Poetry As a Means of Healing and Transformation in Times of Trauma and War

Presented by
River Paw Press

Moderator
Kalpana Singh-Chitnis

Event Description

In human existence, where life entwines joy and sorrow, there lies a profound art, a sublime expression that transcends time and space. Poetry, like a true companion and friend beckons us to embrace and offers solace and healing in times of unspeakable trials—moments of trauma, war and eventual peace. This event will explore how poetry bares wounds and echoes the weight of our collective suffering and communicates with those who contribute to our trials to bring transformation and healing.

The Panelists will offer an insightful perspective on how they have used poetry as a means of self-expression, elixir, and tool of transformation for themselves and others in a non-supportive, disagreeable social environment and during times of war. This extraordinary event will captivate audiences who embrace the profound potential of healing and transformation through creativity, particularly those who have been employing poetry as a tool for activism to bring social changes and world peace.

Event Agenda

The panel consists of five poets, writers, translators, and a psychotherapist from North America and war-ravaged Ukraine will explore the cathartic and transformative power of poetry in transcending trauma and mending fractured spirits with threads of empathy and hope, followed by a Q&A. The event will wrap up with a vote of thanks.

Poetry as a Means of Healing and Transformation in Times of Trauma and War

By Candice Louisa Daquin

In the Western world when someone dies, people often read a poem or play a song at their funeral. It is so commonplace I wonder if anyone considers why poetry, which they otherwise never read, is read then?

As a child, I wondered about this phenomenon. Attending a funeral, I asked my father why they read a poem. He said he didn’t know, which left me frustrated. I asked my grandmother. She was an aficionado of poetry and had a whole answer. “Candy, poetry is read at a funeral because poetry is the highest form of expression and like other creative outputs, conveys feelings so acutely without need to be linear. It gives us permission to release our emotions in the same way dancing or singing does.” I was only 8 so I didn’t really understand but now I do.
Poetry is utilized naturally during intense times, without really being consciously aware of its power. We quote poetry when we’re trying to make an encompassing statement that cannot be made as effectively if we resort to prose. If I say to you ‘I am very sad that your father died, I wish that he hadn’t, this world is cruel. That doesn’t have the impact that poet Summer Sandercox conveys with her poignant poem Not How Did He Die But How Did He Live?

Not what did he gain, but what did he give?
These are the units to measure the worth
Of a man as a man, regardless of birth.
Not, what was his church, nor what was his creed?
But had he befriended those really in need?
Was he ever ready, with word of good cheer,
To bring back a smile, to banish a tear?
Not what did the sketch in the newspaper say,
But how many were sorry when he passed away.

Casual every-day-scenarios require little finesse. Major emotional events, such as funerals, remembrances and marriages, those require something ‘more’ and poetry bequeaths this. It is the artform for intensity. And at the same time simplicity, because whilst a poem is never simple, it may appear so, and thus be accessible to all.

Is it surprising then, for poetry to be a valuable tool or natural ally in working with trauma? Poetry may not literally itself be able to heal, but it is an indirect means to healing and transformation as one tool in a process seeking to ameliorate trauma. Trauma work comes in varied forms. Typically, trauma was dealt with by medication or electric shock therapy but the best choice was the sanatorium. Where quiet, and consistency alongside nature, were thought to be restorative. When sanatoriums closed down or became too expensive, people were inpatient or outpatient and both lost the solace of the sanatorium and became clinical and over medicated.

In the sanatorium setting there was usually a library and it is no surprise many patients found solace in poetry, among other creative endeavors like art and music. Nowadays with a for-profit medical model, the ‘luxuries’ of green space, meditation and the arts, has been replaced with quick fixes. Most recently PTSD has been treated with Ketamine (a well-known horse tranquilizer), the idea being to build a state of well being within the mind to recover within. This is much like the sanatorium with its green trees far from the hustle of city life.

When you cannot avoid the city, and must continue, trauma will resurface and perturb unless you find a way to make an oasis somewhere in your daily life. This could be why many people buy self-help books, and those books often contain meditations and words to consider, much like poetry. Equally it could explain why online memes and poetry have gained popularity. As less people invest in a whole book, they are still drawn to the appeal of a single poem. It speaks to them in an immediate way and helps provoke hope, positivity, the path to healing. It cannot heal a person but it can remind them why healing is possible.

When writing poetry for healing, we reinvigorate language by way of concentrating words to illuminate
and release our interior suffering. Poetry can act as mirror in our lives, and stitch past and present in a revealing dialogue. It helps us see this contrast and work through the melancholic isolation of the mind when suffering from trauma, while reaching outwardly through the whimsical ache of want, that most humans possess. Poetry frees the shadow, our human urge to hide the minute beneath the light, and gives us permission to reveal ourselves.

