Association, among others. Her poems have been translated into Chinese, Spanish, French and Italian. She was a co-founder of Unbound Feet, Asian American Feminist Writing Collective.
THE MAYAKOVSKY SPEAKING ARCANE
by Jack Hirschman

I’d say forty per cent
isn’t half bad, especially
since the media pigs
totally censored us
from TV the last week
before the vote, claiming
they’re representing
democracy, then barefacedly, “Well, we didn’t
want communism back in.”

You know a bit about
that, don’t you, Americans?
I mean, giving other Parties
airtime in your so democratic
democracy where the
free-speech bone’s connected
to the corporate fascist-bone
and the corporate fascist-bone
connected to the munitions
bomb-bone, and the bomb-bone
to the world-terror-bone,
and the most hated figure in
your sparsely narrow little
corner of your continent,
America (No, I’m not talking
about Stalin, but rather his
teacher, the philosopher
and finest inspiration of
peoples’ revolutions in
the 20th and 21st centuries),
who you condemned as
a thug, even put Hitler’s
mustache on him
in your New York Times,
in your despicably degrading
coming of age as a power—
(just as barely a third
of my works have been
translated into your language,
even after all this time),

still, we’re remembered
by more than a few,
wouldn’t you say? I’d say
forty per cent isn’t half bad.
It’ll make the overthrow
that much easier,
cut through death and bring
life to the fetid air,
sorrow nothing and repose
only in the death of greed;

it’ll live in the mouth of song
and trust the propaganda
of its collective ether.
He’s buried for all to see
but walks in the world like
a man, scoffing at the twiddling
of sentimental carcasses,
laughing the red laughter that
brings all colors to their knees,
is penniless in his global death
as he was in his living history.
He goes from youth to youth,
heart to heart, mind to mind,
like the osmosis of a literacy
the other side of the language
of bribery, decay and death.
Naked as a woman who sees
a child in every instant, he's
the hangman of the opportunist,
the leveler of the power

that doesn't spread beyond
what's known as personal
revenge, sexual fraud, the
narcosis of the self-deluding
zeitgeist, whose mind first put
his finger on the imperialist
evil of our time and then
clenched his hand and raised
his fist as a worker and die-hard
Communist, Vladimir Illich Lenin!

*Mayakovsky's book-length epic poem is entitled LENIN
THE LADDER ARCANE
For Ilhan Sami Çormak

By Jack Hirschman

1.

The Ladder is you, caro Ilhan, and that’s why you’ll be released from that unwell well of a prison that you’ve already ascended and liberated yourself from, because to keep a free and freed man behind bars is an insult that not even the Turkish government can bear without itself recalling that it stepped upon Nazim Hikmet’s face for 21 years with its boot-heel mark of a swastika and, whether Kurdistan or not, your face wears the poems of what liberty’s about.

2.

And with all 26 letters of America’s alphabet,—for the 26 years that your hand has written image after image and wrung by wrung, caro Ilhan Sami, until with poem after poem you climbed free from that sick well, missing only the cheek of Suna, your sister, or the lithe body of a cat to stroke, or a sunflower to caress or the hand of a woman to put your own in the palm of, and then begin to seductively finger with a silence after so many years of sounds of words writ by oneself—

3.

I tell you what I’m sure you already know: that the poem, which is the song of Being itself, you early on chose as a key to your emancipation by way of the Ladder of your breaths and words, that even standing still, you rose up wrung by poem until, yes, you’re there, in that well, only you’re not, you’re here in the world of our embrace,
so that even if a hundred
prisons ganged up to keep
you forever, you’ll always
be free, whether living or
dead, un-imprisonable,
O İlhan Sami Çormak,
Presente!

Merdivenin Esrarı
Jack Hirschman

İlhan Sami Çormak için

1.
Sensin Merdiven
canım İlhan ve bu yüzden
çıkarılsın o susuz kuyudan
salverileceksin kendini çoktan așıp
özgürleştirdiğin o mapustan

çünkü bir hakarettir
özgür ve azat edilmiş
bir insani demir parmaklar
ardında tutmak
çıkar devletin bile 21 sene

Nazım Hikmet’in yüzüne
gamali halça bıraklığı
postal izlerini hatırlamadan
dayanabileceğin bir şey değil bu
Kürtistan’da ya da başka bir yerde
yüzün özgürlüğün ne demek
olduğunu anlatan şiirleri kuşanmış

2.
Amerikan alfabesinin
26 harfiyle yazıyorum
—26 yıldır büke büke
yazığın bitimsiz imgelerin için, canım
İlhan Sami, bir şırden
digerine o hasta kuyudan
kendi özgürlüğine tırmandığın güne
kadar, sadece Suna’nın yanağını,
kız kardeşinin, ya da bir kedinin
kıvraklığı okşamanın, yahut
bir ay çiçeğini sevmenin

veya bir kadının elini
alıp ellerine
sonra avuçlarının içinde
parmaklarıyla sessiz ve
ayarlı bir şekilde dokunmanın
haaretyle, onca yıldır kendini yazan
sözcüklerin sesleriyle—

3.
Eminim zaten bildiğin bir şeyi
söyleyeceğim sana: kendini
özgürleştirmenin yolu olarak
ve çok önceden seçtiğin
şir, zaten Varlığın şarkısıdır,
nesesinden ve sözcüklerinden

yapılmış Merdiven, kiprtuşuz
dururken bile, ayağa kalkmış ve
şırden yaratılmışın sen
ve evet, ordaşın
o kuyuda, ama bu aslında burda
olmak için, bir dünya kucakta
bu yüzden yüz hapishane bile
seni bir ömür içerde tutmak için
hücum etse üstüne
sen hep özgür
kalacaksn, yaşarken ya da öldü,
mahkumlaştırılmayacak olsun
sen, ah İlhan Sami Çomak
Presente!

Translated by Öykü Tekten

note:
İlhan Sami Çomak is a Kurdish poet who was imprisoned at the age of 22 based on a false confession extracted after 19 days of torture. He is now 48 years old, is the author of 8 books of poetry, and still in prison. As part of an international campaign for his release initiated by PEN Norway, we ask poets around the world to write a poem dedicated to İlhan and/or inspired by his life and poetry.

bio:
Öykü Tekten is a poet, translator, and editor living between Granada and New York. She is also a founding member of Pinsapo, an art and publishing experience with a particular focus on work in and about translation, and a contributing editor and archivist with Lost & Found: The CUNY Poetics Document Initiative.
Jack Hirschman was born in New York City and grew up in the Bronx. A COPYBOY with the Associated Press in New York as a young man, his earliest brush with fame came from a letter Ernest Hemingway wrote to him, published after Hemingway's death as "A Letter to a Young Writer." Hirschman earned degrees from City College of New York and Indiana University, where he studied comparative literature. He is known for his radical engagement with both poetry and politics; he is a member of the Union of Street Poets, a group that distributes leaflets of poems to people on the streets and The Revolutionary Poets Brigade. The former poet laureate of San Francisco, Hirschman's style has been compared to poets ranging from Walt Whitman to Hart Crane to Dylan Thomas, and Beat poets such as Allen Ginsberg.
ACTA
by Roque Dalton

En nombre de quienes lava ropa ajena
(y expulsan de la blancura la mugre ajena)

En nombre de quienes cuidan hijos ajenos
(y venden su fuerza de trabajo
en forma de amor maternal y humiliaciones)

En nombre de quienes habitan in vivienda ajena
(y aun los mastican con sentimiento de ladron)

En nombre de quienes viven en un pais ajeno
(las casas y las fabricas y los comercios
y las calles y las ciudades y los pueblos
y los rios y los lagos y los volcanes y los montes
son siempre de otros
y por eso esta alli la policia y la guardia
cuidandolos contra nosotros)

En nombre de quienes lo unico que tienen
es hambre explotacion enfermedades
sed de justicia y de agua
persecuciones condenas
soledad abandono opresion muerte

Yo acuso a la propiedad privada
de privarnos de todo.

ACT
By Roque Dalton

In the name of those washing others’ clothes
(and cleaning others’ filth from the whiteness)

In the name of those caring for others’ children
(and selling their labor power
in the form of maternal love and humiliations)

In the name of those living in another’s house
(which isn’t even a kind belly but a tomb or a jail)

In the name of those eating others’ crumbs
(and chewing them still with the feeling of a thief
In the name of those living on others’ land
(the houses and factories and shops
streets cities and towns
rivers lakes volcanoes and mountains
always belong to others
and that’s why the cops and the guards are there
guarding them against us)

In the name of those who have nothing but
hunger exploitation disease
a thirst for justice and water
persecutions and condemnations
loneliness abandonment oppression and death

I accuse private property
of depriving us of everything.

Translated from Spanish by Jack Hirschman
Roque Dalton García was a Salvadoran poet and journalist. He is considered as one of the most influential poets in the history of Latin America. Known for his highly emotional, sarcastic and touching pieces of writings on life, death, love, struggles, and politics, he left an indelible mark on Latin American history with his immortal poetry. Intelligent, inquisitive and rebellious, he was not just a poet or a journalist, but also a revolutionary who was arrested numerous times for his political activism. But there was nothing that could stop this courageous soul from doing what he believed to be right. As a young man he expressed his anguish and mental turmoil through his scathing, satirical prose on politics, life and death. A revolutionary poet, he became actively involved in political activism. Arrested several times, he was even sentenced to death twice though he managed to escape both times. His turbulent life came to an abrupt end shortly before his fortieth birthday when he was shot to death at the orders of his political rival.
Not one more refugee death
By Emmy Pérez

A river killed a man I loved,
And I love that river still

— María Meléndez

1.
Thousands of fish killed after Pemex spill in el Río Salado and everyone runs out to buy more bottled water.
Here, our river kills more crossers than the sun, than the singular

heat of Arizona, than the ranchlands near the Falfurrias checkpoint.
It's hard to imagine an endangered river with that much water, especially in summer and with the Falcon Reservoir in drought, though it only takes inches to drown. Sometimes, further west, there's too little river to paddle in Boquillas Canyon where there are no steel-column walls except the limestone canyon's drop and where a puma might push-wade across, or in El Paso, where double-fenced muros sparkle and blind with bullfight ring lights, the ring the concrete river mold, and above

a Juárez mountain urges
La Biblia es La Verdad—Leela.

2.
Today at the vigil, the native singer said we are all connected by water, la sangre de vida.

Today, our vigil signs proclaimed McAllen is not Murrieta.
We stand with refugee children.
We are all human. Bienvenidos a los Estados Unidos.

And the songs we sang the copal that burned and the rose petals spread en los cuatro puntos were for the children and women and men. Songs for the Guatemalan boy with an Elvis belt buckle and Angry Birds jeans with zippers on back pockets who was found shirtless in La Joya, one mile from the river. The worn jeans that helped identify his body in the news more times than a photo of him while alive. (I never knew why the birds are angry. My mother said someone stole their eggs.)
The Tejas sun took a boy
I do not know, a young man
who wanted to reach Chicago,
his brother’s number etched in
his belt, his mother’s pleas not
to leave in white rosary beads
he carried. The sun in Tejas
stopped a boy the river held.
Detention centers filled, churches
offer showers and fresh clothes.
Water and a covered porch may
have waited at a stranger’s house
or in a patrol truck had his body
not collapsed. Half of our bodies
are made of water, and we can’t
sponge rivers through skin
and release them again
like rain clouds. Today

at the vigil the native singer
sang we are all connected
by water, la sangre de vida.
Emmy Pérez is the author of With the River on Our Face (University of Arizona Press, 2016) and Solstice (Swan Scythe Press, 2003 and 2011). Originally from Santa Ana, California, she earned her BA from the University of Southern California and her MFA from Columbia University. Her work has been published in journals such as North American Review, Prairie Schooner, Mandorla, and Newfound; and in anthologies including Happiness: The Delight Tree (2015), New Border Voices: An Anthology (2014), A Broken Thing: Poets on the Line (2011), The Wind Shifts: New Latino Poetry (2007), and Ghost Fishing: An Eco-Justice Poetry Anthology (2018).

Pérez has held writing residencies at the MacDowell Colony, the Ucross Foundation, the Atlantic Center for the Arts, and the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown. A CantoMundo fellow from 2010 to 2012, she has been an active member of the Macondo Writers’ Workshop founded by Sandra Cisneros for socially engaged writers since 2008. She has been the recipient of the Alfredo Cisneros Del Moral Foundation Award, the James D. Phelan Award, and she has received poetry fellowships from the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown and the New York Foundation for the Arts. In 2012, she was the recipient of a UT Regents’ Outstanding Teaching Award.
Future Needs Help
By Olaleyé Doyin Sunshine

Where is that blanket that shields the sky?
Has it been washed and left to dry?
I see the wide chimneys smoking high
Poking the blanket till it tears

At the billow of the dark exhausts
The birds scampers in trepidity
The air elopes leaving not enough
The trees wither, heads hanging in timidity

The wilds are diminishing
Versions left; extinct.. still extingushing
The world wasn’t given us to kill
Can we protect her after her ancestry?

Where are the humans that would love
Love our planet enough
To keep nature not to fall
Fall from what our hands have done

The birds plead
The fishes weep
The world begs
Olaleye Doyin Sunshine is an award-winning International Poet, Writer, Peace Advocate, and a lover of Art. She is the chief representative of World Nation Writers’ Union in Nigeria. She is also the Squire of the World Union of Poets. Sunshine is an author of two anthologies. She resides in Lagos, Nigeria.
Singing Lullabies For Fully-Grown Men
By Wafula p’Khisa

We are known for our excessive love & generosity for strangers
Our ancestors never hurt anyone; they neither dined nor wined behind a closed door.
We make friends from far & wide, across many ridges & great rivers
Who enjoy the sweetness of our women, but never help when we’re down on the floor.

They come during harvesting, scatter little grains before our empty & rumbling stomach
So we tear and break each other while scrambling for a pie to stay alive
They come wearing plastic smiles, shake our hands vigorously as their eagle eyes look for what to take when they attack
And leave us, after exploiting each of our men & tying our future with silly promises, struggling to survive.

We know why Mumias Sugar died and left our people starving
We know how we lost Webuye Pan Paper & remained with nothing to call our own
We know why our maize rot in granaries, brokers at the marketplace are not welcoming
But we turn a blind eye on them, and instead, sing lullabies for men who are fully grown!

We have been used as gunpowder by others in their quest for victory
And as donkeys to carry them to warm thresholds of a promised land.
Now is time to end profitless bargains and rewrite our history
To fulfill the dreams we deferred when we joined in chanting slogans we didn’t understand.

Now is time to rebuild our ancient shrine, install our own god to worship & sacrifice for, no matter how long it would take to find someone that rules not with an iron rod but frees us from demons here, making this land wonderful to belong.
BiO

Wafula p’Khisa is a poet, writer and teacher from Kenya. His poetry and short stories have been published in several online literary journals and magazines such as Better Than Sturbacks Poetry Magazine, African Writer Magazine, Nalubaale Review, Elixir Magazine, Writers Space Africa, Local Train Magazine and Lunaris Review among others. His work has also been anthologized (or is forthcoming) in global collections such as Best ‘New’ African Poets (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019) anthology series, An Anthology of Poems from East Africa and Beyond, Hope: An Anthology of Poetry (by Culture Cult Press), Soaring Above the Pandemic, Musings in a Time of Pandemic, The Amagedon & Other Stories, Love Thy Mother Book Anthology (by Poetry Planet), The Way We Were (by Poetry Planet), Kofi Annan: Tributes among others. He has published one poetry collection ‘A Cock’s Seduction Song & Other Poems’ (2019). He was longlisted for the Babishai Niwe Poetry Prize in 2018.
A Nâzım Hikmet Dream
By Ángel L. Martínez

May children everywhere
have their birthright
a life of peace
without fear.

This wish was shouted from behind prison bars
and painful exiles.
This poet looked into sadness
with the hope of joy.
This revolutionary would tell you his story
as he weaved it with the stories of a working-class world.

I see children bridging nations at a gathering of poets
And I see our gateway to freedom
This is a dream that is beyond a dream
It is necessity

This poem is to ask as he remembered the children of the first
atomic bombs
now let us remember the children of today and its never-ending
drone bombs.

Now is time to rebuild our ancient shrine, install our own god
to worship & sacrifice for, no matter how long
it would take to find someone that rules not with an iron rod
but frees us from demons here, making this land wonderful to
belong.
Ángel L. Martínez is a poet, musician, and cultural worker. He is a member of The Arawax, Revolutionary Poets Brigade - New York and is celebrating 27 years of The Bread is Rising Poetry Collective.
A Marimbe For Jaime Hurtado González

By Carlos Raúl Dufflar

The highest stars and a place
on this great planet
Like a wind through the sky
Pass our story
To a beautiful rose
Red zamora
In the water of the Pacific
until the captains of today
Always to confuse civilization
with the power of wealth
And the sunlight for the tears of my people
And I salute the workers
in the homeland and abroad
We are millions looking for life
Like the words of my root
And my father for being Ecuadorian
and I have a memory of love
Blood and laughter to true life
Like the Caribbean wind
quimbambá the voice of Celia Cruz
Today you and I take consciousness
and in the march of solidarity
In search of peace and justice
and the humble of the earth
And I laugh like
a New York avenue without an exit

Un Marimbe Para Jaime Hurtado González

By Carlos Raúl Dufflar

Las estrellas más altas y un lugar
en este gran planeta
Como un viento por el cielo
Pasa nuestra historia
A una rosa preciosa
Zamora roja
En la agua del Pacífico
hasta los capitanes de hoy
Siempre a confundir la civilización
con el poder de la riqueza
Y la luz del sol por las lágrimas de mi pueblo
Y yo saludo los trabajadores
en la patria y en el externo
Somos millones que buscan a la vida
Como las palabras de mi raíz
Y mi padre por ser ecuatoriano
y yo tengo una memoria de amor
Sangre y risa a la verdadera vida
Como el viento del Caribe
quimbambá la voz de Celia Cruz
Hoy tu y yo tomamos la conciencia
y en la marcha de la solidaridad
En la busca a paz y justicia
y los humildes de la tierra
Y me rio como
una avenida neoyorquina sin una salida
Carlos Raúl Dufflar is a poet, playwright, cultural worker, and a longtime activist since his high school days. He co-founded Los Poetas del Barrio in Loisaida, New York. He is a member of Revolutionary Poets Brigade - New York and is celebrating 27 years of The Bread is Rising Poetry Collective.
Borders
By Alexis Bernaut

Let the winds
let the rivers
tell you about borders
They might admit
that they don’t sing quite the same song anymore
that men don’t listen like they used to
They might admit that they weren’t looking for trouble
that they had their papers with them
as they approached the customs
But that their papers were soaked
illegible
but that the gusts and clouds had claimed them
And what good are papers for anyway
when you’ve answered a thousand names
They might recognize
that they would have stopped
when they were ordered to
had it been possible
To stop the momentum they had taken
over a million years ago
Alexis Bernaut is a poet, translator, and musician, born in Paris in 1977. His poetry has been published in several reviews and anthologies in France and abroad, and translated into English, Korean, Hebrew, and Romanian. In 2016, he was invited to the Seoul International Writers Festival. He is the translator of Sam Hamill and Earl Lovelace in particular. His first collection of poetry, *Au matin suspendu*, was published in December 2012. His latest book, *Un miroir au coeur du brasier*, was published in May 2020.
FORBIDDEN PSALM TO THE IMPOVERISHED
for the starving people of the world
by David Volpendesta

They can’t turn the salt
on their brows
into sugar.
Pain in their eyes
and poverty
is the lash of scorn
given to the lives of workers
who live on their backs
as the whips of the rich
whirl through the air
as they’re snapped
with a flick of the wrist
to jar the atoms of consciousness
hammered by iridescent pain
that reduces screaming men
into puddles of flesh…….

Capitalism is a sadist
sharpening its fangs
only to bite into flesh
so that the blood coagulates
in the muscles and sinews
and pours
from the hole
in the mouth
until it slows to a drop of blood!

In this age
when capitalists
revel in their wealth
everyone else
gets an ear of moldy corn
that was rejected
by well-fed farm animals.

Human beings want to know
where will it end?
Mothers clutch infants
with lips too dry to wrap around a breast
and eyes swimming in bitter tears.

Men of god repeating the gospel of
It’s not a sin to bow before the rich
while corpulent leeches living off the wealth
others create
Drugs to keep people anesthetized.
Religion to keep them babbling.

There’s a new astrology
one where human beings
are liberated from exploitation
so the planets can revolve
around the stars
around men and women who dance
the dance of revolving
chimes in the rapture of the wind
freed from the scourge of violence
empires will crumple
when their walls evaporate
from the transparency of their lies.

A dusty book
with a broken spine
the letters are a retired alphabet
of profit and greed
in a chapter of humanity
that soon will be ending
banks won’t be able to afford
the interest they will be charged
while their worthless currency
keeps burning a hole in their soul
and clinks on the cement
like a copper coin
Wealth gave them the appearance
that they were immortal
but the mortality
of living
showed that they were ephemeral
like buzzards
swept from their nest
by a hurricane

San Francisco
David Volpendesta is a member of the San Francisco Revolutionary Poets Brigade and the Roque Dalton Cultural Brigade. He is the author of five books of poetry, the most recent is Forbidden Psalms (2021). He is co-editor of two collections of work in translation, Tomorrow Triumphant: Poetry of Otto Rene Castillo and Clamor of Innocence: Short Stories from Central America, and co-editor of Homeless not Helpless. He has contributed translations to Volcan: Poetry from Central America and poems to five anthologies of the Revolutionary Poets Brigade.

I have attached a photo - hope it is OK. Feel free to edit bio as well.
We are going to have to fight for socialism  
the way we fight for survival  
by Cathleen Williams

Fannie Lou Hamer's mother  
sharecropper 1930  
had to bind the feet of her children with rags  
to walk  
the frozen ruts and fields  

to ask for the scrap cotton  
left behind by the harvesters  
bolls caught still  
in the thorns of ruined stalks  
gather a bale

like that we have to fight  
in the winter of these days  
who lives, who decides, who dies  
who has shoes  
on the bloody roads

we have to fight as mothers  
that hard  
we have to feed the kids  
their hunger starts at birth
Cathleen Williams, member of the League of Revolutionaries for a New America, has been dedicated to the struggle for housing justice in Sacramento, California. She began writing poetry at age 10.
Reconstruction blues II
By Gregory Pond

back in the day
after sambo became django
and we were legally no longer slaves
reconstruction was dangled
before us like a carrot
but we never managed to grab it
though it seemed to be inches away

after centuries of servitude
our men murdered, emasculated
our children sold, our women raped
in order to ensure our survival
we had to grin to bear the pain
before we labored through birth of a nation
feeling the pinch of derision and hate
years after burning crosses
repeated lynchings and klansman rage

sad to say we’re still reconstructing
still recovering after restless decades
with hell much closer than heaven
while equality got lost in space
black woman and man
made some gains but
never better than second place
our lives continually marginalized
victims of an economic system
based on power, class and race
we’re sick of singing kumbaya
we’re tired of rhyming do-re-mi
waiting for some liberty bell to toll
to finally set us free
to save us from the choke of the rope
the pressure of the knee
from under the thumb
Gregory Pond was born in Brooklyn, NY to Panamanian parents and moved to San Francisco in the late 1970’s. Author and publisher of four books of poetry: “aftermoon”, “Blackened Blue”, “4:00 a.m. (DARK)” and “4:00 a.m. LIGHT).” He has been featured in the Haight-Ashbury Literary Journal, is a board member of Clarion Performing Arts Center and worked on several Queer Rebels productions. He is a member of the Revolutionary Poets Brigade and featured in several of their anthologies. He also volunteers as facilitator of Poetically Speaking, a weekly conference-call program for seniors featuring classic and contemporary poetry.
The poet is a waterfall
By Rati Saxena

Didn't I tell you so?
A poet is a waterfall
not a lion

Then why are you terrified of me?
The waterfall doesn't destroy dams
the waterfall doesn't drown the cities
The waterfall brings to the cities
the saga of the forests
It reminds the cities of those sounds
which their ears have long forgotten to listen
those melodies which were onerous to listen

the dark shadows spun in the light
the stories of beings who are entitled to the earth

I had indeed told so
A poet is not a lion
that would drink from the forest dwellers' share of water, and become a possessor of its own people

poet is just a waterfall

Didn't I tell you so?

The waterfall just calls out
and the jungle gets together
even the city comes running

the waterfall gives up its life
by merging into the river

which you throw your dirt in

The poet is just a waterfall
So why is the establishment terrified?

Why is the river silenced

The bars of the prison
can't keep the waterfall
the wet cold floor
frees not the body
but the voice of the poet

the poet is just a waterfall
my voice will reach

the womb of the earth
then it will sprout like a plant

no matter how long you put me behind bars

my voice will spread
far and wide

(Translated by shelly bhoil from Hindi)
BiO

Rati Saxena is a poet, critic, translator, editor, cultural activist and Vedic scholar having more than 40 books in her credit in all forms of literature. Her work on fresh approach to Vedic study and past present and future of poetry therapy is an important work. She started the first bilingual poetry web journal in the India, and the first poetry Festival – kritiya poetry Festival from 2005 onwards which is a combination of art, culture and languages. She is running kritiya talk show in this pandemic time to discuss about social, political, economic and art and culture of third world counties basically of India.
Take Refuge
By Luis Filipe Sarmento

Take refuge in your conscience, without crosses or crescents, without wires or walls, without barbs or hatreds; and you will soon recognize among the crowds of wanderers that permeate your memory your ancestors from afar who gave birth to you here.

Where do you come from? To which original cave do you belong? What languages sail the seas and rivers of your blood? How many gods did you worship, asking and hoping that the future would not be this present?

Where are the divine answers?
Take refuge in your conscience, without the fear that priests of hidden power want to impose on you nor the anguish of the destroyed dream.
Observe the renewal of the sea, the regeneration of the planet, every unconscious attack of the madman, and you will soon see the power of the bowels of this magnificent globe, as if it were a head that thinks the possibility of defeat is the impossibility of life and makes it reborn in all its splendor, the colorful map of what we really are: take refuge in your conscience as host of the future and do not fear the gods, who are divine and who understand each other far from this Earth, and open the doors of your humble hovel as if it were a palace against death and against the chaotic image of the end.

"I Am A Man Born Of Women In Verse"
by Luis Filipe Sarmento

If I say mother, I mean Italy; if I say grandmother, I mean an island, if I say great-grandfather, I mean Galicia; if I say great-grandmother, I mean France.
One great-great grandfather in Greece, another in Damascus; One a gypsy lost in India, another in the streets of Palestine, If I reach to the tenth grandparents, I’ll be from everywhere, I have my origins everywhere, conceived in all religions; I come from a pirate and surely from a whore, from a maharajah and from a courtesan, a geisha and from a dealer in silks; from an amazonas of the steppes; and a boyar; a vizier and a poet, from a family of robbers in times long ago, Australian sailors, lost in hell for being people of the world, a parental world then I come from various incidences to this reformed Lisbon; at Mouraria a cousin another in the Quartier, a female cousin in Maghreb another in Moscow and yet another in the Congo thousands in Brazil, my DNA is the world, my cells are the universe.
I am a man born by women in verse.
In my veins lives a profound refugee I ask where is the crib of my birth?

Translated from the Portuguese by Scott Edward Anderson       Translation: Vamberto Freitas
Luís Filipe Sarmento was born in Lisbon on 12 October, 1956. He studied Philosophy at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Lisbon. He is a Journalist, Writer, Translator and Film Director. Some of his books and texts are translated into English, Spanish, French, Italian, Greek, Arabic, Mandarin, Japanese, Romanian, Macedonian, Croatian, Turkish and Russian. He produced and performed the first video book experience made in Portugal in the program Acontece para RTP (Radiotevisão Portuguesa).
Beginnings and Endings
by Lisbit Bailey

1. Beginnings
As you look around these days,
talk with your family,
visit friends,
greet acquaintances,
notice similarities
that make us kin

We are the Workers
the Workers are The People
We are The People

2. Endings
End the police and their murderous methods
Root out the Capitalist system failing The People
Cease the willful lies about what's right and true
Quit inciting hatred to divide us
Halt worldwide aggression
Stop destruction of the planet

We are the Workers
the Workers are The People
We are The People

3. Endings are Beginnings
We demand:
equal rights for every human being
a clean planetary environment
a dignified life for our labor
free education and healthcare
a real opportunity to live a full life
in wellness and contentment
in this most wealthy nation of the world
Lisbit Bailey lives in San Francisco where she’s a member of the Revolutionary Poets Brigade and an Archivist for the National Park Service at San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park.
BARBONE ... (TI BRUCIO .. MI BRUCIO) ... DISCANTO

by Sandro Sardella

1
Varese non ha stelle uruguaiane in cielo
ma freddo e pigre luminarie
che vorrebbero scaldare questa sera di
fine aprile piena d’aria e di grumose
porose parole.
L’aironcino elegante sorvolava
spianando dal cielo di Rasa
il suo cagare bomba slavaggiata.

Nella luce mattutina
colate scaricate da un pennello
carico di tinta
tempesta la bellezza cade
le parole annegano
nel colore sparso e non finito di Cy Twombly.

Quanto dura questo tempo di
lamiere dismesse
nella retorica che si fa orrore?

2
Un secchio pieno di benzina
ha fatto pulizia
un rogo ha sbolluto rancori e miseria
poi.. ora... un bouquet di fiori
sistemato in silenzio
sotto i portici della mensa dei poveri
sta a ricordare in via Cipressi a Palermo
la disperazione
il naufragio umano.
Chi è fuori dalle regole fa paura
morde le coscienze
davanti ai cancelli
le periferie esistentiali
fermentano indignazione
nel buio dei muri anneriti.
Aveva perso tutto Marcello Cimino
non faceva del male a nessuno
raccoglieva roba usata dai cassonetti
provava poi a rivenderla
sistemava il suo giaciglio
dormiva ogni sera sotto il portico del refettorio.

3
Un barbone un vecchio senza casa
seduti in piedi stravaccati
un emigrato una donna sola un disoccupato
nei giardinetti di via Dandolo a Varese
dove le panchine
(onde evitare contatti o soste prolungate)
sono per un culo singolo ...
guardate le loro mani
le occhiaie dei loro volti
guardate l’usura del tempo
nei loro passi
tra asfalti e aiuole soffocate
guardate un’ombra di quiete
tra le borse gonfie di muti stracci
un’ombra che compatisce
gli orrori di una greve eleganza
in un paesaggio
tra muri di spinosa ipocrisia.

4
Dappertutto un gran baccano
un ciarlare urlato
un danzare sulle rovine
quando le strade dei sogni sono disoccupate
quando sangue e cenere e
il vento non soffia
.. ecco (ancora)
non tornare da perdenti
diventare (ancora)
con leggerezza
invincibili
oltre l’angoscia della Storia scritta
dai vincitori.
Dal letame della polis
nuove musiche di nuovi colori
rigeneranti
una luce
dentro
intorno
le storie
nel gratuito dimenticato.

Un ascoltare gentile
prezioso e perduto
la strada
vedere
parlare
in uno scrivere come pioggia
che impasta il prurito della polvere.

Nell’accampamento buio bruciato
restare e lottare
con donne con fiori
al di là delle apparenze delle leggi.
Le prime luci si accendono
pronte a esplodere
ad apertura di pagina
segni che si incidono.

Leggere riga per riga il vostro esodo.

un’onda dagli ultimi
repentina
si lancia
sconfina.

La povertà è un reato
in un maggio senza nome
bombe caos profughi frontiere
i bambini disegnano carri armati e arcobaleni
crudeltà e innocenza
speranza e morte
il mare è stanco
piange di vergogna
e dico parole che ricordo
che ricordano
cancelli e muri di lavori
notturni e calcinosi.

6
Il treno va ... il treno va ...
arra libera aria tossica
binari e reticolati indistinti
nella città i cani grassi cagano
tanto quanto i loro grassi padroni
sabati collosi insomni stralunati
pori della pelle buttano fuori
lo spirito delle cose sniffate e consumate
tra giallo noir e disincanto.

Sul muro di Milano sta scritto:
FARE SCHIFO E’ UN ATTO!

Fondare una banca o sfondare una banca?

Felici come il giorno di Carnevale!
7
VITA? o TEATRO?
di Charlotte Salomon
un poema di carte colorate e scritte
davvero un qualcosa di totalmente folle
.. un canto tragico di una forza febrile
.. innervato dai disastri di famiglia e
dal terrore nazista ..
.. temeraria e sublime solenne sconfina
l’opera di Charlotte Salomon.

Nel piazzale della stazione Centrale a Milano
la scultura di Marino Marini
cavallo e cavaliere schiantati
circondati da arrivati e naufragati.

Lo sguardo profondamente pensoso
lo scrivere nelle carni di Giovanni Testori
“pestante” e febbricitante
nelle viscere della città.

Colori macerati impastati grovigli di
Giancarlo Ossola tra rovine industriali
ritrovano la nascosta umana operosità
graffiano l’inesorabile devastamento del tempo.

Come natura morta le pantofole di Nureyev
in uno scatto fotografico di Patti Smith
i bordi sfocati della tomba di Pasolini.

Robert Mapplethorpe
“il ragazzo che amava Michelangelo”
quando creava
“teneva Dio per mano”.

8
Nella periferia torinese
l’operaio è morto da solo appeso a una corda
nel magazzino in cui lavorava da anni
l’ansia del lavoro
ha alimentato l’usitata solitaria
di una sopravvivenza umiliata ..

Bituminosa rabbia
rabbia che non s’arrende
rabbia che segna sogna un canto
di coraggiosa tempesta nudità
con occhi arrossati e gioiosi
canta compagno canta
la frenesia d’ideali
oltre la tristezza del pregiudizio della serietà
oltre lo sfacelo del consumo pianificato
oltre il marciume di una giustizia di marmo
oltre il lavoro desolatamente deprivato e silenziato.

9
Le grandi nuvole di maggio
scollinano frettolose
corrono verso il mare.

Ricordare per non ricordare
i galli far cantare
i fondi del caffè scrutare
perché infastidire?

La poesia raccoglie la neve
con cuore e settantasette furori.

Nel cadere del giorno
disegna il sole
(la poesia)
sente il fuoco del mondo.
Alzate lo sguardo dagli schermi senza carne
guardate l’orizzonte
il soffio di una foglia
le onde del mare
sorridete senza ringhiare
toccatevi almeno le mani
sventolate lo straccio ritrovato
ascoltate le conchiglie e le clessidre.

La parola trabocca
la parola voltega capovolta
la parola torna leggenda.
Sandro Sardella (1952) poet and painter from Varese, Italy. He was a metalworker in Milano and after shift worker at the post office in Varese. In the ’80s with other workers he founded the magazine "clothes-work", writing from the word of work. He read his poems at the 2012 San Francisco International Poetry Festival.

Translated by Jack Hirschman
If You Know Her
by Kwame Dawes

If you know your woman, know her rhythms, know her ways; if you paying attention to her all these years, you will know how she comes and goes, how she slips away even though she is standing in the same place, you will know that her world is drifting softly from you, and she may not mean it, because all it is is she is scared to be everything, scared to be finding herself in you every time, scared that one day she will ask herself, all forty-plenty years of her, where she’s been; if you know your woman, you will know that mostly she will come back, but sometimes, when she drifts like this, something can make her slip; and then coming back is hard. If you know your woman, you can tell by the way she puts on heels, and she does not sashay for you because it is not about you—how she will buy some leather boots and not say a word about it, and you only see it when she walks in one night, and she says she’s had them forever; you will see the way she loses the weight and pretend it’s nothing, but when she isn’t seeing you looking, you can see how she faces the mirror lifts her chest to catch a profile, and how she casually looks at her ass for signs of life. If you know your woman, when you are gone, she will find things to do, like walk alone, go see a movie, find a park, collect her secrets and you won’t know, because she is looking for herself. And she won’t tell you that she wants to hear what idle men say when she walks by them; because what you say is not enough. If you know your woman, you know when she’s going away and you will feel the big hole of your love, and you can’t tell why she’s listening and humming to tunes you did not know she heard before, and she will laugh softly at nothing at all. If you know your woman, you will see how she comes and goes, and all you can do is wait and pray she will come back to you, because you know that your sins are enough for her to leave and not return.
BiO

Kwame Dawes is the author of twenty books of poetry and numerous other books of fiction, criticism, and essays. In 2016 his book, Speak from Here to There, a co-written collection of verse with Australian poet John Kinsella appeared. His most recent collection, City of Bones: A Testament (Northwestern University Press) will appear in 2017. He is Glenna Luschei Editor of Prairie Schooner and teaches at the University of Nebraska and the Pacific MFA Program. He is Director of the African Poetry Book Fund and Artistic Director of the Calabash International Literary Festival. Often called ‘the busiest man in literature’, Kwame will celebrate the publication of eight new books in 2016-2017.
By Alexander KERDAN

Sea, a little oven-cricket,
or a tiny thinking creature –
I'll remain for ever Pupil
of eternal Teacher.

I'll remember to the end,
how the world is hard, how fine is!
True, I did not grasp the Secret,
though the Day's declining.

And my Fate – I wouldn't change
to the arch of His abode,
where I humbly kneel and mumble
at the Face of Lord.

He will stumble, reading my
small confessions aloud,
and will send to distant stars
me to shepherd clouds.

Запечным маленьким сверчком,
Букашкою-мыслителем –
Мне вечным быть учеником
У Вечного Учителя.

Мир этот странен и велик –
Таким он и запомнится...
Я тайну так и не постиг,
А день к закату клонится.

Но я судьбе не изменю
До врат Его обители,
Где я смиренно преклоню
Колени пред Учителем.

Он перечтет мои стихи –
Слова исповедальные –
И облака пошлет пасти
Меня на звезды дальше.
Alexander Kerdan is a military man – and a philosopher, a poet and man-of-letters, which usually do not come together in one but not by him. He has served all, he might, in the army, he has written about thirty books of poetry and prose, he is going to defend his Doctor’s thesis in Culturology – and which is not less important he is a man of high morals – a loving son to his mother, a true husband and friend, a kind man.
A Key
by Liliya Gazizova

Denis Osokin says,
I’m a key to the city of Ka...
And I – a poet and a key –
Would like to shut this city for three days.
Neither dwellers, nor guests in it.
Let them plunge into
A free and sweet dream.
And I will walk
Along the ancient streets,
Big and small,
Scrutinizing and listening
To the colors and sounds.
Remembering the fiddlesticks and points
Of my sad childhood...
I would stand for a long time
At my great-grand called Mullanur...
My city would be very silent.
My injuries would leave me.
I would feel my city,
And forgive it
As a child...
As a king...
Translation from Russian to English by Olga Karasik
Liliya Gazizova is a Russian poet of Tatar origin, one of the most noted authors of her generation. She was born in Kazan, Russia, graduated from the Kazan Medical Institute, and Moscow M. Gorky’s Literature Institute (1996).

She is actively presenting her works at Russian and international festivals and book forums. She was the first who introduced the term «Non-Euclidian Poetry». Gazizova is the author of fourteen volumes of poetry, published in Russia and in Europe. The first, entitled Black Pearl, was published at the beginning of the 90-s with the foreword written by Anastasiya Tsvetaeva. Currently she is working on the anthology «Contemporary Russian Free Verse» L.Gazizova is the author of more 300 publications of poetry, prose and essays in prestigious Russian magazines: Noviy mir, Znamya, Oktyabr, Interpoezia, Literatura and many others. Gazizova’s poems were translated into several European languages and published in number of anthologies.

Recently she lives in Turkey. She teaches Russian literature at Ergies University (Kayseri).
In This Pandemic Year
by Kim Shuck

There is nothing I can tell you about the rich
Collecting
Even more while the firefighters
Some transformed from prisoners
Parch before the walls of wildfire

Nothing can be said
As some shelter in place
While others deliver
Edible curios
Exercise equipment and
Vitamins
Unable to stay home

We can watch our neighbors
The nurse and the doctor
Wake early
Leave the house before dawn
Return late and take a moment to look at the stairs
Gather their energy to climb them

There is no need for translation or reading glasses
The situation is clear
Kim Shuck was the 7th poet laureate of San Francisco from June of 2017 to January of 2021. Shuck has 7 published books of poetry. In 2019 Kim was awarded a National Laureate Fellowship from the Academy of American Poets. Shuck’s most recent book is Deer Trails from The City Lights Foundation.
**Been raped .......... being raped!**
By Pratibha Jangra

Been raped .......... being raped!!
sex?
what do you think?
has this decision always be taken by her?
NO!
Has she have this choice to be in bed or not?
NO!
When someone is unwrapping her.
has she have right to say NO?
NO!

I denied , I cried
I shouted , I stopped
I was shoveling , Groaning in pain
I was broken , shattered
and almost dead!!

Unwanted cunnilingus , Unwanted fondles
day was curse , night was dearth

don’t you love me?
I ain’t been same?
has the carnility of mine changed?/libido?

those kisses , those hugs
those nights, those fights
strange!! You forgot the taste of mine
do you want bit more?
or just your lechery is high

Why can’t you heal my soul?
It has been wounded by you.

why don’t I have right to live? to be loved? to love? to glow?
don’t you feel pity on me?
you made me dead , you made buried alive

soul is wounded , body is in grave .
half above and half in the grave
I m being raped again , again , and again

by you
by this society
by these people
by cruel thoughts
by many more
I m being raped by many more.........
Pratibha Jangra writes in Hindi, English, and Urdu. Her fields of writing consist of poems, short stories, and quotes belonging to different genres. She is very passionate, not just about writing, but reading as well. Writing makes her soul happy. That is her comfort zone where she is not bound with laws holding this universe. She can express herself the way she is, the way she want to.

Academic Career: Her academic life began from Rajkiya Pratibha Vikas Vidyalaya, Paschim Vihar, Delhi, where she studied till 12th standard. She is currently pursuing her graduation in Psychology from Delhi University.

Honours: Received Bronze, Silver, and Gold medals in Judo Martial Arts in Zonal Tournaments.
Performed on 1st International Yoga Day, at Rajpath, Delhi.
Honored with Swami Vivekananda Rashtriya Yuva Samman 2020, in literature.
Her work published in more than 40 anthologies on different theme and genre at national and international levels.
World Record Holder as a Co-Author recognized by "INDIA BOOK OF RECORD"
Received scholarship by clearing National Means-Cum Merit scholarship (NMMS) exam.
Compiled an anthology ‘DESIRE OF VERSES’ in 2020.
Wherever life would lead along its road
By Dmitry Mizgulin

Wherever life would lead along its road, we demonstrate, as theorems, the same – for someone wait great deeds and higher fame, for all the others - waits a heavy load.

Say, what was wrong in our native home? But once again the simple truth’s rejected, we pull down all, we’ve built, to foundation, and stay in smoldering ruins, not erected.

There is a crowd already by the doors of exit. In the end a queue of sophists. God help us to forgive the stray blind guides, God help us to forgive the deaf mute prophets!

And God permit to see the light at times, when our soul will not respond to call, just when fast-flowing waters of oblivion will close up over us – and fall.

***

Misfortune’s not in asses, not in roads – it is – that being drunk with vodka’s bottle, we don’t repent of our sins to God, we don’t believe, that Soul is immortal.

Now we are crying, now are laughing, no reason to both, no rules or foundations, and we are bowing like an autumn’s aspen, and suffer from winds’ gusts with patience.

Not recognizing foolishness or nonsense with spiteful envying the fate of other countries, we sing the praises of a blockhead or a thief, stupidly watching the TV-screens, their radiation is so long, and patient, and seems to turn into intoxication.

He was published in the following magazines: "Zvezda", "Literary Azerbaijan", "Neva", "Young Guard", "Our Contemporary", "Russian Bell", "Youth", weekly magazines "Literary Russia", "Literary Newspaper", etc.


Chairman of the Editorial Board of the almanac "Erintur" (Khanty-Mansiysk), co-chairman of the almanac "Day of Poetry" (Moscow), Chairman of the editorial Board of the magazine "Nevcherkis Svet", member of the editorial boards of the magazines' North (Petrozavodsk), "Podyom" (Voronezh), the newspaper "Slovo" (Moscow), almanacs "Tobolsk and All Siberia" (Tobolsk), "Young Petersburg" (St. Petersburg).

Winner of the D. N. Mamin-Sibiryak Prize (2004), the "Petropavlovsk" Prize (2005), the "Our Contemporary" magazine Prize (2006), the All-Russian 'Tradition' Prize (2007), the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug Governor's Prize in Literature (2007), the B. Kornilov Prize (2008), the Russian Government's Cultural Prize (2013), the All-Russian Literary Prize 'Russian Way' named after F. I. Tyutchev (2015), the International Slavic Literary Forum 'Golden Knight' in the category 'Poetry' (2019).
РАССКАЗАННАЯ ВОЙНА
By Svetlana Gritsenko

Про ту войну рассказывала мама,
Про долгие в голодной муке дни,
И как сестра Марийка умирала,
Братишка плакал на её груди...

Скулила вьюга и в окошки стукала.
К опухшим с голоду не приходили сны.
А где-то поезда вовсю аукали,
Как будто увозили от войны.

И в сотый раз обшаривая шкафчики,
В которых так давно была еда,
Они нашли и съели мыло, ставшее
На миг крашею, болью – навсегда.

И мне мерещились их лица синие,
Подросток-девочка, в бреду, одна.
Мать на окопах, возле фронта линии,
А вьюга-смерть кружится у окна.

Седьм туман над спящими курганами,
Бновь чуткая повисла тишина.
Осталась в сердце носящими ранами
Рассказанная матерью война

WAR STORY
By Svetlana Gritsenko

Mom used to tell us war’s misfortunes,
About longest hunger days,
Mariyka-sister’s dying torture,
And brother crying on her chest...

The blizzard screamed and hit the windows.
Dreams did not knock the starving door.
The trains were loud, howling lingers,
As if to take away from war.

And fumbling through the kitchen – wasted...
No food for long, just spoons and knife,
They found and ate the soap that tasted
Like bread by then, like pain – for life.

I dreamed of their bluish faces,
Teenager-girl, deluded, lone.
Her Mother in the front-line trenches
The blizzard-death is never gone.

A fog rolled over sleeping mounds,
The silence hung its fragile spell.
My heart still feels the wounded sounds
Of war, that mother used to tell.

Translated by Liudmila Murashova
Svetlana Gritsenko (Krasnodar) - poet, novelist, publicist. Secretary of the Union of Writers of Russia, coordinator of the project "World without Walls" in the Southern Federal District. Since May 2004, he has been the head of the Krasnodar Writers' Organization. Editor-in-Chief of the Krasnodar Literary magazine. S. N. Makarova — honored art worker of Kuban, winner of the Russian Orthodox literary prize of the Holy Prince Alexander Nevsky, the international literary prize. V. I. Narbut prize ID "Russian writers" of literary awards named after M. N. Alekseev, A. D. Sign. Holder of the "Golden Order of Service to Art", other public, departmental, and foreign awards. Novels, short stories, essays writer published in international and national journals, including the magazine "Our contemporary", the "Roman-magazine 21", "Moscow Gazette", "the Young guard", "Native Ladoga", "the bronze horseman", "Nevsky Prospekt", "North", "New literary Minsk" (Belarus), in the newspaper "Literary Russia", "Day literature, the Russian writer", "Yakutia", regional literary journals. Author of the novels "In the deaf years", "Leap of the Leopard", "Domes", "Rain in a large cage", "Birds from a flock of turmans". Books were published in Moscow and Krasnodar.
Душа
Автор: Liudmila Murashova

Храни, господь, мою жемчужину
Не для меня, но для других,
Где штормы полночью простужены
Пошли на помощь ей святых,
Не дай увлечь щелками темными
Во глубь стихий, на дно морей –
Ей возвышаться над коронами
Земных царей,
Земных царей...

Укрой от стрел каленых пологом
Моих молитв, чужих забот,
Бе прилив, целуя золотом,
На остров райский принесет.

Рассвет с улыбкой перламутровой
Румянцем щеки тронет ей,
И от ее сиянья чудного
В раю становится светлей.
Liudmila Murashova (Ph.D. in philology) is a poet, a translator, a critic, and an associate professor at the Department of Foreign Languages at Kuban State Technological University. The author is also a member of the International Union of Writers and Artists.

Liudmila was born and lives in Krasnodar (Russia). She graduated from the school named after Ignatov brothers in 2004 with a gold medal and with honors from Kuban State University with a degree in linguistics and translation in 2010. After that, she finished a course for English teachers in the Colchester Center accredited by the University of Cambridge in the UK. Liudmila finished her PhD at Pyatigorsk Linguistic University (Russia) with a degree in Germanic languages and defended her Ph.D. thesis in 2018. Currently, she works as a translator and a university teacher. During the period from 1999 to 2020, she became a laureate of more than twenty poetry competitions and festivals at various levels.

The first collection of poems by L. Murashova “Revelation” was published in Moscow in 2012. Poems written from 1997 to 2011 were included in the book. In 2014 Liudmila was honored by the award of the head of Krasnodar administration “For high achievements in the field of culture and art”. The author was included in the regional image calendar of young authors in 2015.

The first monograph “Translator’s Commentary as a type of Professional Activity” was published in 2016, and included the translations of poems by the British court poet-laureate Ted Hughes, detailed translator’s comments on translations, as well as theoretical investigation of commentary as an integral part of translator’s work.

Liudmila became a laureate in the international music and poetry competition “Touching the Sky with my Heart” in the category “Civic Lyrics” (Astana city), of the All-Russian literary festival-competition “Crystal Spring” in the category “Poetry” (Orel, Russia) in 2016 and of many others. She devoted herself to writing critical articles in the period from 2018 to 2020, and founded the Young Writers Club affiliated to Kuban Regional Association of the Union of Writers of Russia in 2020. The club has been recognized as one of the best Young writers unions in Russia at the meeting of Young Writers in Moscow (Russia). As a head of the Club she joined the actions held under the auspices of the World Poetry Movement “World without walls”, “Carnation festival” timed to the date of the liberation of the Portuguese people from fascism and other.
THE GREAT CONJUNCTION
By Mauro ffortissimo

If things could be so simple,
the acceptance of gravity's force
authority...
Supernova and bossanova
and all the novas of the world, united.

'Cause in the face of this atrocious
calamity of a year,
we, "the people" demand:

an end to: no good.
An extension, always an extension.

A door left ajar for the Magis, all of them,
from Persia, from India, from Arabia...
Oh wise men, what should we do?
Moderna? Pfizer?

Today is tonight's longest dark
and tomorrow winter festivities will start.
Melted cheese, chocolate mousse,
persimmons
pomegranates
and much more!

Tonight
I am making seafood paella
to appease the locust gods
with shallots and leeks,
mushrooms and thyme,
and, just in case Kilauea
gets angrier,
jasmine rice,
estewed tomatoes
and clams.
Mauro ffortissimo. Argentinian/Italian/American, grew up in Argentina, where interest in art and music led him to study classical piano and visual arts. He emigrated to California in 1981 to further his artistic explorations, taking classes in printmaking, sculpture and painting at San Mateo College, Art Institute, and Berkeley Extension. Mauro is a founding member of “849 Folsom Music”, a 13 member music and spoken word performance troop that brought vital energy to the San Francisco “South Market” artist underground scene in the pre-dot com years of the late 80’s.

As a founding member of the Enso Art Collective and the Miles Davis Memorial Hall, Mauro has been investigating sounds with the deconstruction of pianos, becoming more able to expand the 12-tone scale. He does not subscribe to the romantic notion of a solitary artist, a suffering individual, hidden in a state of despair, creating work that only few can appreciate; instead Mauro travels the world, looking to the mundane, the sacred and the original with the same eyes, and listening to the music of diverse cultures, bringing it all home to work with it’s particular way of assimilation making art and music available to the community.
The Awakening

By Solomon Sunday

The breaking dawn of the forth noon ritual
Herald their arrival in robes like a catholic priest
Acting like saints & angels
Reciting promises like poems
Giving hope bright as star.

But, like blood-sucking demons, they possess our possessions,
Hijack peaceful protest for justice
& play deaf ears to our rendition.
We have become hostages in our own land.

Of this menace, we are threatened day & night
Counting bodies like pennies.
Like athletes, we live running for our lives like it was a
competition.
Escaping bullet like soldiers in Afghanistan.

Yesterday, when I was a little boy
I was told "you are the leader of tomorrow"
Today, just as the east is from the west I am nowhere close to
this feat.
Tomorrow is suffocating in blue
yearning to be liberated.

Out here, on this sultry land
we must stand
Out of tears & bleeding heart
We rise
Out of the wound unhealed
We rise
We are the currency to this freedom
We rise.

Leaving behind tribal differences &
Religious sentiment
We must rise
Bringing the dreams of our heroes past live.
We must rise.
Today, on this somber bridge
We hold no fascination to political captivity,
God-fatherism that ticks sanity off our system.
We must rise
Confront our demons, squelch our fears until victory is named on
our soil
We move
We rise.
Solomon Sunday is also known by his pen name “The Pen Healer.” He is a Nigerian poet, content creator and IT consultant. His works have featured in The Quills, Neurological, Nantygreen, Erogospel, Upwrite Mag, Vindywrites, and others.
A Poet is a Communist
For Olivier Mayer
by Francis Combesç

Every poet – whether or not
he knows it, even he who denies it –
Every poet is a communist.
Every poet
everywhere and forever
claims that the world,
the land and the seas,
the trees, the birds, the cities
and all that they hold,
palaces, even, the Champs-Elysées,
the bridges over the Seine,
the smiles of all women
(none of whom you can claim as your own)
the smiles of children
and the smiles of men
the look in the eyes of the animals
everything –
all of the Earth,
the world and its seasons,
autumn and its beauties,
winter and its pleasures,
springtime, its promises,
summer and its harvests,
everything is ours.
Everything which we do not own,
by the powers bestowed upon us by
imagination and poetry,
and the necessary dream
of humanity,
everything belongs to us
and we belong to everything.
Everything that lives on the Earth is our business.
Everything speaks to us and we will answer for everything.
Everything is ours
Le poète est un communiste
à Olivier Mayer
by Francis Combes

Tout poète — même s’il l’ignore
et même s’il le refuse —
tout poète est un communiste.

Tout poète
partout et toujours
dit que le monde,
la terre et les mers,
les arbres, les oiseaux, les villes
et tout ce qu’elles contiennent,
même les palais, les Champs-Élysées,
les ponts sur la Seine,
le sourire des femmes
(même celles qui ne sont pas la tienne…
Mai en vérité, aucune n’est ta propriété)
et le sourire des enfants
et celui des hommes
et le regard des bêtes
tout,
la Terre entière,
le monde et ses saisons,
l’automne et ses richesses,
l’hiver et ses plaisirs,
le printemps, ses promesses,
l’été et ses moissons,
tout est à nous.

Tout ce que nous ne possédons pas,
par les pouvoirs que nous confèrent
l’imagination, la poésie
et le rêve nécessaire
de l’humanité,
tout nous appartient
et nous appartenons à tout.

Toute la vie sur Terre est notre affaire.

Tout nous parle et nous répondons de tout.
Francis Combes was born in 1953, in South of France. He is an activist and a poet. He founded in 1993 the publishing company Le Temps des Cerises. As a poet, he published twenty books, and has been translated in English, German, Arabic, Spanish, Italian, Macedonian, Albanian, Hungarian, Turkish, Chinese… Among his books: Cause commune (Common cause); La Fabrique du bonheur, L'Aubépine, Poèmes du nouveau monde, La France aux quatre vents … He also wrote novels, essays and published with his wife, Patricia Latour, a book of conversation with the French Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre. He made also translations of poets: Henri Heine and Brecht, from German, Vladimir Maïakovski from Russian, Peire Vidal from Occitan and Attila Jozsef, from Hungarian. For fifteen years, he was in charge of a public campaign of poetry posters in the subway of Paris. He has also been for seven years the director of the International poetry festival of Val-de-Marne. Now, he works with the Merle moqueur, the French section of WPM, and is setting up a new press, with young poets, Manifeste!
A Just Future
By Verina Odoi Amoakwaa

The world lies bare before me
In my mind’s eye it’s all a blur
Everything lies in shambles
The world spins on its wheels
Though the world is at bay
We are rampaged from within

As much as we may
We are tangled in a web
A mass of unscrupulous mess
Shoelaced by a foot
We maneuver around one another
Only to fall flat on our faces
I hear the cries of pain all around
My heart clenches
My gut feels rawed

As I lay down each night, I dream
Of a world where justice isn’t a price
Where nobility is humanity
Where morality is a hallmark
Where ones is a priority
A future for all in all

It’s a prayer I whisper all along

As I take in all that’s before me
I am overcome by emotion
Verina Odoi Amoakwaa is a graduate of the University of Education, Winneba campus. She is currently working at Guinness Ghana Breweries Limited at the Kumasi branch in Kaase. Verina is a member of Splendors of Dawn Poetry Foundation, Ghana Chapter. She has always loved writing. For as long as she can remember, writing has been a source of relief and escape from any turbulence life throws at her. She finds it therapeutic.
Six Feet Under
By Anele Kose

The door is narrow
Down dead and buried won't rise again
Trade of life is expired with no guarantee
Gardens of wickedness
Graves of empty soul
Pleasures to the world of the dead
Color black shuts the glittering stars of cold windy nights
Hope and trust behind the tomb stone hiding
Mourners tears flows
On their hands with red rose and on their heads with black cloth

Welcome to Cemetery Avenue six feet under with no street
Evil shadow with big hands kissing the ground floors
Flesh is getting week and dry
Pores are closed and sight is gone
No more trembling bones fear's the fact of death
Back at one piece
Body cancel the day of living
Claws of fate are dripping the drops of life
Call unto you father God you gave birth then why death
No friends, no brother or a sister it's cold here
No light no life its dark here
Do wanna talk, voice is locked
Do wanna sea, eyes are sealed
Day by day bones softly undresses the flesh
Rotten to the last piece
Soul to the Lord and flesh to the soil
Then dearest life is no more

This place is holly to those who obey
With their backs they lie, they don't freak to rise
Dear God I'm weak under your grace and I'm dead under your mercies
Hook me up God to the warmth of your bosoms
Cover me with your light and sits me to your throne
This grave is getting deeper than the gold mines of this world
Cold minds of this man I am are in the drawers of fate with no one to relate
This is a yoke of solo that commands the soil to digest the flesh and cease the bones till the men ends
Right or wrong, good or bad under thee it matters no life and value no price
Death speaks no resurrection
Only hard feeling that sings the sad songs to win your soul
Heart doors are opened, no more privacy and no more me to be me again
Six feet under we are all going the
Anele Kose is a 36 years old male in Cape Town, South Africa. He is a poet, play write and Novelist who recently had his extract read from the text market in October this year at Baxter Theater. Currently he has his poetry featured on the Inside Wants out mother tongue poetry podcast in Africa. He has made his name in South African poetry by sharing his unique poems on different platforms of media such as radio and TV performances in IsiXhosa his mother tongue and English his second language. In 2017 he was in the program of incubators at Arts Cape theater center (State Theater) in Cape Town, where he was given a chance to learn more about arts from North West University, and he obtained six certificate which are (Governance in arts, marketing in arts, project management in arts, Entrepreneurship in arts, the management of community arts festival and community level arts and culture management. in 2018 he travelled abroad to USA (Chicago) at Northwestern University with Lingua Franca Spoken Word Movement, and it was all made possible by the program of African studies and US Government, where he had poetry workshops, talks and performances. in 2019 he went to National Arts Festival with Mud and Fire company as a poet for Ityala lamawele production that was directed by most acclaimed theater director and mentor Mandla Mbothwe. And apart from arts he has a diploma in tourism and City and guilds certificates which he obtained from the South African chefs association.
Address beyond Gettysburg

By Indran Amirthanayagam

We are not going to stop. We have already started to walk, to run, our legs stretching, striding. The wind is behind us blowing our hair and pushing us ahead. Every day every hour every minute fills us with enormous adrenalin, enormous hope. There are only so many insults the brain and heart can take before they begin to fight back, but with guidance, from the village elder, to dilute the poisoned barb with herbs and prayers to get the Russians on the back foot, to invite Chinese to return to business, to let ordinary Iranians drink coffee in peace. But I am not a mere internationalist. No, my friends I am running with Iowa farmers, former steel workers of Bethlehem, chicken pickers of Perdue plants in Tennessee. I am not satisfied with the way things are in fifty states and all the dependencies. In Puerto Rico I will not ignore people after they suffer hurricanes twice. In New Orleans, and the Bayou, I am not going to stop at building a levee. I will build parishes back with the faith that sustains me and them, that we will see a promised land, that we can arrive there together, one nation under God. And I have only just begun. Just begun.

Give me your stories from every community, every state house. We are going to talk among ourselves, one great family conversation around the fireplace, the TV, the radio, the computer, the phone. We are going to go back towards building that Great Society. Do you remember the dream deferred? Langston Hughes will be on my night table. Congressman Lewis will dance in my dreams as he did in Congress. Blue Dog democrats will have their say at the table. And we will listen to reasonable arguments from the other aisle. What is reasonable? That we spend the budget to get people back to work, in good health and with hope; that we make peace with our friends again, and we trust but verify our enemies. Let us keep rolling. To the election. Beyond.

A Special Tie

The choice remains, to stay private or go public. I had resolved this matter in New York after you went to Managua to take a look at the revolution. The Twin Towers, symbols of permanence, entered the poem. They exploded via airplane, on 9/11, and the revolution became Ortega’s dictatorship, but we did not think of every possible turning then—friends, me from a Catholic grammar, and you, a well-established émigré, but studying at a comprehensive, class divisions of English schools I think now a subject for historians. But property offers security, comfort. Who owned the Towers? Who owns democracy burning in the tyrant’s eyes? How quaint to talk of tyrants as if we did not know then how the story would end before it began again—hence American optimism, faith renewed, friendship sustained.
A man from the moon walks the world
Without raising the eyelids, without any reason.

He does not care about anything, he seems insane
The search for successes, all is in vain.

People, listen to me, life has no meaning.
The man in the moon, where did he come from?

Where is it going? Are we not from there
Of the bright moon ?, according to Salvador Dalí

Sometimes we want it to be the other way around.
We exchange the secret gloom for light.

And we don’t love the ones we should well
We lose our modesty and the world would lose.

What good could we have to celebrate?
Just a reflection of the moon in the sea.

The man walks by the reflection and does not understand anything.
A dog howls and the soul dislikes it.

Don’t try to call him, he won’t answer.
You, by reflection, try to walk.

You and I are also almost from the moon,
For trying to find a love that unites us.

A love that, they say, cannot exist.
But this moonlight wouldn’t stop flowing

Between you and me. And they are no longer cravings.
The light does not disappear. Don’t open your eyes.

***

No screams, no tears, no sounds,
Followed by a loud silence.
The neighbor’s bitch doesn’t howl
(And someone threw their hatchlings off the bridge.)
Snakes the flame of a running blizzard
And a downed bird falls into the ravine.
The soul is lost, it cannot stand the environment:
It was not an aurora, it was nothing.
The last glass, I’ll have it in one gulp
Toasting to the world, may I not die!
The forbidden zone, a very long wall:
And inside there are many and no one outside.
I was there ... Although ... I don’t know.
But I do know the things I shouldn’t know.
The firmament fell, and I watched it.
The time has come, my friend, to perish.
Wherever you see, you better not look:
A lantern, and the wind makes him cry.

As for the bulwark, I’m going to get closer.
And what else is left for me, if what I wanted
It ceased to exist, and all without are ...
My aching chest, why did it fall apart
And is my great heart exhausted?
El HOMBRE DE LA LUNA
By: Victor Petrov

Anda por el mundo un hombre de la luna
Sin alzar los párpidos, sin razón alguna.

No le importa nada, le parece insano
El buscar de éxitos, todo es en vano.

Gente, ¡escuchadme!, la vida no tiene sentido.
El hombre de la luna, ¿de dónde ha venido?

¿Adónde va? ¿Acaso no somos de allí
De la luna brillante?, según Salvador Dalí

A veces lo queremos todo al revés.
Cambiamos por la luz la secreta lobreguez.

Y no amamos bien a los que deberíamos,
Perdemos el pudor y el mundo perderíamos.

¿Qué bien podríamos tener para festejar?
Nomás que un reflejo de la luna en la mar.

El hombre anda por el reflejo y no entiende nada.
Un perro aulla y al alma le desagrada.

No trates de llamarle, no va a contestar.
Tú, por el reflejo, prueba a caminar.

Tu y yo también somos casi de la luna,
Por tratar de buscar un amor que nos una.

Un amor que, dicen, no puede existir.
Pero esta luz lunar no dejaba de fluir

Entre tú y yo. Y ya no son antojos.
La luz no desaparece. No abras tú los ojos.

***

Sin gritos, ni llantos, ni sonidos,
Seguidos por un silencio fuerte.

La perra del vecino no da aullidos
(Y alguien lanzó sus crías del puente).

Serpentea la llama de una ventisca corriente
Y un ave derribado va cayendo a la quebrada.

El alma se pierde, no soporta el ambiente:
No era una aurora, era la nada.

El último vaso, lo tomaré de un trago
Brindando por el mundo, ¡que no se muera!

La zona prohibida, un muro muy largo:
Y dentro hay muchos y nadie fuera.

Estuve allí... Aunque... No lo sé.
Mas sí sé las cosas que no debería saber.

El firmamento cayó, y lo observé.

Llegó, amigo mío, la hora de perecer.

Por doquier que veas, mejor que no mires:
Un farol, y el viento le hace llorar.

Quizá yo no voy a decir más mentiras,
En cuanto al baluarte me vaya a acercar.

Y qué más me queda, si lo que quería
Dejó de existir, y todo sin son...

Mi pecho dolido, ¿por qué se deshacia
Y está extenuado mi gran corazón?

Traducido por
Aleksandr Dziuba
Victor Petrov es el autor de los libros poéticos “Blade”, “Reservé of Level”, “Hasta el suelo”, “Umbral del dolor”, “Borde”, “Rotonda”. Es el ganador del premio ruso literario que lleva el nombre de Sholokhov y la revista “Juventud”, es otorgado de la Medalla europea de Franz Kafka, es el ganador del “Golden Knight”. Fue impreso en los Estados Unidos, Inglaterra y Alemania. Es el Escritor, Editor, el Jefe Editor de la revista “Don”.

VICTOR PETROV

Bio
Before the Flower Dries

by: Jackson Makuła

Mine was not a wish to be a god,
But the greatest hero I was called,
And I didn’t seek to be branded an angel,
For I was merely a mortal man like all,
And I did not campaign to pick all the praise,
But only to sail in the sea of grace,
Before I climb the ladder above,
And say surely, I did serve.

So, when I live a life uncommon,
Searching wisdom as Solomon,
‘Ts because I have unfinished assignment,
With which my strength has alignment,
To which may differ with your earthly business,
But which we complement as we run the race,
And the tasks ought to be complete,
Before we end to drink and to eat.

I was not called for those other things,
So, I had to flap my little wings,
To perch in the place that was mine,
To sing and dance until I shine,
In the tune that came at birth,
For the Master will soon land on the earth,
And ask the interest from what he did give,
When the hole will open for me to receive.
Jackson Makula is a trained teacher from the University of Nairobi. He graduated on 2019, December with a second class honours in Bachelor of Education Arts (Literature and Linguistics). He runs a self-managed project dubbed 'Inspired Modern Writers', a program that he uses to enhance reading and writing culture in the contemporary society. The 25-year-old author has demonstrated great passion in writing and has been published in the past by Daily Nation Newspaper (Kenya) in the Readers' Corner section. He is aspiring to publish his almost complete manuscript 'Poetry Everyday; Everywhere'.
Where do we go?
by Ajmal Khan
Where should we go after the last frontiers?
Where should the birds fly after the last sky?
Where should the plants sleep after the last breath of air?

Mahmoud Darwish
After the Isha Namaz
Chanting prayers sitting in her Musalla
Keeping her copy of Quran aside with the Thasbeeh, she asks
Where do we go if our names are not in the list?

Where do coconut trees go when their roots are declared illegal?
How does Hibiscus flower if you ask them go back where they
come from?
Can you ask Tapioca to go back to Brazil?
Do you ask tea and coffee to go back where they come from?
Where do Great Pied Hornbills go when you tell monsoons are
illegal to them?
Where do Mackerels and Sardines go when you inform them, they
are illegal in the water?
Do Malabar elephant have identity card to enter Maasai Mara?
Where do Lion-tailed macaques go if they are asked to vacate the
Silent Valley?
Can Mundakan and Puncha paddy be cultivated in Saudi Arabia?
Which water Giant Danio’s swim if rivers are made illegal to
them?
Is there a list of snakes that are allowed only on the Western
Ghats?
On which seas Hassinar fish if you ask him documents to enter the
Arabian sea?

Where do we go?
The sword breaks my silence, she asks again
Where?
I reminded
“For your father, Adam, was created with dirt from the surface of
the earth.”

You also will be returned to the earth
We came from soil
We go to soil, until then
We live here.
THE HISTORIAN’S AUTOPSY OF A TREE

“Kill, you may kill, sell, you may sell”
--- (Slave Transaction Document)
After “How to pick a hanging tree”? by Kwame Dawes

By Chandramohan Satyarthi

The roots must be strong near the base,
Then it is unlikely that the trunk will be usurped
By the push and shove of a slave.

“A mushroom that grows on the bark has no deep soil.”

This tree was chopped down
With an axe, with its handle
Axed from the same tree.

The soil surrounding the base
Like the saucer of a tea-cup
Has to be wide and deep enough
For the corpse to be covered.

Further excavations might unearth a trite semi-rusted tale
Could crumble into pieces unless handled with care.

The leaves of such trees are greener
Lush green, the nourishment from corpses.
This shade of green is abundant in “God’s own country”.

BiO

Chandramohan Satyarthi is an Indian English Dalit poet based in Trivandrum, Kerala. His poems were shortlisted for Srinivas Rayaprol Poetry Prize 2016. His second collection of poems titled "Letters to Namdeo Dhasal" was a runner up at M.HARISH GOVIND memorial prize instituted by POETRY CHAIN. Was a fellow at the international writing program (IWP) at the University of Iowa?
Human Daughter
By Vijayarajamallika

My death and posthumous is equally worrying me Even though I may fall dead on a bed
My remains may be found in a desolate and mysterious place
During the first few Hours of my death
I will be on the headlines of all media
Later in the afternoon, As the sunset
Masses turn up for condolence
With floral offerings on my huge cut-outs
Candles burn commemorating me
I would be even then awaiting
The trial of an orphan
On the same old desk
Finally to the graveyard
My mortal remains
I
The one forgotten
By the leaders of the renaissance
And flags
My name is Transgender
The Human daughter

Not a son
Not a daughter
You are my dear rainbow
Holding you close to my bosom
Let me kiss your forehead
Hundred kisses of gratification
Not to fail
But to nourish all your dreams
Let others find solace in you
With the strength in you
Not a curse
Not a sin
You are my lucky star
My first star
My first lucky star

Neither Boy nor Girl
Not a boy
Not a girl
You are my precious honey drop
Seeing my dashed hope
Time gifted you my Treasure
Separating good from the evil
You grow beyond the checkered boxes
Fill yourself as much with yourself
And be the reflection of truth
Vijayarajamallika is the first Transgender poet in Malayalam literature, a writer, teacher, social worker, inspirational speaker and an activist from Kerala. Daivathinte Makal (Daughter of God) her first collection of poetry has been included in the syllabus of many Universities in south India. She has won the Swami Vivekanandan Yuva Prathibha Award for literature in 2019 instituted by the Kerala State Youth Welfare Board for this autobiography. “Aanalla Pennalla Kanmani nee” is a lullaby penned by Vijayarajamallika which is reported to be the first Intersex lullaby in the history World Literature. Daivathinte Makal has won Yuvakala Sahithi Vayalar Award 2019.
Smartphone
by Vasily Popov

A whole world is in my hand
I touch it like a river
I scroll some countries and some lands
The summer’s always near.

It rings, it seems like drop of rain
The light that makes me happy
But there is a kind of pain
To pay so much to get it.

All those pictures, twinkling screen
The violet saffron there
A snowflake falling that I’ve seen
A drop of rain I share.

***
How much to think about life?
The sky’s concealing everywhere
In constellations, red and white
There is a sufferer somewhere.

He looks at some stars when they faded
He thinks the same the day and night
Why was the whole world created?
The silent Universe. That’s right?

And there’s a distance, long between us
Which is impossible to leave
And even shining words can’t help thus
It’s just to die or to believe.

I know the strength, the world will show me
The way celestial for men
With ether fuel light and only
We’ll fly together now or then.

Somewhere right up in the middle
We’ll hug each other as a friend
And sing a song about children
It’s where the story has to end.

***
Stars are shining in the silence
Look like sweater on the Moon
Snowstorm sweeping in the violence
Ursa Major coming soon.

Deer’s running far away
Falcon on a shoulder
Guarding, watching over prey
Acting as a moulder.

When a man is getting older
And the strength has gone
Such a sweater if it’s colder
He will put it on.

***
Memory doesn’t make me feel peaceful
Who gave me something? Where and why?
Can’t find words, just being blissful
Simple and warm in the soul of mine.

If everything that I write here correctly
It’s true from previous, past awful time
Then I don’t need anything else exactly
I wasn’t born, didn’t follow the line.

***
I know that happiness is here
The forest flowers told me that
I look through open windows, dear
Dandelion whose eyes are sad.
Forgive my tenderness and loving
I haven’t written for some days
Preparing heart for life is coming
Will blaze all branches anyway.

My spring is burning more and hotter
You praise and glorify my way
But will I need it? Yes? And what for?
When I will leave this world one day.

If everything has got its ending
And you can’t help even it’s sad
I know where happiness is landing
The forest flowers told me that.
Vasily Nicolaevich Popov is one of the best modern young poets in Russia. He inherits classical traditions of world literature. According to many literary critics the poet continues the folklore line of famous writers such as Ivan Bunin and Robert Burns. Popov's poetry is penetrated by hearty lyricism and light perception of the world, it is distinguished by delicate vision of nature and special melody.

Popov is a prize-winner of Governor's award for culture and art, he possesses the Grand Prix of the International Literature Forum "Zolotoi Vitiaz" ("Golden Hero"), a prize-winner of the award named after I. A. Bunin, the award named after M. U. Lermontov and many others. Popov graduated from Literature Institute named after A. M. Gorky. Popov's poetry is published in more than 40 periodicals all around Russia and abroad. His creation is translated into many different languages. He is the author of 5 poetry collections. Vasily Popov was born in Siberia in 1983.
Fate bene a non fidarvi  
perché anch’io non mi  
fidò più di voi.

Avete rinnegato Marx  
e Lenin  
col pretesto che la storia  
cambia sempre.

Avete infangato le lotte operaie  
di questi duri anni  
col discorso  
delle grandi intese.

Avete imparato i metodi  
dei padroni  
più sputtanati della terra.

Avete accantonato i combattenti  
che hanno dato tutto  
per un mondo con uomini  
non più in ginocchio,  
per un mondo senza più umiliazioni  
libero.

Non ho rancore se ora forse  
tocca a me.

Ma se mai ce ne fosse  
bisogno

io resto un comunista  
si, un comunista senza tessera  
ma un compagno comunista sincero, vero.

Non ho rancore se ora forse  
tocca a me.

Ma se mai ce ne fosse  
bisogno

io resto un comunista  
si, un comunista senza tessera  
ma un compagno comunista sincero, vero.

You do good to trust  
because I don’t have  
faith anymore in you either.

You’ve rejected Marx  
and Lenin  
under the pretext that history’s  
always changing.

You’ve muddied up the working-class struggle  
of these difficult years  
with pronouncements  
of great savvy  
learned the bosses’  
methods  
for blood-sucking the land even more.

You’ve tabled the fighters  
who’ve given everything  
for a world where human beings won’t have  
to live on their kness  
for a world finally free of  
humiliations.

It’s not rancour I have now that it’s maybe  
my turn.

But if ever there was a need  
to say it,  
I remain a communist  
yes, a communist without a party-card  
but a really sincere communist comrade.
Ferruccio Brugnaro was born in Mestre, Italy in 1936. He worked for more than 30 years - most of his adult life - in the giant complex of chemical factories in the Porto Marghera district of Venice. By turns tender, loving, angry, satiric, these are passionate poems that grab you by the collar by Italy’s best-known working-class poet- skillfully crafted, clear, and filled with powerful images.
IN MEMORIAM

Today Is Sunday
By: Nazım Hikmet

Today is Sunday.
For the first time they took me out into the sun today.
And for the first time in my life I was aghast
that the sky is so far away
and so blue
and so vast
I stood there without a motion.
Then I sat on the ground with respectful devotion
leaning against the white wall.
Who cares about the waves with which I yearn to roll
Or about strife or freedom or my wife right now.
The soil, the sun and me...
I feel joyful and how.

Translated by Talat Sait Halman

Don Quixote
By: Nazım Hikmet

The knight of immortal youth
at the age of fifty found his mind in his heart
and on July morning went out to capture
the right, the beautiful, the just.

Facing him a world of silly and arrogant giants,
he on his sad but brave Rocinante.
I know what it means to be longing for something,
but if your heart weighs only a pound and sixteen ounces,
there's no sense, my Don, in fighting these senseless windmills.

But you are right, of course, Dulcinea is your woman,
the most beautiful in the world;
I'm sure you'll shout this fact
at the face of street-traders;
but they'll pull you down from your horse
and beat you up.
But you, the unbeatable knight of our curse,
will continue to glow behind the heavy iron visor
and Dulcinea will become even more beautiful.

Translated by Taner Baybars
Nazım Hikmet, also called Nazim Hikmet Ran, (born 1902, Salonika, Ottoman Empire [now Thessaloniki, Greece]—died June 2, 1963, Moscow), poet Nazım who was one of the most important and influential figures in 20th-century Turkish literature. He studied economics and political science at the University of Moscow. Returning home as a Marxist in 1924 after the advent of the new Turkish Republic, he began to work for a number of journals and started Communist activities. In 1951 he left Turkey forever after serving a lengthy jail sentence for his radical and subversive activities. From then on he lived in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, where he continued to work for the ideals of world Communism. His mastery of language and introduction of free verse and a wide range of poetic themes strongly influenced Turkish literature in the late 1930s. After early recognition with his patriotic poems in syllabic metre, in Moscow he came under the influence of the Russian Futurists, and by abandoning traditional poetic forms, indulging in exaggerated imagery, and using unexpected associations, he attempted to “depoetize” poetry. Later his style became quieter, and he published Şeyh Bedreddin destani (1936; “The Epic of Shaykh Bedreddin”), about a 15th-century revolutionary religious leader in Anatolia; and Memleketimden insan manzaraları (“Portraits of People from My Land”), a 20,000-line epic. Although previously censored, after his death in 1963 all his works were published and widely read, and he became a poet of the people and a revolutionary hero of the Turkish left. Many of his works have been translated into English, including Selected Poems (1967), The Moscow Symphony (1970), The Day Before Tomorrow (1972), and Things I Didn’t Know I Loved (1975). Nazım Hikmet is also known for his plays, which are written in vigorous prose and are also mainly Marxist inspired.
TO THE SENEGALESE RIFLEMEN WHO DIED FOR FRANCE
By Léopold Sédar Senghor

Here is the Sun
Which tightens the breasts of the virgins
Who makes the old men smile on the green benches
Who would awaken the dead under a maternal earth.
I hear the sound of cannon—is it from Irun?
They put flowers on tombs and warm the Unknown Soldier.
You my dark brothers, no one appoints you.
Five hundred thousand of your children are promised glory
of the future deaths, they thank them in advance, future dark dead.

Die Schwarze Schande!

Listen to me, Senegalese Riflemen, in the solitude of
black earth and death
In your solitude without eyes without ears, more than
I in my dark skin at the depths of the Province,
Without even the warmth of your comrades lying close to
you, as in the trenches in
the village palavers long ago,
Listen to me, black skin Riflemen, well without
ears and eyes in your threefold chamber
at night.

We have not borrowed mourners, nor
tears from your former wives
—They only remember your
fury and prefer the stench of the living.
The mourners’ laments come too clear,
Too quickly drying up the cheeks of your wives, as
in the Fouta streams in the dry season,
The warmest tears too clear and too quickly
drunk from the corners of the forgetful lips.
We bring you, listen to us, we who epilate
your names in the months of your death,
We, in these days of fear without memory, we bring
you the friendship of your comrades
Ah! May I, one day, in a voice glowing like embers,
may I sing
The friendship of the comrades fervent as bowels
and delicate as entrails, strong as tendons.
Listen to us, Dead in the deep water
plains of the northern and the eastern fields.
Receive this red soil, under a summer sun this redden soil
blood of the white hosts
Receive the salute of your black comrades, Senegalese Riflemen
DEATH FOR THE REPUBLIC!
.....................................................Tours, 1938
TO THE NEGRO-AMERICAN SOLDIERS

By Léopold Sédar Senghor

I did not recognize you in prison under your
sad-colored uniform

I did not recognize you under the calabash helmet
without style

I did not recognize the whining sound of your
iron horses, who drink but do not eat.

And it is no longer the nobility of elephants, it is the
barbaric weight of the prehistoric
monsters of the world.

Under your closed face, I did not recognize you.
I only touched the warmth of your brown hand,
I called myself “Afrika!”

And I found once again the lost laughter, I hailed the ancient
voices
and the roar of Congo waterfalls.

Brothers, if you are the lightning of God’s hand that burned
Sodom and Gomorrah.

No, you are the messengers of his mercy, the
Spring after Winter.

To those who had forgotten how to laugh—only
smile obliquely
Who knew nothing but the savory flavor of
tears and the vexing stench of blood
You bring the Season of Peace and hope to
end of the delay.

And their night is filled with milky sweetness, the blue
fields of the sky are covered with flowers, silence sings
soothingly.

You bring them the sun. The air beats with whispers
liquids and crystalline chirping and beating
silky wings

The aerial cities are tepid with nests.

Through the streets joy streamed, the boys play with
dreams

Men dance before of their machines and
surprised themselves singing.

Schoolgirls’s eyelids are rose petals, and
fruits ripen in the virgins’ breasts

And the women’s hips—Oh, sweetness—
generously heavy.

Black brothers, warriors whose mouths are flowers that
sing
—Oh! the delight to live after Winter—I salute you
like messengers of peace.
Léopold Sédar Senghor is a Senegalese poet, writer, politician, and the first President of the Republic of Senegal (1960–1980). He was also the first African man elected to the Académie Française. Léopold was a Minister in France before his country’s independence was proclaimed. He was born on October 9, 1906, in Joal (Senegal), and died on December 20, 2001 in Verson, Normandie (France).
Short Speech to My Friends
BY Amiri Baraka

A political art, let it be
tenderness, low strings the fingers
touch, or the width of autumn
climbing wider avenues, among the virtue
and dignity of knowing what city
you’re in, who to talk to, what clothes
—even what buttons—to wear. I address

/ the society
the image, of
common utopia.

/ The perversity
of separation, isolation,

after so many years of trying to enter their kingdoms,
now they suffer in tears, these others, saxophones whining
through the wooden doors of their less than gracious homes.
The poor have become our creators. The black. The thoroughly
ignorant.

Let the combination of morality
and inhumanity
begin.

One hero
has pretensions toward literature
one toward the cultivation of errors, arrogance,
and constantly changing disguises, as trucker, boxer,
valet, barkeep, in the aging taverns of memory. Making love
to those speedy heroines of masturbation or kicking literal evil
continually down filmy public stairs.

A compromise
would be silence. To shut up, even such risk
as the proper placement
of verbs and nouns. To freeze the spit
in mid-air, as it aims itself
at some valiant intellectual’s face.

There would be someone
who would understand, for whatever
fancy reason. Dead, lying, Roi, as your children
cane up, would also rise. As George Armstrong Custer
these 100 years, has never made
a mistake.

2.

Is power, the enemy? (Destroyer
of dawns, cool flesh of valentines, among
the radios, pauses, drunks
of the 19th century. I see it,

as any man’s single history. All the possible heroes
dead from heat exhaustion

at the beach

or hiding for years from cameras
only to die cheaply in the pages
of our daily lie.
Amiri Baraka Poet, writer, teacher, and political activist Amiri Baraka was born Everett LeRoi Jones in 1934 in Newark, New Jersey. He attended Rutgers University and Howard University, spent three years in the U.S. Air Force, and returned to New York City to attend Columbia University and the New School for Social Research. Baraka was well known for his strident social criticism, often writing in an incendiary style that made it difficult for some audiences and critics to respond with objectivity to his works. Throughout most of his career his method in poetry, drama, fiction, and essays was confrontational, calculated to shock and awaken audiences to the political concerns of black Americans. For decades, Baraka was one of the most prominent voices in the world of American literature.
I look at the world
BY Langston Hughes

I look at the world
From awakening eyes in a black face—
And this is what I see:
This fenced-off narrow space
Assigned to me.

I look then at the silly walls
Through dark eyes in a dark face—
And this is what I know:
That all these walls oppression builds
Will have to go!

I look at my own body
With eyes no longer blind—
And I see that my own hands can make
The world that's in my mind.
Then let us hurry, comrades,
The road to find.
Langston Hughes was a central figure in the Harlem Renaissance, the flowering of black intellectual, literary, and artistic life that took place in the 1920s in a number of American cities, particularly Harlem. A major poet, Hughes also wrote novels, short stories, essays, and plays. He sought to honestly portray the joys and hardships of working-class black lives, avoiding both sentimental idealization and negative stereotypes.
“The United States Company”
(a translation of Pablo Neruda’s “The United Fruit Company”)
By Pablo Neruda

The United States Company
See my friends, es hora de jardín
when the American Anthem played, it was all ready every where and every when
God Father pissed Coke into the oceans and it began pieced and parcelled
the wealth of the lemon blossom earth to Amazon and Facebook to the extremes but gave the delicious middle part for a below job of epic proportions and baptized the Waste Land
the National Military Command Center of the Red, White, and Blues
where baby needs a pair of shoes
where snake eyes shine
out of Rappaccini’s Garden
of poisonous lilies and scorpions
crawl out of the national flag
draped over coffins and televisions
and the naked and dead suck sugar cane candy from the Lord of Flies and his citizens united for the Bush flies and Obama flies and Clinton flies
the swastika flags and Kissinger flies the B-52s and Nixon does too and Trump&Pence drones on for the dead, rites, and choose to train mercenary flies
on for the Red, White, and Blue and meanwhile a dead and diseased body tumbles from a yacht into the ocean waters and washes ashore with debris and desolation for the US Company Nation
“La United Fruit Co.” de Canto general
By Pablo Neruda

Cuando sonó la trompeta, estuvo todo preparado en la tierra
y Jehová repartió el mundo a Coca-Cola Inc., Anaconda,
Ford Motors, y otras entidades: la Compañía Frutera Inc.
se reservó lo más jugoso,
la costa central de mi tierra,
la dulce cintura de América.
Bautizó de nuevo sus tierras como “Repúblicas Bananas”,
y sobre los muertos dormidos, sobre los héroes inquietos
que conquistaron la grandeza, la libertad y las banderas,
estableció la ópera bufa:
enajenó los albedríos, regaló coronas de César,
desenvainó la envidia, atrajo la dictadura de las moscas,
moscas Trujillo, moscas Tachos,
moscas Carias, moscas Martínez,
moscas Ubico, moscas húmedas de sangre humilde y mermelada,
moscas borrachas que zumban sobre las tumbas populares,
moscas de circo, sabias moscas entendidas en tiranía.
Entre las moscas sanguinarias la Frutera desembarca,
arrasando el café y las frutas en sus barcos que deslizaron como bandejas el tesoro de nuestras tierras sumergidas.
Mientras tanto, por los abismos azucarados de los puertos,
caían indios sepultados
en el vapor de la mañana:
un cuerpo rueda, una cosa
sin nombre, un número caído
un racimo de fruta muerta
derramada en el pudrirero.
Pablo Neruda was a precocious boy who began to write poetry at age 10. His father tried to discourage him from writing and never cared for his poems, which was probably why the young poet began to publish under the pseudonym Pablo Neruda, which he was legally to adopt in 1946. He entered the Temuco Boys' School in 1910 and finished his secondary schooling there in 1920. Tall, shy, and lonely, Neruda read voraciously and was encouraged by the principal of the Temuco Girls' School, Gabriela Mistral, a gifted poet who would herself later become a Nobel laureate. His first book of poems, Crepusculario, was published in 1923. The poems, subtle and elegant, were in the tradition of Symbolist poetry, or rather its Hispanic version, Modernismo. His second book, Veinte poemas de amor y una canción desesperada (1924; Twenty Love Poems and a Song of Despair), was inspired by an unhappy love affair. It became an instant success and is still one of Neruda's most popular books.
"Trespassing vehicles will be shot and eaten" was the grim sign that welcomed us to Prof Wole Soyinka's residence in Abeokuta one lovely weekend, five years ago.

Set in a forest enclave at the far corner of the Kemta Housing Estate, the massive leafy enclave reminded one of the legendary D.O Fagunwa's 'Igbo Irunmole' (A Forest of a Thousand Demons).

However instead of demons, what the Nobel Laureate fondly referred to as 'Kongi' by his admirers had in his own forest was a brick-walled villa tucked into a corner of an enchanting forest and accessed by a laterite road, sandwiched by sky high trees and creepers above which birds flew and sang and through which a natural stream slowly flowed.

So thick was the foliage that daylight visibility was a challenge.

On what necessitated the scary signboard, our guide, Yaya, one of the caretakers of the estate explained that it came about when the workers, in a bid to fend off marauders had advised Prof Soyinka to fence off the property and install a gate.

However, the Nobel Laureate told his staff that he had a better idea on how to ward off potential intruders and so the scary sign board.

On whether the trick had worked?

"Yes. It works like magic. Once anybody including visitors see the sign, they all stop at the entrance and shout to announce their arrival," Yaya replied.

"Since they know that Oga is a hunter, they fear that he might turn his gun on them. Fortunately, Prof only shoots 'aparo' (partridge) and not human beings."

I had come to Abeokuta on the invitation of The Wole Soyinka Foundation to the formal inauguration of 'A Residential Fellowship for the Arts, Research and Creativity'. Although the venue of the inauguration was the Cultural Centre, Kuto in Abeokuta, I had tagged along with Kunle Ajibade one of Prof Soyinka's close associates who had come ahead of the invitees to put final touches to the preparations.

To arrive that early in Abeokuta meant leaving Lagos just as the muezzins in the local mosques called for the early morning prayers. Even at that hour, the Lagos-Ota road through which we had travelled to Abeokuta was already choked with traffic.

Matters were not helped by the deplorable state of the road where whole sections of the road were full of pot holes the size of gullies. Mercifully, things got better immediately after Ota and we could then glide down the well paved road. At Ewekoro, white dusty villages and farms flew past as the whole environment laid prostrate under tons of white powder from the nearby Cement Factory. Finally, we arrived Abeokuta long before the inauguration and made straight for Kemta Estate. Kunle and I were still a few metres from the entrance to Kongi's residence when we saw the Nobel Laureate coming out of a building which turned out to be the residential annexe for the junior fellows.
As always, I was immediately captivated by the aura of the 81 year old savant. In spite of the years, he was in good health, his white fluffy mane glistening in the early morning sunshine. Although he appeared quiet and introspective, his brown eyes danced with excitement like a man who had not only experienced life but had also endured and come out victorious.

On sighting me, Kongi said, “Hello Wale. I saw your mail,” quickly disposing of an unfinished business between us.

Kunle and I then joined Prof in his black SUV for the short trip to the entrance of the forest enclave where we disembarked.

I was impressed by the vast forest which I was told is about 4.2 hectares in size.

And as we walked, our host gave a running commentary of his empire made up of an enchanting greenery, immaculate manicured lawns and soothing flowers that yielded to the gentle wriggle of the rhythm of the early morning breeze.

A few minutes later, we came out of the forest and were greeted by a brick-walled, picturesque villa deliberately tucked into the far corner of the forest.

It was a lovely house, enormous and quiet and romantically mysterious like the owner and designer. With its high ceilings, priceless art work, memento-adorned walls and sparse but tasteful furniture, it gave an aura of quiet grandeur, the type you see only in the homes of the deep.

Expectedly, the house had many parts to it; an amphitheatre, an inner chamber for Ibale Agba (elders) with its own wine cellar, many sitting rooms as well as four large double bedrooms for the use of senior fellows.

Suddenly, Kongi turned to me. “Wale, this is where you will stay when you come for your own residency.”

I quickly muttered my thanks for what I considered an open invitation. Kunle and I were later introduced to Kongi’s elder sister, Mrs Tinu Aina who had come visiting. It was obvious that she was still the dotting elder sister as she passed some snacks to Kongi for onwards transmission to another younger brother, Prof Femi Soyinka, Emeritus Professor of medicine and my former teacher in Medical School.

As we continued the tour, our host reminded us that the whole house got its power supply from solar energy which ran the house for 24 hours. He also let us into the objectives of the residency.

It was soon time to go for the Inauguration Ceremony at the Cultural Centre in town.

That was when Kongi reminded Kunle of his role as one of the readers at the event. Kunle told him that he would be reading from Soyinka’s Ake.

“I was looking forward to you reading from your book Jailed for Life. It will be nice to hear a former prisoner recount his experience,” Kongi had responded.

And as we all laughed at the joke, Kunle quickly retorted, “But sir, you were there before me.”

“I was never jailed, just put in a long drawn detention whereas in your case, you were a condemned prisoner,” came Kongi’s response amidst another bout of laughter. As we all laughed at the joke, I quietly informed another guest that from the calibre of the writers invited for the occasion, I seemed to be the only one who had not been to detention or jail before.

“You are an ‘aje butter’ (butter fed, mild) writer. You can’t write what will take you to jail. Unfortunately it is too late to do otherwise. Buhari is not in the mood to jail any writer now that he is a born again democrat,” my friend replied.
“Also on ground at the residence was Christopher Okigbo’s daughter, Obiageli who had come to unveil a room named in her father’s honour as well as being a pioneer senior fellow at the residency.

At Kuto Cultural Centre, we were welcomed by a platoon of Pyrates Confraternity members in their traditional black, red and white outfits as they sang and danced to the delight of visitors.

Apart from politicians, students, Pyrates, former prisoners and detainees, members of the literati such as Francesca Emmanuel, Promise Okeke, Kole Omotosho, Odia Ofeimun, Remi Raji, Igini Barrett, Dapo Adeniyi, Jumoke Verissimo and Hakeem Lasisi among others were all there to support their own.

It was a long but fascinating Inauguration made up of speeches, poetry recitations, readings, a film screening as well a performance of excerpts of Wole Soyinka’s Alapata Apata by Tunde Awosanni.

In his closing remarks, Prof Soyinka expressed his happiness at the fact that many Writers’ Residencies were coming up in the country around the same time.

These were Wale Okediran’s Ebedi Residency in Iseyin, Oyo State, Femi Osofisan’s Residency in Ibadan as well as J.P Clarke’s Residency in Kiagbodo, Delta State.

As I came to the end of the refreshing weekend with one of the greatest living writers in the world, I counted myself lucky of such worthy honour.

In the past, some of my literary weekends spent with the likes of Anton Chekhov, Kwame Nkrumah and Winston Churchill to mention just a few had been done posthumously through their books. As a recorder of men and events, I considered spending another literary weekend with a living legend a rare honour.

I admit that I wasn’t doing anything original, only following in the footsteps of some of the masters; the storytellers, dreamers and thinkers who as life’s legendary witnesses have witnessed and recorded far greater events: Plato, Dante, D. H. Lawrence, Leo Tolstoy, Chinua Achebe, Abubakar Imam to name a few.

Having set the pace, their fame has become inseparable from civilization’s glory despite the fact that the bond between writer and society seems to fade with each passing year.

Our duty therefore as legatees of this ancient craft is to refreshen the bond by dreaming, wandering and recording society as it is.

The sun was still up when I finally took my leave of this remarkable and respected writer. And as my car drove out of the Cultural Centre, Kuto, in the Saturday sunshine. I looked back to see him standing, talking, gesticulating in his trade mark fashion.

He stood there in the warm glow of the sun, ram rod straight, his white fluffy mane shining like a famous statue with all the aura of a man who has lived to tell his tale.
Dr. Wale Okediran, a Medical Doctor and Former Member of the Federal House of Representatives, Abuja (2003-2007) is a former National President of the Association of Nigerian Authors (2005-2008) and the current Secretary General, Pan African Writers Association.

He is a published author of ten novels many of which have won local and international literary prizes such as, American Poetry Association Book Prize (Call To Worship, 1990), Commonwealth Literature Prize Shortlist (The Boys At The Border, 1991), ANA Prize for Children’s Literature (The Rescue of Uncle Babs, 1998), NLNG Nigerian Literature Prize Shortlist (Dreams Die At Twilight, 2004) Spectrum Books Prize For One of the Best 25 Books in Nigeria in the last 25 years (Dreams Die At Twilight, 2004), ANA Best Fiction Prize (Strange Encounters, 2005), and Wole Soyinka Prize for Literature in Africa shortlist (The Weaving Looms 2008).

His book, TENANTS OF THE HOUSE which is a fictional account of his stay in the Federal House of Representatives (2003-2007) was the co-winner of the 2010 Wole Soyinka Prize for African Literature and has now been adapted as a motion picture.
The chief advantage that would result from the establishment of Socialism is, undoubtedly, the fact that Socialism would relieve us from that sordid necessity of living for others which, in the present condition of things, presses so hardly upon almost everybody. In fact, scarcely anyone at all escapes.

Now and then, in the course of the century, a great man of science, like Darwin; a great poet, like Keats; a fine critical spirit, like M. Renan; a supreme artist, like Flaubert, has been able to isolate himself, to keep himself out of reach of the clamorous claims of others, to stand ‘under the shelter of the wall,’ as Plato puts it, and so to realise the perfection of what was in him, to his own incomparable gain, and to the incomparable and lasting gain of the whole world. These, however, are exceptions. The majority of people spoil their lives by an unhealthy and exaggerated altruism – are forced, indeed, so to spoil them. They find themselves surrounded by hideous poverty, by hideous ugliness, by hideous starvation. It is inevitable that they should be strongly moved by all this. The emotions of man are stirred more quickly than man’s intelligence; and, as I pointed out some time ago in an article on the function of criticism, it is much more easy to have sympathy with suffering than it is to have sympathy with thought. Accordingly, with admirable, though misdirected intentions, they very seriously and very sentimentally set themselves to the task of remedying the evils that they see. But their remedies do not cure the disease: they merely prolong it. Indeed, their remedies are part of the disease.

They try to solve the problem of poverty, for instance, by keeping the poor alive; or, in the case of a very advanced school, by amusing the poor. But this is not a solution: it is an aggravation of the difficulty. The proper aim is to try and reconstruct society on such a basis that poverty will be impossible. And the altruistic virtues have really prevented the carrying out of this aim. Just as the worst slave-owners were those who were kind to their slaves, and so prevented the horror of the system being realised by those who suffered from it, and understood by those who contemplated it, so, in the present state of things in England, the people who do most harm are the people who try to do most good; and at last we have had the spectacle of men who have really studied the problem and know the life – educated men who live in the East End – coming forward and imploring the community to restrain its altruistic impulses of charity, benevolence, and the like. They do so on the ground that such charity degrades and demoralises. They are perfectly right. Charity creates a multitude of sins.

There is also this to be said. It is immoral to use private property in order to alleviate the horrible evils that result from the institution of private property. It is both immoral and unfair.

Under Socialism all this will, of course, be altered. There will be no people living in fetid dens and fetid rags, and bringing up unhealthy, hunger-pinched children in the midst of impossible and absolutely repulsive surroundings. The security of society will not depend, as it does now, on the state of the weather. If a frost comes we shall not have a hundred thousand men out of work, tramping about the streets in a state of disgusting misery, or whining to their neighbours for alms, or crowding round the doors of loathsome shelters to try and secure a hunch of bread and a night’s unclean lodging. Each member of the society will share in the general prosperity and happiness of the society, and if a frost comes no one will practically be anything the worse.

Upon the other hand, Socialism itself will be of value simply because it will lead to Individualism.
Socialism, Communism, or whatever one chooses to call it, by converting private property into public wealth, and substituting cooperation for competition, will restore society to its proper condition of a thoroughly healthy organism, and insure the material well-being of each member of the community. It will, in fact, give Life its proper basis and its proper environment. But for the full development of Life to its highest mode of perfection, something more is needed. What is needed is Individualism. If the Socialism is Authoritarian; if there are Governments armed with economic power as they are now with political power; if, in a word, we are to have Industrial Tyrannies, then the last state of man will be worse than the first. At present, in consequence of the existence of private property, a great many people are enabled to develop a certain very limited amount of Individualism. They are either under no necessity to work for their living, or are enabled to choose the sphere of activity that is really congenial to them, and gives them pleasure. These are the poets, the philosophers, the men of science, the men of culture – in a word, the real men, the men who have realised themselves, and in whom all Humanity gains a partial realisation. Upon the other hand, there are a great many people who, having no private property of their own, and being always on the brink of sheer starvation, are compelled to do the work of beasts of burden, to do work that is quite uncongenial to them, and to which they are forced by the peremptory, unreasonable, degrading Tyranny of want. These are the poor, and amongst them there is no grace of manner, or charm of speech, or civilisation, or culture, or refinement in pleasures, or joy of life. From their collective force Humanity gains much in material prosperity. But it is only the material result that it gains, and the man who is poor is in himself absolutely of no importance. He is merely the infinitesimal atom of a force that, so far from regarding him, crushes him: indeed, prefers him crushed, as in that case he is far more obedient.

Of course, it might be said that the Individualism generated under conditions of private property is not always, or even as a rule, of a fine or wonderful type, and that the poor, if they have not culture and charm, have still many virtues. Both these statements would be quite true. The possession of private property is very often extremely demoralising, and that is, of course, one of the reasons why Socialism wants to get rid of the institution. In fact, property is really a nuisance. Some years ago people went about the country saying that property has duties. They said it so often and so tediously that, at last, the Church has begun to say it. One hears it now from every pulpit. It is perfectly true. Property not merely has duties, but has so many duties that its possession to any large extent is a bore. It involves endless claims upon one, endless attention to business, endless bother. If property had simply pleasures, we could stand it; but its duties make it unbearable. In the interest of the rich we must get rid of it. The virtues of the poor may be readily admitted, and are much to be regretted. We are often told that the poor are grateful for charity. Some of them are, no doubt, but the best amongst the poor are never grateful. They are ungrateful, discontented, disobedient, and rebellious. They are quite right to be so. Charity they feel to be a ridiculously inadequate mode of partial restitution, or a sentimental dole, usually accompanied by some impertinent attempt on the part of the sentimentalist to tyrannise over their private lives. Why should they be grateful for the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table? They should be seated at the board, and are beginning to know it. As for being discontented, a man who would not be discontented with such surroundings and such a low mode of life would be a perfect brute. Disobedience, in the eyes of anyone who has read history, is man's original virtue. It is through disobedience that progress has been made, through disobedience and through rebellion. Sometimes the poor are praised for being thrifty. But to recommend thrift to the poor is both grotesque and insulting. It is like advising a man who is starving to eat less. For a town or country labourer to practise thrift would be absolutely immoral. Man should not be ready to show that he can live like a badly-fed animal. He should decline to live like that, and should either steal or go on the rates, which is considered by many to be a form of stealing. As for begging, it is safer to beg than to take, but it is finer to take than to beg. No: a poor man who is ungrateful, unthrifty, discontented, and rebellious, is probably a real personality, and has much in him. He is at any rate a healthy protest. As for the virtuous poor, one can pity them, of course, but one cannot possibly admire them. They have made private terms with the enemy, and sold their birthright for very bad pottage. They must also
be extraordinarily stupid. I can quite understand a man accepting laws that protect private property, and admit of its accumulation, as long as he himself is able under those conditions to realise some form of beautiful and intellectual life. But it is almost incredible to me how a man whose life is marred and made hideous by such laws can possibly acquiesce in their continuance.

However, the explanation is not really difficult to find. It is simply this. Misery and poverty are so absolutely degrading, and exercise such a paralysing effect over the nature of men, that no class is ever really conscious of its own suffering. They have to be told of it by other people, and they often entirely disbelieve them. What is said by great employers of labour against agitators is unquestionably true. Agitators are a set of interfering, meddling people, who come down to some perfectly contented class of the community, and sow the seeds of discontent amongst them. That is the reason why agitators are so absolutely necessary. Without them, in our incomplete state, there would be no advance towards civilisation. Slavery was put down in America, not in consequence of any action on the part of the slaves, or even any express desire on their part that they should be free. It was put down entirely through the grossly illegal conduct of certain agitators in Boston and elsewhere, who were not slaves themselves, nor owners of slaves, nor had anything to do with the question really. It was, undoubtedly, the Abolitionists who set the torch alight, who began the whole thing. And it is curious to note that from the slaves themselves they received, not merely very little assistance, but hardly any sympathy even; and when at the close of the war the slaves found themselves free, found themselves indeed so absolutely free that they were free to starve, many of them bitterly regretted the new state of things. To the thinker, the most tragic fact in the whole of the French Revolution is that Marie Antoinette was killed for being a queen, but that the starved peasant of the Vendee voluntarily went out to die for the hideous cause of feudalism.

It is clear, then, that no Authoritarian Socialism will do. For while under the present system a very large number of people can lead lives of a certain amount of freedom and expression and happiness, under an industrial-barrack system, or a system of economic tyranny, nobody would be able to have any such freedom at all. It is to be regretted that a portion of our community should be practically in slavery, but to propose to solve the problem by enslaving the entire community is childish. Every man must be left quite free to choose his own work. No form of compulsion must be exercised over him. If there is, his work will not be good for him, will not be good in itself, and will not be good for others. And by work I simply mean activity of any kind.

I hardly think that any Socialist, nowadays, would seriously propose that an inspector should call every morning at each house to see that each citizen rose up and did manual labour for eight hours. Humanity has got beyond that stage, and reserves such a form of life for the people whom, in a very arbitrary manner, it chooses to call criminals. But I confess that many of the socialistic views that I have come across seem to me to be tainted with ideas of authority, if not of actual compulsion. Of course, authority and compulsion are out of the question. All association must be quite voluntary. It is only in voluntary associations that man is fine.

But it may be asked how Individualism, which is now more or less dependent on the existence of private property for its development, will benefit by the abolition of such private property. The answer is very simple. It is true that, under existing conditions, a few men who have had private means of their own, such as Byron, Shelley, Browning, Victor Hugo, Baudelaire, and others, have been able to realise their personality more or less completely. Not one of these men ever did a single day’s work for hire. They were relieved from poverty. They had an immense advantage. The question is whether it would be for the good of Individualism that such an advantage should be taken away. Let us suppose that it is taken away. What happens then to Individualism? How will it benefit?

It will benefit in this way. Under the new conditions Individualism will be far freer, far finer, and far more intensified than it is now. I am not talking of the great imaginatively realised Individualism of such poets as I have mentioned, but of the great actual Individualism latent and potential in mankind generally. For the recognition of private property has really harmed Individualism, and obscured it, by confusing a man with what he possesses. It has led Individualism entirely astray. It has made gain not growth its aim.
So that man thought that the important thing was to have, and did not know that the important thing is to be. The true perfection of man lies, not in what man has, but in what man is.

Private property has crushed true Individualism, and set up an Individualism that is false. It has debarred one part of the community from being individual by starving them. It has debarred the other part of the community from being individual by putting them on the wrong road, and encumbering them. Indeed, so completely has man’s personality been absorbed by his possessions that the English law has always treated offences against a man’s property with far more severity than offences against his person, and property is still the test of complete citizenship. The industry necessary for the making money is also very demoralising. In a community like ours, where property confers immense distinction, social position, honour, respect, titles, and other pleasant things of the kind, man, being naturally ambitious, makes it his aim to accumulate this property, and goes on wearily and tediously accumulating it long after he has got far more than he wants, or can use, or enjoy, or perhaps even know of. Man will kill himself by overwork in order to secure property, and really, considering the enormous advantages that property brings, one is hardly surprised.

One’s regret is that society should be constructed on such a basis that man has been forced into a groove in which he cannot freely develop what is wonderful, and fascinating, and delightful in him – in which, in fact, he misses the true pleasure and joy of living. He is also, under existing conditions, very insecure. An enormously wealthy merchant may be – often is – at every moment of his life at the mercy of things that are not under his control. If the wind blows an extra point or so, or the weather suddenly changes, or some trivial thing happens, his ship may go down, his speculations may go wrong, and he finds himself a poor man, with his social position quite gone. Now, nothing should be able to harm a man except himself. Nothing should be able to rob a man at all. What a man really has, is what is in him. What is outside of him should be a matter of no importance.

With the abolition of private property, then, we shall have true, beautiful, healthy Individualism. Nobody will waste his life in accumulating things, and the symbols for things. One will live. To live is the rarest thing in the world. Most people exist, that is all. It is a question whether we have ever seen the full expression of a personality, except on the imaginative plane of art. In action, we never have. Caesar, says Mommsen, was the complete and perfect man. But how tragically insecure was Caesar! Wherever there is a man who exercises authority, there is a man who resists authority. Caesar was very perfect, but his perfection travelled by too dangerous a road. Marcus Aurelius was the perfect man, says Renan. Yes; the great emperor was a perfect man. But how intolerable were the endless claims upon him! He staggered under the burden of the empire. He was conscious how inadequate one man was to bear the weight of that Titan and too vast orb. What I mean by a perfect man is one who develops under perfect conditions; one who is not wounded, or worried or maimed, or in danger. Most personalities have been obliged to be rebels. Half their strength has been wasted in friction. Byron’s personality, for instance, was terribly wasted in its battle with the stupidity, and hypocrisy, and Philistinism of the English. Such battles do not always intensify strength: they often exaggerate weakness. Byron was never able to give us what he might have given us. Shelley escaped better. Like Byron, he got out of England as soon as possible. But he was not so well known. If the English had had any idea of what a great poet he really was, they would have fallen on him with tooth and nail, and made his life as unbearable to him as they possibly could. But he was not a remarkable figure in society, and consequently he escaped, to a certain degree. Still, even in Shelley the note of rebellion is sometimes too strong. The note of the perfect personality is not rebellion, but peace.

It will be a marvellous thing – the true personality of man – when we see it. It will grow naturally and simply, flowerlike, or as a tree grows. It will not be at discord. It will never argue or dispute. It will not prove things. It will know everything. And yet it will not busy itself about knowledge. It will have wisdom. Its value will not be measured by material things. It will have nothing. And yet it will have everything, and whatever one takes from it, it will still have, so rich will it be. It will not be always meddling with others, or
asking them to be like itself. It will love them because they will be different. And yet while it will not meddle with others, it will help all, as a beautiful thing helps us, by being what it is. The personality of man will be very wonderful. It will be as wonderful as the personality of a child.

In its development it will be assisted by Christianity, if men desire that; but if men do not desire that, it will develop none the less surely. For it will not worry itself about the past, nor care whether things happened or did not happen. Nor will it admit any laws but its own laws; nor any authority but its own authority. Yet it will love those who sought to intensify it, and speak often of them. And of these Christ was one.

‘Know thyself’ was written over the portal of the antique world. Over the portal of the new world, ‘Be thyself’ shall be written. And the message of Christ to man was simply ‘Be thyself.’ That is the secret of Christ.

When Jesus talks about the poor he simply means personalities, just as when he talks about the rich he simply means people who have not developed their personalities. Jesus moved in a community that allowed the accumulation of private property just as ours does, and the gospel that he preached was not that in such a community it is an advantage for a man to live on scanty, unwholesome food, to wear ragged, unwholesome clothes, to sleep in horrid, unwholesome dwellings, and a disadvantage for a man to live under healthy, pleasant, and decent conditions. Such a view would have been wrong there and then, and would, of course, be still more wrong now and in England; for as man moves northward the material necessities of life become of more vital importance, and our society is infinitely more complex, and displays far greater extremes of luxury and pauperism than any society of the antique world. What Jesus meant, was this. He said to man, ‘You have a wonderful personality. Develop it. Be yourself. Don’t imagine that your perfection lies in accumulating or possessing external things. Your affection is inside of you. If only you could realise that, you would not want to be rich. Ordinary riches can be stolen from a man. Real riches cannot. In the treasury-house of your soul, there are infinitely precious things, that may not be taken from you. And so, try to so shape your life that external things will not harm you.

And try also to get rid of personal property. It involves sordid preoccupation, endless industry, continual wrong. Personal property hinders Individualism at every step.’ It is to be noted that Jesus never says that impoverished people are necessarily good, or wealthy people necessarily bad. That would not have been true. Wealthy people are, as a class, better than impoverished people, more moral, more intellectual, more well-behaved. There is only one class in the community that thinks more about money than the rich, and that is the poor. The poor can think of nothing else. That is the misery of being poor. What Jesus does say is that man reaches his perfection, not through what he has, not even through what he does, but entirely through what he is. And so the wealthy young man who comes to Jesus is represented as a thoroughly good citizen, who has broken none of the laws of his state, none of the commandments of his religion. He is quite respectable, in the ordinary sense of that extraordinary word. Jesus says to him, ‘You should give up private property. It hinders you from realising your perfection. It is a drag upon you. It is a burden. Your personality does not need it. It is within you, and not outside of you, that you will find what you really are, and what you really want.’ To his own friends he says the same thing. He tells them to be themselves, and not to be always worrying about other things. What do other things matter? Man is complete in himself. When they go into the world, the world will disagree with them. That is inevitable. The world hates Individualism. But that is not to trouble them. They are to be calm and self-centred. If a man takes their cloak, they are to give him their coat, just to show that material things are of no importance. If people abuse them, they are not to answer back. What does it signify? The things people say of a man do not alter a man. He is what he is. Public opinion is of no value whatsoever. Even if people employ actual violence, they are not to be violent in turn. That would be to fall to the same low level. After all, even in prison, a man can be quite free. His soul can be free. His personality can be untroubled. He can be at peace. And, above all things, they are not to interfere with other people or judge them in any way. Personality is a very mysterious thing. A man cannot always be estimated by what he does. He may
keep the law, and yet be worthless. He may break the law, and yet be fine. He may be bad, without ever doing anything bad. He may commit a sin against society, and yet realise through that sin his true perfection.

There was a woman who was taken in adultery. We are not told the history of her love, but that love must have been very great; for Jesus said that her sins were forgiven her, not because she repented, but because her love was so intense and wonderful. Later on, a short time before his death, as he sat at a feast, the woman came in and poured costly perfumes on his hair. His friends tried to interfere with her, and said that it was an extravagance, and that the money that the perfume cost should have been expended on charitable relief of people in want, or something of that kind. Jesus did not accept that view. He pointed out that the material needs of Man were great and very permanent, but that the spiritual needs of Man were greater still, and that in one divine moment, and by selecting its own mode of expression, a personality might make itself perfect. The world worships the woman, even now, as a saint.

Yes; there are suggestive things in Individualism. Socialism annihilates family life, for instance. With the abolition of private property, marriage in its present form must disappear. This is part of the programme. Individualism accepts this and makes it fine. It converts the abolition of legal restraint into a form of freedom that will help the full development of personality, and make the love of man and woman more wonderful, more beautiful, and more ennobling. Jesus knew this. He rejected the claims of family life, although they existed in his day and community in a very marked form. ‘Who is my mother? Who are my brothers?’ he said, when he was told that they wished to speak to him. When one of his followers asked leave to go and bury his father, ‘Let the dead bury the dead,’ was his terrible answer. He would allow no claim whatsoever to be made on personality.

And so he who would lead a Christlike life is he who is perfectly and absolutely himself. He may be a great poet, or a great man of science; or a young student at a University, or one who watches sheep upon a moor; or a maker of dramas, like Shakespeare, or a thinker about God, like Spinoza; or a child who plays in a garden, or a fisherman who throws his net into the sea. It does not matter what he is, as long as he realises the perfection of the soul that is within him. All imitation in morals and in life is wrong. Through the streets of Jerusalem at the present day crawls one who is mad and carries a wooden cross on his shoulders. He is a symbol of the lives that are marred by imitation. Father Damien was Christlike when he went out to live with the lepers, because in such service he realised fully what was best in him. But he was not more Christlike than Wagner when he realised his soul in music; or than Shelley, when he realised his soul in song. There is no one type for man. There are as many perfections as there are imperfect men. And while to the claims of charity a man may yield and yet be free, to the claims of conformity no man may yield and remain free at all.

Individualism, then, is what through Socialism we are to attain to. As a natural result the State must give up all idea of government. It must give it up because, as a wise man once said many centuries before Christ, there is such a thing as leaving mankind alone; there is no such thing as governing mankind. All modes of government are failures. Despotism is unjust to everybody, including the despot, who was probably made for better things. Oligarchies are unjust to the many, and ochlocracies are unjust to the few. High hopes were once formed of democracy; but democracy means simply the bludgeoning of the people by the people for the people. It has been found out. I must say that it was high time, for all authority is quite degrading. It degrades those who exercise it, and degrades those over whom it is exercised. When it is violently, grossly, and cruelly used, it produces a good effect, by creating, or at any rate bringing out, the spirit of revolt and Individualism that is to kill it. When it is used with a certain amount of kindness, and accompanied by prizes and rewards, it is dreadfully demoralising. People, in that case, are less conscious of the horrible pressure that is being put on them, and so go through their lives in a sort of coarse comfort, like petted animals, without ever realising that they are probably thinking other people’s thoughts, living by other people’s standards, wearing practically what one may call other people’s second-hand clothes, and never being themselves for a single moment. ‘He who would be free,’ says a fine thinker, ‘must not conform.’ And authority, by bribing people to conform, produces a very gross kind of over-fed barbarism amongst us.
With authority, punishment will pass away. This will be a great gain – a gain, in fact, of incalculable value. As one reads history, not in the expurgated editions written for school-boys and passmen, but in the original authorities of each time, one is absolutely sickened, not by the crimes that the wicked have committed, but by the punishments that the good have inflicted; and a community is infinitely more brutalised by the habitual employment of punishment, than it is by the occurrence of crime. It obviously follows that the more punishment is inflicted the more crime is produced, and most modern legislation has clearly recognised this, and has made it its task to diminish punishment as far as it thinks it can. Wherever it has really diminished it, the results have always been extremely good. The less punishment, the less crime. When there is no punishment at all, crime will either cease to exist, or, if it occurs, will be treated by physicians as a very distressing form of dementia, to be cured by care and kindness. For what are called criminals nowadays are not criminals at all. Starvation, and not sin, is the parent of modern crime. That indeed is the reason why our criminals are, as a class, so absolutely uninteresting from any psychological point of view. They are not marvellous Macbeths and terrible Vautrins. They are merely what ordinary, respectable, commonplace people would be if they had not got enough to eat. When private property is abolished there will be no necessity for crime, no demand for it; it will cease to exist. Of course, all crimes are not crimes against property, though such are the crimes that the English law, valuing what a man has more than what a man is, punishes with the harshest and most horrible severity, if we except the crime of murder, and regard death as worse than penal servitude, a point on which our criminals, I believe, disagree. But though a crime may not be against property, it may spring from the misery and rage and depression produced by our wrong system of property-holding, and so, when that system is abolished, will disappear. When each member of the community has sufficient for his wants, and is not interfered with by his neighbour, it will not be an object of any interest to him to interfere with anyone else. Jealousy, which is an extraordinary source of crime in modern life, is an emotion closely bound up with our conceptions of property, and under Socialism and Individualism will die out. It is remarkable that in communistic tribes jealousy is entirely unknown.

Now as the State is not to govern, it may be asked what the State is to do. The State is to be a voluntary association that will organise labour, and be the manufacturer and distributor of necessary commodities. The State is to make what is useful. The individual is to make what is beautiful. And as I have mentioned the word labour, I cannot help saying that a great deal of nonsense is being written and talked nowadays about the dignity of manual labour. There is nothing necessarily dignified about manual labour at all, and most of it is absolutely degrading. It is mentally and morally injurious to man to do anything in which he does not find pleasure, and many forms of labour are quite pleasureless activities, and should be regarded as such. To sweep a slushy crossing for eight hours, on a day when the east wind is blowing is disgusting occupation. To sweep it with mental, moral, or physical dignity seems to me to be impossible. To sweep it with joy would be appalling. Man is made for something better than disturbing dirt. All work of that kind should be done by a machine.

And I have no doubt that it will be so. Up to the present, man has been, to a certain extent, the slave of machinery, and there is something tragic in the fact that as soon as man had invented a machine to do his work he began to starve. This, however, is, of course, the result of our property system and our system of competition. One man owns a machine which does the work of five hundred men. Five hundred men are, in consequence, thrown out of employment, and, having no work to do, become hungry and take to thieving. The one man secures the produce of the machine and keeps it, and has five hundred times as much as he should have, and probably, which is of much more importance, a great deal more than he really wants. Were that machine the property of all, every one would benefit by it. It would be an immense advantage to the community. All unIntellectual labour, all monotonous, dull labour, all labour that deals with dreadful things, and involves unpleasant conditions, must be done by machinery. Machinery must work for us in coal mines, and do all sanitary services, and be the stoker of steamers, and clean the streets, and run messages on wet days, and do
anything that is tedious or distressing. At present machinery competes against man. Under proper conditions machinery will serve
man. There is no doubt at all that this is the future of machinery, and just as trees grow while the country gentleman is asleep, so
while Humanity will be amusing itself, or enjoying cultivated leisure——which, and not labour, is the aim of man——or making beautiful
things, or reading beautiful things, or simply contemplating the world with admiration and delight, machinery will be doing all the
necessary and unpleasant work. The fact is, that civilisation requires slaves. The Greeks were quite right there. Unless there are
slaves to do the ugly, horrible, uninteresting work, culture and contemplation become almost impossible. Human slavery is wrong,
insecure, and demoralising. On mechanical slavery, on the slavery of the machine, the future of the world depends. And when scientific
men are no longer called upon to go down to a depressing East End and distribute bad cocoa and worse blankets to starving people,
they will have delightful leisure in which to devise wonderful and marvellous things for their own joy and the joy of everyone else.
There will be great storages of force for every city, and for every house if required, and this force will convert into heat, light, or
motion, according to his needs. Is this Utopian? A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it
leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a better
country, sets sail. Progress is the realisation of Utopias.

Now, I have said that the community by means of organisation of machinery will supply the useful things, and that the beautiful
things will be made by the individual. This is not merely necessary, but it is the only possible way by which we can get either the one
or the other. An individual who has to make things for the use of others, and with reference to their wants and their wishes, does not
work with interest, and consequently cannot put into his work what is best in him. Upon the other hand, whenever a community or a
powerful section of a community, or a government of any kind, attempts to dictate to the artist what he is to do, Art either entirely
vanishes, or becomes stereotyped, or degenerates into a low and ignoble form of craft. A work of art is the unique result of a unique
temperament. Its beauty comes from the fact that the author is what he is. It has nothing to do with the fact that other people want
what they want. Indeed, the moment that an artist takes notice of what other people want, and tries to supply the demand, he ceases
to be an artist, and becomes a dull or an amusing craftsman, an honest or a dishonest tradesman. He has no further claim to be
considered as an artist. Art is the most intense mode of Individualism that the world has known. I am inclined to say that it is the only
real mode of Individualism that the world has known. Crime, which, under certain conditions, may seem to have created Individualism,
must take cognisance of other people and interfere with them. It belongs to the sphere of action. But alone, without any reference to
his neighbours, without any interference, the artist can fashion a beautiful thing; and if he does not do it solely for his own pleasure, he
is not an artist at all.

And it is to be noted that it is the fact that Art is this intense form of Individualism that makes the public try to exercise over it in
an authority that is as immoral as it is ridiculous, and as corrupting as it is contemptible. It is not quite their fault. The public has
always, and in every age, been badly brought up. They are continually asking Art to be popular, to please their want of taste, to flatter
their absurd vanity, to tell them what they have been told before, to show them what they ought to be tired of seeing, to amuse them
when they feel heavy after eating too much, and to distract their thoughts when they are weary of their own stupidity. Now Art
should never try to be popular. The public should try to make itself artistic. There is a very wide difference. If a man of science were
told that the results of his experiments, and the conclusions that he arrived at, should be of such a character that they would not upset
the received popular notions on the subject, or disturb popular prejudice, or hurt the sensibilities of people who knew nothing about
science; if a philosopher were told that he had a perfect right to speculate in the highest spheres of thought, provided that he arrived at
the same conclusions as were held by those who had never thought in any sphere at all——well, nowadays the man of science and the
philosopher would be considerably amused. Yet it is really a very few years since both philosophy and science were subjected to brutal
popular control, to authority – in fact the authority of either the general ignorance of the community, or the terror and greed for power of an ecclesiastical or governmental class. Of course, we have to a very great extent got rid of any attempt on the part of the community, or the Church, or the Government, to interfere with the individualism of speculative thought, but the attempt to interfere with the individualism of imaginative art still lingers. In fact, it does more than linger; it is aggressive, offensive, and brutalising.

In England, the arts that have escaped best are the arts in which the public take no interest. Poetry is an instance of what I mean. We have been able to have fine poetry in England because the public do not read it, and consequently do not influence it. The public like to insult poets because they are individual, but once they have insulted them, they leave them alone. In the case of the novel and the drama, arts in which the public do take an interest, the result of the exercise of popular authority has been absolutely ridiculous. No country produces such badly-written fiction, such tedious, common work in the novel form, such silly, vulgar plays as England. It must necessarily be so. The popular standard is of such a character that no artist can get to it. It is at once too easy and too difficult to be a popular novelist. It is too easy, because the requirements of the public as far as plot, style, psychology, treatment of life, and treatment of literature are concerned are within the reach of the very meanest capacity and the most uncultivated mind. It is too difficult, because to meet such requirements the artist would have to do violence to his temperament, would have to write not for the artistic joy of writing, but for the amusement of half-educated people, and so would have to suppress his individualism, forget his culture, annihilate his style, and surrender everything that is valuable in him. In the case of the drama, things are a little better: the theatre-going public like the obvious, it is true, but they do not like the tedious; and burlesque and farcical comedy, the two most popular forms, are distinct forms of art. Delightful work may be produced under burlesque and farcical conditions, and in work of this kind the artist in England is allowed very great freedom. It is when one comes to the higher forms of the drama that the result of popular control is seen. The one thing that the public dislike is novelty. Any attempt to extend the subject-matter of art is extremely distasteful to the public; and yet the vitality and progress of art depend in a large measure on the continual extension of subject-matter. The public dislike novelty because they are afraid of it. It represents to them a mode of Individualism, an assertion on the part of the artist that he selects his own subject, and treats it as he chooses. The public are quite right in their attitude. Art is Individualism, and Individualism is a disturbing and disintegrating force. Therein lies its immense value. For what it seeks to disturb is monotony of type, slavery of custom, tyranny of habit, and the reduction of man to the level of a machine. In Art, the public accept what has been, because they cannot alter it, not because they appreciate it. They swallow their classics whole, and never taste them. They endure them as the inevitable, and as they cannot mar them, they mouth about them. Strangely enough, or not strangely, according to one’s own views, this acceptance of the classics does a great deal of harm. The uncritical admiration of the Bible and Shakespeare in England is an instance of what I mean. With regard to the Bible, considerations of ecclesiastical authority enter into the matter, so that I need not dwell upon the point. But in the case of Shakespeare it is quite obvious that the public really see neither the beauties nor the defects of his plays. If they saw the beauties, they would not object to the development of the drama; and if they saw the defects, they would not object to the development of the drama either. The fact is, the public make use of the classics of a country as a means of checking the progress of Art. They degrade the classics into authorities. They use them as bludgeons for preventing the free expression of Beauty in new forms. They are always asking a writer why he does not write like somebody else, or a painter why he does not paint like somebody else, quite oblivious of the fact that if either of them did anything of the kind he would cease to be an artist. A fresh mode of Beauty is absolutely distasteful to them, and whenever it appears they get so angry, and bewildered that they always use two stupid expressions – one is that the work of art is grossly unintelligible; the other, that the work of art is grossly immoral. What they mean by these words seems to me to be this. When they say a work is grossly unintelligible, they mean that the artist has said or made a beautiful thing that is new; when they describe a work as grossly immoral, they mean that the artist has said...
or made a beautiful thing that is true. The former expression has reference to style; the latter to subject-matter. But they probably use the words very vaguely, as an ordinary mob will use ready-made paving-stones. There is not a single real poet or prose-writer of this century, for instance, on whom the British public have not solemnly conferred diplomas of immorality, and these diplomas practically take the place, with us, of what in France, is the formal recognition of an Academy of Letters, and fortunately make the establishment of such an institution quite unnecessary in England. Of course, the public are very reckless in their use of the word. That they should have called Wordsworth an immoral poet, was only to be expected. Wordsworth was a poet. But that they should have called Charles Kingsley an immoral novelist is extraordinary. Kingsley's prose was not of a very fine quality. Still, there is the word, and they use it as best they can. An artist is, of course, not disturbed by it. The true artist is a man who believes absolutely in himself, because he is absolutely himself. But I can fancy that if an artist produced a work of art in England that immediately on its appearance was recognised by the public, through their medium, which is the public press, as a work that was quite intelligible and highly moral, he would begin to seriously question whether in its creation he had really been himself at all, and consequently whether the work was not quite unworthy of him, and either of a thoroughly second-rate order, or of no artistic value whatsoever.

Perhaps, however, I have wronged the public in limiting them to such words as 'immoral,' 'unintelligible,' 'exotic,' and 'unhealthy.' There is one other word that they use. That word is 'morbid.' They do not use it often. The meaning of the word is so simple that they are afraid of using it. Still, they use it sometimes, and, now and then, one comes across it in popular newspapers. It is, of course, a ridiculous word to apply to a work of art. For what is morbidity but a mood of emotion or a mode of thought that one cannot express? The public are all morbid, because the public can never find expression for anything. The artist is never morbid. He expresses everything. He stands outside his subject, and through its medium produces incomparable and artistic effects. To call an artist morbid because he deals with morbidity as his subject-matter is as silly as if one called Shakespeare mad because he wrote 'King Lear.'

On the whole, an artist in England gains something by being attacked. His individuality is intensified. He becomes more completely himself. Of course, the attacks are very gross, very impertinent, and very contemptible. But then no artist expects grace from the vulgar mind, or style from the suburban intellect. Vulgarity and stupidity are two very vivid facts in modern life. One regrets them, naturally. But there they are. They are subjects for study, like everything else. And it is only fair to state, with regard to modern journalists, that they always apologise to one in private for what they have written against one in public.

Within the last few years two other adjectives, it may be mentioned, have been added to the very limited vocabulary of art-abuse that is at the disposal of the public. One is the word 'unhealthy,' the other is the word 'exotic.' The latter merely expresses the rage of the momentary mushroom against the immortal, entrancing, and exquisitely lovely orchid. It is a tribute, but a tribute of no importance. The word 'unhealthy,' however, admits of analysis. It is a rather interesting word. In fact, it is so interesting that the people who use it do not know what it means.

What does it mean? What is a healthy, or an unhealthy work of art? All terms that one applies to a work of art, provided that one applies them rationally, have reference to either its style or its subject, or to both together. From the point of view of style, a healthy work of art is one whose style recognizes the beauty of the material it employs, be that material one of words or of bronze, of colour or of ivory, and uses that beauty as a factor in producing the aesthetic effect. From the point of view of subject, a healthy work of art is one the choice of whose subject is conditioned by the temperament of the artist, and comes directly out of it. In fine, a healthy work of art is one that has both perfection and personality. Of course, form and substance cannot be separated in a work of art; they are always one. But for purposes of analysis, and setting the wholeness of aesthetic impression aside for a moment, we can intellectually so separate them. An unhealthy work of art, on the other hand, is a work whose style is obvious, old-fashioned, and common, and whose subject is deliberately chosen, not because the artist has any pleasure in it, but because he thinks that the public will pay him
for it. In fact, the popular novel that the public calls healthy is always a thoroughly unhealthy production; and what the public call an unhealthy novel is always a beautiful and healthy work of art.

I need hardly say that I am not, for a single moment, complaining that the public and the public press misuse these words. I do not see how, with their lack of comprehension of what Art is, they could possibly use them in the proper sense. I am merely pointing out the misuse; and as for the origin of the misuse and the meaning that lies behind it all, the explanation is very simple. It comes from the barbarous conception of authority. It comes from the natural inability of a community corrupted by authority to understand or appreciate Individualism. In a word, it comes from that monstrous and ignorant thing that is called Public Opinion, which, bad and well-meaning as it is when it tries to control action, is infamous and of evil meaning when it tries to control Thought or Art.

Indeed, there is much more to be said in favour of the physical force of the public than there is in favour of the public’s opinion. The former may be fine. The latter must be foolish. It is often said that force is no argument. That, however, entirely depends on what one wants to prove. Many of the most important problems of the last few centuries, such as the continuance of personal government in England, or of feudalism in France, have been solved entirely by means of physical force. The very violence of a revolution may make the public grand and splendid for a moment. It was a fatal day when the public discovered that the pen is mightier than the paving-stone, and can be made as offensive as the brickbat. They at once sought for the journalist, found him, developed him, and made him their industrious and well-paid servant. It is greatly to be regretted, for both their sakes. Behind the barricade there may be much that is noble and heroic. But what is there behind the leading-article but prejudice, stupidity, cant, and twaddle? And when these four are joined together they make a terrible force, and constitute the new authority.

In old days men had the rack. Now they have the press. That is an improvement certainly. But still it is very bad, and wrong, and demoralizing. Somebody – was it Burke? – called journalism the fourth estate. That was true at the time, no doubt. But at the present moment it really is the only estate. It has eaten up the other three. The Lords Temporal say nothing, the Lords Spiritual have nothing to say, and the House of Commons has nothing to say and says it. We are dominated by Journalism. In America the President reigns for four years, and Journalism governs for ever and ever. Fortunately in America Journalism has carried its authority to the grossest and most brutal extreme. As a natural consequence it has begun to create a spirit of revolt. People are amused by it, or disgusted by it, according to their temperaments. But it is no longer the real force it was. It is not seriously treated. In England, Journalism, not, except in a few well-known instances, having been carried to such excesses of brutality, is still a great factor, a really remarkable power. The tyranny that it proposes to exercise over people’s private lives seems to me to be quite extraordinary. The fact is, that the public have an insatiable curiosity to know everything, except what is worth knowing. Journalism, conscious of this, and having tradesman-like habits, supplies their demands. In centuries before ours the public nailed the ears of journalists to the pump. That was quite hideous. In this century journalists have nailed their own ears to the keyhole. That is much worse. And what aggravates the mischief is that the journalists who are most to blame are not the amusing journalists who write for what are called Society papers. The harm is done by the serious, thoughtful, earnest journalists, who solemnly, as they are doing at present, will drag before the eyes of the public some incident in the private life of a great statesman, of a man who is a leader of political thought as he is a creator of political force, and invite the public to discuss the incident, to exercise authority in the matter, to give their views, and not merely to give their views, but to carry them into action, to dictate to the man upon all other points, to dictate to his party, to dictate to his country; in fact, to make themselves ridiculous, offensive, and harmful. The private lives of men and women should not be told to the public. The public have nothing to do with them at all. In France they manage these things better. There they do not allow the details of the trials that take place in the divorce courts to be published for the amusement or criticism of the public. All that the public are allowed to know is that the divorce has taken place and was granted on petition of one or other or both of the married parties.
concerned. In France, in fact, they limit the journalist, and allow the artist almost perfect freedom. Here we allow absolute freedom to the journalist, and entirely limit the artist. English public opinion, that is to say, tries to constrain and impede and warp the man who makes things that are beautiful in effect, and compels the journalist to retail things that are ugly, or disgusting, or revolting in fact, so that we have the most serious journalists in the world, and the most indecent newspapers. It is no exaggeration to talk of compulsion. There are possibly some journalists who take a real pleasure in publishing horrible things, or who, being poor, look to scandals as forming a sort of permanent basis for an income. But there are other journalists, I feel certain, men of education and cultivation, who really dislike publishing these things, who know that it is wrong to do so, and only do it because the unhealthy conditions under which their occupation is carried on oblige them to supply the public with what the public wants, and to compete with other journalists in making that supply as full and satisfying to the gross popular appetite as possible. It is a very degrading position for any body of educated men to be placed in, and I have no doubt that most of them feel it acutely.

However, let us leave what is really a very sordid side of the subject, and return to the question of popular control in the matter of Art, by which I mean Public Opinion dictating to the artist the form which he is to use, the mode in which he is to use it, and the materials with which he is to work. I have pointed out that the arts which have escaped best in England are the arts in which the public have not been interested. They are, however, interested in the drama, and as a certain advance has been made in the drama within the last ten or fifteen years, it is important to point out that this advance is entirely due to a few individual artists refusing to accept the popular want of taste as their standard, and refusing to regard Art as a mere matter of demand and supply. With his marvellous and vivid personality, with a style that has really a true colour-element in it, with his extraordinary power, not over mere mimicry but over imaginative and intellectual creation, Mr Irving, had his sole object been to give the public what they wanted, could have produced the commonest plays in the commonest manner, and made as much success and money as a man could possibly desire. But his object was not that. His object was to realise his own perfection as an artist, under certain conditions, and in certain forms of Art. At first he appealed to the few: now he has educated the many. He has created in the public both taste and temperament. The public appreciate his artistic success immensely. I often wonder, however, whether the public understand that that success is entirely due to the fact that he did not accept their standard, but realised his own. With their standard the Lyceum would have been a sort of second-rate booth, as some of the popular theatres in London are at present. Whether they understand it or not the fact however remains, that taste and temperament have, to a certain extent been created in the public, and that the public is capable of developing these qualities. The problem then is, why do not the public become more civilised? They have the capacity. What stops them?

The thing that stops them, it must be said again, is their desire to exercise authority over the artist and over works of art. To certain theatres, such as the Lyceum and the Haymarket, the public seem to come in a proper mood. In both of these theatres there have been individual artists, who have succeeded in creating in their audiences – and every theatre in London has its own audience – the temperament to which Art appeals. And what is that temperament? It is the temperament of receptivity. That is all.

If a man approaches a work of art with any desire to exercise authority over it and the artist, he approaches it in such a spirit that he cannot receive any artistic impression from it at all. The work of art is to dominate the spectator: the spectator is not to dominate the work of art. The spectator is to be receptive. He is to be the violin on which the master is to play. And the more completely he can suppress his own silly views, his own foolish prejudices, his own absurd ideas of what Art should be, or should not be, the more likely he is to understand and appreciate the work of art in question. This is, of course, quite obvious in the case of the vulgar theatre-going public of English men and women. But it is equally true of what are called educated people. For an educated person’s ideas of Art are drawn naturally from what Art has been, whereas the new work of art is beautiful by being what Art has never been; and to measure it by the standard of the past is to measure it by a standard on the rejection of which its real perfection depends. A temperament
capable of receiving, through an imaginative medium, and under imaginative conditions, new and beautiful impressions, is the only temperament that can appreciate a work of art. And true as this is in the case of the appreciation of sculpture and painting, it is still more true of the appreciation of such arts as the drama. For a picture and a statue are not at war with Time. They take no count of its succession. In one moment their unity may be apprehended. In the case of literature it is different. Time must be traversed before the unity of effect is realised. And so, in the drama, there may occur in the first act of the play something whose real artistic value may not be evident to the spectator till the third or fourth act is reached. Is the silly fellow to get angry and call out, and disturb the play, and annoy the artists? No. The honest man is to sit quietly, and know the delightful emotions of wonder, curiosity, and suspense. He is not to go to the play to lose a vulgar temper. He is to go to the play to realise an artistic temperament. He is to go to the play to gain an artistic temperament. He is not the arbiter of the work of art. He is one who is admitted to contemplate the work of art, and, if the work be fine, to forget in its contemplation and the egotism that mars him — the egotism of his ignorance, or the egotism of his information. This point about the drama is hardly, I think, sufficiently recognised. I can quite understand that were ‘Macbeth’ produced for the first time before a modern London audience, many of the people present would strongly and vigorously object to the introduction of the witches in the first act, with their grotesque phrases and their ridiculous words. But when the play is over one realises that the laughter of the witches in ‘Macbeth’ is as terrible as the laughter of madness in ‘Lear,’ more terrible than the laughter of Iago in the tragedy of the Moor. No spectator of art needs a more perfect mood of receptivity than the spectator of a play. The moment he seeks to exercise authority he becomes the avowed enemy of Art and of himself. Art does not mind. It is he who suffers.

With the novel it is the same thing. Popular authority and the recognition of popular authority are fatal. Thackeray’s ‘Esmond’ is a beautiful work of art because he wrote it to please himself. In his other novels, in ‘Pendennis,’ in ‘Philip,’ in ‘Vanity Fair’ even, at times, he is too conscious of the public, and spoils his work by appealing directly to the sympathies of the public, or by directly mocking at them. A true artist takes no notice whatever of the public. The public are to him non-existent. He has no poppied or honeyed cakes through which to give the monster sleep or sustenance. He leaves that to the popular novelist. One incomparable novelist we have now in England, Mr George Meredith. There are better artists in France, but France has no one whose view of life is so large, so varied, so imaginatively true. There are tellers of stories in Russia who have a more vivid sense of what pain in fiction may be. But to him belongs philosophy in fiction. His people not merely live, but they live in thought. One can see them from myriad points of view. They are suggestive. There is soul in them and around them. They are interpretative and symbolic. And he who made them, those wonderful quickly-moving figures, made them for his own pleasure, and has never asked the public what they wanted, has never cared to know what they wanted, has never allowed the public to dictate to him or influence him in any way but has gone on intensifying his own personality, and producing his own individual work. At first none came to him. That did not matter. Then the few came to him. That did not change him. The many have come now. He is still the same. He is an incomparable novelist. With the decorative arts it is not different. The public clung with really pathetic tenacity to what I believe were the direct traditions of the Great Exhibition of international vulgarity, traditions that were so appalling that the houses in which people lived were only fit for blind people to live in. Beautiful things began to be made, beautiful colours came from the dyer’s hand, beautiful patterns from the artist’s brain, and the use of beautiful things and their value and importance were set forth. The public were really very indignant. They lost their temper. They said silly things. No one minded. No one was a whit the worse. No one accepted the authority of public opinion. And now it is almost impossible to enter any modern house without seeing some recognition of good taste, some recognition of the value of lovely surroundings, some sign of appreciation of beauty. In fact, people’s houses are, as a rule, quite charming nowadays. People have been to a very great extent civilised. It is only fair to state, however, that the extraordinary success of the revolution in house-decoration and furniture and the like has not really been due to the majority of the public developing a very fine taste in such
It has been chiefly due to the fact that the craftsmen of things so appreciated the pleasure of making what was beautiful, and woke to such a vivid consciousness of the hideousness and vulgarity of what the public had previously wanted, that they simply starved the public out. It would be quite impossible at the present moment to furnish a room as rooms were furnished a few years ago, without going for everything to an auction of second-hand furniture from some third-rate lodging-house. The things are no longer made. However they may object to it, people must nowadays have something charming in their surroundings. Fortunately for them, their assumption of authority in these art-matters came to entire grief.

It is evident, then, that all authority in such things is bad. People sometimes inquire what form of government is most suitable for an artist to live under. To this question there is only one answer. The form of government that is most suitable to the artist is no government at all. Authority over him and his art is ridiculous. It has been stated that under despotisms artists have produced lovely work. This is not quite so. Artists have visited despots, not as subjects to be tyrannised over, but as wandering wonder-makers, as fascinating vagrant personalities, to be entertained and charmed and suffered to be at peace, and allowed to create. There is this to be said in favour of the despot, that he, being an individual, may have culture, while the mob, being a monster, has none. One who is an Emperor and King may stoop down to pick up a brush for a painter, but when the democracy stoops down it is merely to throw mud. And yet the democracy have not so far to stoop as the emperor. In fact, when they want to throw mud they have not to stoop at all. But there is no necessity to separate the monarch from the mob; all authority is equally bad.

There are three kinds of despots. There is the despot who tyrannises over the body. There is the despot who tyrannises over the soul. There is the despot who tyrannises over the soul and body alike. The first is called the Prince. The second is called the Pope. The third is called the People. The Prince may be cultivated. Many Princes have been. Yet in the Prince there is danger. One thinks of Dante at the bitter feast in Verona, of Tasso in Ferrara’s madman’s cell. It is better for the artist not to live with Princes. The Pope may be cultivated. Many Popes have been; the bad Popes have been. The bad Popes loved Beauty, almost as passionately, nay, with as much passion as the good Popes hated Thought. To the wickedness of the Papacy humanity owes much. The goodness of the Papacy owes a terrible debt to humanity. Yet, though the Vatican has kept the rhetoric of its thunders, and lost the rod of its lightning, it is better for the artist not to live with Popes. It was a Pope who said of Cellini to a conclave of Cardinals that common laws and common authority were not made for men such as he; but it was a Pope who thrust Cellini into prison, and kept him there till he sickened with rage, and created unreal visions for himself, and saw the gilded sun enter his room, and grew so enamoured of it that he sought to escape, and crept out from tower to tower, and falling through dizzy air at dawn, maimed himself, and was by a vine-dresser covered with vine leaves, and carried in a cart to one who, loving beautiful things, had care of him. There is danger in Popes. And as for the People, what of them and their authority? Perhaps of them and their authority one has spoken enough. Their authority is a thing blind, deaf, hideous, grotesque, tragic, amusing, serious, and obscene. It is impossible for the artist to live with the People. All despots bribe. The people bribe and brutalise. Who told them to exercise authority? They were made to live, to listen, and to love. Someone has done them a great wrong. They have marred themselves by imitation of their inferiors. They have taken the sceptre of the Prince. How should they use it? They have taken the triple tiara of the Pope. How should they carry its burden? They are as a clown whose heart is broken. They are as a priest whose soul is not yet born. Let all who love Beauty pity them. Though they themselves love not Beauty, yet let them pity themselves. Who taught them the trick of tyranny?

There are many other things that one might point out. One might point out how the Renaissance was great, because it sought to solve no social problem, and busied itself not about such things, but suffered the individual to develop freely, beautifully, and naturally, and so had great and individual artists, and great and individual men. One might point out how Louis XIV., by creating the modern state, destroyed the individualism of the artist, and made things monstrous in their monotony of repetition, and contemptible in their
conformity to rule, and destroyed throughout all France all those fine freedoms of expression that had made tradition new in beauty, and new modes one with antique form. But the past is of no importance. The present is of no importance. It is with the future that we have to deal. For the past is what man should not have been. The present is what man ought not to be. The future is what artists are.

It will, of course, be said that such a scheme as is set forth here is quite unpractical, and goes against human nature. This is perfectly true. It is unpractical, and it goes against human nature. This is why it is worth carrying out, and that is why one proposes it. For what is a practical scheme? A practical scheme is either a scheme that is already in existence, or a scheme that could be carried out under existing conditions. But it is exactly the existing conditions that one objects to; and any scheme that could accept these conditions is wrong and foolish. The conditions will be done away with, and human nature will change. The only thing that one really knows about human nature is that it changes. Change is the one quality we can predicate of it. The systems that fail are those that rely on the permanency of human nature, and not on its growth and development. The error of Louis XIV. was that he thought human nature would always be the same. The result of his error was the French Revolution. It was an admirable result. All the results of the mistakes of governments are quite admirable.

It is to be noted also that Individualism does not come to man with any sickly cant about duty, which merely means doing what other people want because they want it; or any hideous cant about self-sacrifice, which is merely a survival of savage mutilation. In fact, it does not come to man with any claims upon him at all. It comes naturally and inevitably out of man. It is the point to which all development tends. It is the differentiation to which all organisms grow. It is the perfection that is inherent in every mode of life, and towards which every mode of life quickens. And so Individualism exercises no compulsion over man. On the contrary, it says to man that he should suffer no compulsion to be exercised over him. It does not try to force people to be good. It knows that people are good when they are let alone. Man will develop Individualism out of himself. Man is now so developing Individualism. To ask whether Individualism is practical is like asking whether Evolution is practical. Evolution is the law of life, and there is no evolution except towards Individualism. Where this tendency is not expressed, it is a case of artificially-arrested growth, or of disease, or of death.

are now. For the egotist is he who makes claims upon others, and the Individualist will not desire to do that. It will not give him pleasure. When man has realised Individualism, he will also realise sympathy and exercise it freely and spontaneously. Up to the present man has hardly cultivated sympathy at all. He has merely sympathy with pain, and sympathy with pain is not the highest form of sympathy. All sympathy is fine, but sympathy with suffering is the least fine mode. It is tainted with egotism. It is apt to become morbid. There is in it a certain element of terror for our own safety. We become afraid that we ourselves might be as the leper or as the blind, and that no man would have care of us. It is curiously limiting, too. One should sympathise with the entirety of life, not with life's sores and maladies merely, but with life's joy and beauty and energy and health and freedom. The wider sympathy is, of course, the more difficult. It requires more unselfishness. Anybody can sympathise with the sufferings of a friend, but it requires a very fine nature – it requires, in fact, the nature of a true Individualist – to sympathise with a friend's success.

In the modern stress of competition and struggle for place, such sympathy is naturally rare, and is also very much stifled by the immoral ideal of uniformity of type and conformity to rule which is so prevalent everywhere, and is perhaps most obnoxious in England.

Individualism will also be unselfish and unaffected. It has been pointed out that one of the results of the extraordinary tyranny of authority is that words are absolutely distorted from their proper and simple meaning, and are used to express the obverse of their right signification. What is true about Art is true about Life. A man is called affected, nowadays, if he dresses as he likes to dress. But in doing that he is acting in a perfectly natural manner. Affectation, in such matters, consists in dressing according to the views of one's neighbour, whose views, as they are the views of the majority, will probably be extremely stupid. Or a man is called selfish if he
lives in the manner that seems to him most suitable for the full realisation of his own personality; if, in fact, the primary aim of his life is self-development. But this is the way in which everyone should live. Selfishness is not living as one wishes to live, it is asking others to live as one wishes to live. And unselfishness is letting other people's lives alone, not interfering with them. Selfishness always aims at creating around it an absolute uniformity of type. Unselfishness recognises infinite variety of type as a delightful thing, accepts it, acquiesces in it, enjoys it. It is not selfish to think for oneself. A man who does not think for himself does not think at all. It is grossly selfish to require of one's neighbour that he should think in the same way, and hold the same opinions. Why should he? If he can think, he will probably think differently. If he cannot think, it is monstrous to require thought of any kind from him. A red rose is not selfish because it wants to be a red rose. It would be horribly selfish if it wanted all the other flowers in the garden to be both red and roses.

Under Individualism people will be quite natural and absolutely unselfish, and will know the meanings of the words, and realise them in their free, beautiful lives. Nor will men be egotistic as they

Sympathy with pain there will, of course, always be. It is one of the first instincts of man. The animals which are individual, the higher animals, that is to say, share it with us. But it must be remembered that while sympathy with joy intensifies the sum of joy in the world, sympathy with pain does not really diminish the amount of pain. It may make man better able to endure evil, but the evil remains. Sympathy with consumption does not cure consumption; that is what Science does. And when Socialism has solved the problem of poverty, and Science solved the problem of disease, the area of the sentimentalists will be lessened, and the sympathy of man will be large, healthy, and spontaneous. Man will have joy in the contemplation of the joyous life of others.

For it is through joy that the Individualism of the future will develop itself. Christ made no attempt to reconstruct society, and consequently the Individualism that he preached to man could be realised only through pain or in solitude. The ideals that we owe to Christ are the ideals of the man who abandons society entirely, or of the man who resists society absolutely. But man is naturally social. Even the Thebaid became peopled at last. And though the cenobite realises his personality, it is often an impoverished personality that he so realises. Upon the other hand, the terrible truth that pain is a mode through which man may realise himself exercises a wonderful fascination over the world. Shallow speakers and shallow thinkers in pulpits and on platforms often talk about the world's worship of pleasure, and whine against it. But it is rarely in the world's history that its ideal has been one of joy and beauty. The worship of pain has far more often dominated the world. Mediaevalism, with its saints and martyrs, its love of self-torture, its wild passion for wounding itself, its gashing with knives, and its whipping with rods – Mediaevalism is real Christianity, and the mediaeval Christ is the real Christ. When the Renaissance dawned upon the world, and brought with it the new ideals of the beauty of life and the joy of living, men could not understand Christ. Even Art shows us that. The painters of the Renaissance drew Christ as a little boy playing with another boy in a palace or a garden, or lying back in his mother's arms, smiling at her, or at a flower, or at a bright bird; or as a noble, stately figure moving nobly through the world; or as a wonderful figure rising in a sort of ecstasy from death to life. Even when they drew him crucified they drew him as a beautiful God on whom evil men had inflicted suffering. But he did not preoccupy them much. What delighted them was to paint the men and women whom they admired, and to show the loveliness of this lovely earth. They painted many religious pictures – in fact, they painted far too many, and the monotony of type and motive is wearisome, and was bad for art. It was the result of the authority of the public in art-matters, and is to be deplored. But their soul was not in the subject. Raphael was a great artist when he painted his portrait of the Pope. When he painted his Madonnas and infant Christs, he is not a great artist at all. Christ had no message for the Renaissance, which was wonderful because it brought an ideal at variance with his, and to find the presentation of the real Christ we must go to mediaeval art. There he is one maimed and marred; one who is not comely to look on, because Beauty is a joy; one who is not in fair raiment, because that may be a joy also; he is a beggar who has a marvellous soul; he is a leper whose soul is divine; he needs neither property nor health; he is a
God realising his perfection through pain.

The evolution of man is slow. The injustice of men is great. It was necessary that pain should be put forward as a mode of self-realisation. Even now, in some places in the world, the message of Christ is necessary. No one who lived in modern Russia could possibly realise his perfection except by pain. A few Russian artists have realised themselves in Art; in a fiction that is mediaeval in character, because its dominant note is the realisation of men through suffering. But for those who are not artists, and to whom there is no mode of life but the actual life of fact, pain is the only door to perfection. A Russian who lives happily under the present system of government in Russia must either believe that man has no soul, or that, if he has, it is not worth developing. A Nihilist who rejects all authority, because he knows authority to be evil, and welcomes all pain, because through that he realises his personality, is a real Christian. To him the Christian ideal is a true thing.

And yet, Christ did not revolt against authority. He accepted the imperial authority of the Roman Empire and paid tribute. He endured the ecclesiastical authority of the Jewish Church, and would not repel its violence by any violence of his own. He had, as I said before, no scheme for the reconstruction of society. But the modern world has schemes. It proposes to do away with poverty and the suffering that it entails. It desires to get rid of pain, and the suffering that pain entails. It trusts to Socialism and to Science as its methods. What it aims at is an Individualism expressing itself through joy. This Individualism will be larger, fuller, lovelier than any Individualism has ever been. Pain is not the ultimate mode of perfection. It is merely provisional and a protest. It has reference to wrong, unhealthy, unjust surroundings. When the wrong, and the disease, and the injustice are removed, it will have no further place. It will have done its work. It was a great work, but it is almost over. Its sphere lessens every day.

Nor will man miss it. For what man has sought for is, indeed, neither pain nor pleasure, but simply Life. Man has sought to live intensely, fully, perfectly. When he can do so without exercising restraint on others, or suffering it ever, and his activities are all pleasurable to him, he will be saner, healthier, more civilised, more himself. Pleasure is Nature’s test, her sign of approval. When man is happy, he is in harmony with himself and his environment. The new Individualism, for whose service Socialism, whether it wills it or not, is working, will be perfect harmony. It will be what the Greeks sought for, but could not, except in Thought, realise completely, because they had slaves, and fed them; it will be what the Renaissance sought for, but could not realise completely except in Art, because they had slaves, and starved them. It will be complete, and through it each man will attain to his perfection. The new Individualism is the new Hellenism.

Source: Oscar Wilde Archive
Oscar Wilde was an Anglo-Irish novelist, playwright, poet and critic, and a celebrity in late 19th century London.

Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wills Wilde was born in Dublin on 16 October 1854. His father was a successful surgeon and his mother a writer and literary hostess. Wilde was educated at Trinity College, Dublin and Magdalen College, Oxford. While at Oxford, Wilde became involved in the aesthetic movement. After he graduated, he moved to London to pursue a literary career.

His output was diverse. A first volume of his poetry was published in 1881 but as well as composing verse, he contributed to publications such as the 'Pall Mall Gazette', wrote fairy stories and published a novel 'The Picture of Dorian Gray' (1891). His greatest talent was for writing plays, and he produced a string of extremely popular comedies including 'Lady Windermere's Fan' (1892), 'An Ideal Husband' (1895) and 'The Importance of Being Earnest' (1895). 'Salomé' was performed in Paris in 1896 and he published 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol' in 1898. He died in Paris on 30 November 1900.
‘There is a reason why reactive poetry – and occasion poems in particular – are striking such a chord right now’

Poetry has always been the language of fire and comfort at once. If there is anyone who has proven that in the last month, it is Youth Poet Laureate Amanda Gorman, whose US inauguration poem “The Hill We Climb” resonated far and wide across the globe, proving once and for all that poetry is a powerful, emotive medium capable of far-reaching change.

Gorman, 22, hasn’t stopped, since. Her performance of her poem “Chorus of the Captains” at the Super Bowl, this week, cemented that poetry – especially in times of unprecedented crisis – can be a source of fuel and hope.

In her poem, she paid tribute to three “honorary” Super Bowl captains – educator Trimaine Davis, ICU nurse manager Suzie Dorner, and marine veteran James Martin – chosen for their leadership during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Gorman is the first poet ever to lend her craft to the Super Bowl – which, last year, was watched by as many as 102 million people – and, much like her inauguration poem, she was able to captivate the world while hitting the exact note that was needed in this inordinately difficult year.

There is a reason why reactive poetry – and occasion poems, in particular – are striking such a chord right now. Poems are a monument to our emotional history. In times of crisis, hope is in short supply; while feelings run high and low at an increasingly unmanageable rate.

We long for a world that gives us something to hold onto, to anchor us. Poems give us the fuel that we so desperately need; they serve as sources of catharsis and hope, giving us the permission to feel deeply, and to feel together.

Ever since I was a child, I would turn to poems as a place of comfort, safety and deep understanding. When I felt small and beaten, Maya Angelou’s “Still I Rise” empowered me. When I couldn’t find the purpose to life, Robert Frost’s “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening” helped me find meaning.

If I needed lessons on letting go, I need only to turn to Lucille Clifton’s “The Lesson of Falling Leaves”. One of the most wonderful things about these poems is how accessible they are – I have no formal education when it comes to poetry; I just love it – and now, with social media, poems are everywhere. You only need to seek them out by typing the word “poetry” into a search bar to find one you love.

It is no surprise that through this devastating pandemic, poetry has found a way to save me once again, this time in the shape of a little book of poems and affirmations I wrote during the first lockdown, called, “Where Hope Comes From”. I want the poems I write to make other people feel less alone in their pain, because I, too, rely on a whole arsenal of poets and poems to keep me going through grief – and they have never failed me.

Any art form that has the capacity to bring people together and help them through loneliness in a time of isolation, while also raising their spirits, is a powerful tonic. In her Super Bowl poem, Gorman focuses on three people who have helped build a community through leading, healing and educating.

This spotlight, told through rhythmic words that allow us to see the good that is rising, even in tragedy; is incredibly uplifting – and can make us want to do more to help and build community. Good work inspires further good work.
I have watched in awe at the way poems build diverse and strong communities, because poetry is the language of love. I have watched poems power revolutions, because it is the language of protest. And I have watched a poem by a young poet stop the world, and remind it that hope will conquer fear, that love will win over hate, that there is a brighter future to fight for.

As Amanda Gorman said: “There is always light. If only we’re brave enough to see it. If only we’re brave enough to be it.” She is right. There is. And we are.

POETRY NEWS

Then first the inauguration, the Super Bowl – Amanda Gorman is leading a poetry revolution

As a poet, I too want the poems I write to make other people feel less alone in their pain

by Nikita Gill
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IN MEMORIAM — LAWRENCE FERLINGHETTI (1919 – 2021)

“... Outside the leaves were falling
and they cried
Too soon! Too soon!”
— Lawrence Ferlinghetti, from “A Coney Island of the Mind”

Lawrence Ferlinghetti died Monday at the age of 101. He was a household name for poetry lovers and all those who grew up in and out of the cultural revolutions that took place in the 20th century. His memory lives on not only in his writing, but also in the intellectual and artistic hub of San Francisco’s North Beach district and the City Lights Bookstore.

Ferlinghetti settled in San Francisco in 1951 and immersed himself in the culture. Partnering with Peter Martin, Ferlinghetti founded City Lights bookstore in 1953 and established a publishing house under the same name. Under the Pocket Poets Series, Ferlinghetti published Allen Ginsberg’s Howl and Other Poems.

The first 520 copies of Howl were printed in 1957. Upon arriving at the docks from the London-based printer the copies were seized, based on the grounds that the book was obscene. “You wouldn’t want your children to come across it!” Ferlinghetti and the bookstore’s cashier were both arrested.

The obscenity trial lasted two months and resulted with the U.S. Attorney’s office declining to prosecute. The charges were dropped, Ferlinghetti was acquitted, and the copies of Howl were released. Now, Ferlinghetti’s only problem was getting copies printed fast enough. Since it’s initial publication, more than one million copies of Howl have sold.

Ferlinghetti was a political iconoclast, establishing the idea of “poetry as insurgent art” — examples of such can be found in poems like “Tentative Description of a Dinner to Promote the Impeachment of President Eisenhower.”
STOP CHILD LABOUR
LET THEM GO TO SCHOOL

YENOWA DZI MI KWELI