**Those fierce moments in-between**

The day will come  
THE DAY WILL COME  
when you fall and feel you cannot get up  
and when that day comes and feels like it’s won  
you will pull yourself  
in inch by inch, of broken spine  
cry by cry, scream by scream  
until you stand  
TALL AGAIN  
and when that day comes  
you will think on this and know  
belief is half the battle  
faithe the other part  
there is no room for query or supposition  
let not terrors a place at the table  
the pure hearted know  
healing comes from the soul  
I tell myself this  
at 4am over the toilet bowl  
exhausted before I have woken  
I tell myself this  
when panic grips my chest like a thunder bolt  
and whispers in my ear, it’s been six months  
I tell myself this  
when the person I was, is not the person I have become  
but a whisper of what was  
BECAUSE  
we have a choice in our fight  
to take it, to face it, or to back down  
and though I wanted to give up, though I tried to let go  
I’m still carrying the smallest candle of hope  
it is in the stains of your disaffection  
the hideous recollection of your breakage  
when you see through the ugliness that doesn’t quit  
and pain needling you like it learned to knit  
those fierce moments in between  
they are yours  
and the day will come
full and bright and brilliant  
when you shall, reclaim yourself  

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**Moonstone**

unseen birds with small beaks  
brake silence in pre-storm gabble  
their compatriots crowd ominous skies  
with fleeing wing catching diminished sunlight in their rapidity  
an air of urgency juxtaposes the quiet beforehand  
as if nature duals with the disobedient will of man  
our science and their instinct  
a leak of lightning, the rolling, forecasting drum of thunder  
she whispered into the concave whorl of my ear  
you are healing, you are becoming well  
shedding fear, memories, pain  
climbing out of your hot hostage skin  
you are becoming whole again  
the power is within you  
I hear her crisp, certain, enunciation  
like a memory, she is a jigsaw of past and present  
I have known her before and now  
recognizing in the certain vowels and consonants  
a shared lineage  
hers shining eyes and the spirit hand  
reaching inside of me, like feeling taking material form  
I tell her, I wish we'd met years ago, when we were kids  
and played away regret in the arms of elms and aspen  
lifting us from our lots, the catapult of companionship  
where in freedom we roamed wild abandon  
the liberate, unshackled from conformities pinch  
two strange children with hearts of gold  
I hear her step closer and her words infuse me  
with something of hope  
as if she were dressed in the moonlight  
claiming those corners of dark where pain likes to kneel in wait  
with her radiating determining shine  

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Poetry as a Means of Healing and Transformation in Times of Trauma and War

By Olena O’Lear

Poetry, an ancient art, for centuries has connected people with the highest spheres of spirituality, and the Divine Principle. The poet has acted as an intermediary between God or gods and humanity. Poetic inspiration is true revelation. Ancient Greek poets sought inspiration from Apollo and the muses. Poetry's purpose remains unchanged even today, although the muse's image has been desacralized in mass consciousness.

The poetic word evokes a sense of beauty. But what is beauty? I concur with philosophers who see beauty as the embodiment of Absolute Good and Truth.

Thus, poetry expressing evil and lies isn't true art.

How can poetry address today's challenges, especially war? War themes date back to Homer's Iliad and are prominent in works like Beowulf, Song of Roland, and Song of My Cid in the medieval era.

Ukraine is now defending against a long-time adversary Russia, that has encroached its land and resources for centuries and suppressed Ukrainian language and culture. Russia disregarded democratic principles by invading Ukraine in 2014, and with full-scale aggression in 2022. Violating war conventions, Russia barbarically targets civilian infrastructures with weapons and commits atrocities on people, including women and children, and subjects prisoners to inhuman torture.

Russia propagates absolute evil and ensnares globally with propaganda, spreading falsehoods to uplift its image and undermine and isolate Ukraine internationally.

Poetry, embodying Absolute Good and Truth, must counter this evil and deceit or it will lose its essence.

While poetry cannot divert a deadly missile, cannot bring back deceased men, women or children to life, it upholds eternal values, conveying truths aesthetically. From the beginning, it has promoted goodness, mercy, love, and can be a prayer for justice, victory, and peace, fortifying souls during trials.

Here I want to give a specific example. Vasyl Liutyi, a Ukrainian bandura player, rock musician, and composer who lived in Rubizhne, Luhansk region, witnessed the beginning of the war. In April 2014, during a pro-Ukrainian rally, he was severely beaten by pro-Russian collaborators and arrested. He was held in captivity for two days, and was released only after the direct intervention of the OSCE. During his captivity, his life hung in the balance.

He told me that he was rescued from the terrorists’ torture chamber by Ivan Bahrianyi, a twentieth-century Ukrainian poet and novelist, who himself was twice arrested by Soviet punitive authorities for Ukrainian nationalism and tortured, leading to his escape from exile in the Far East and migration to Germany at the end of World War II. He wrote about his experience of struggle and survival in his works. Bahrianyi is one of Vasyl Lutyi’s favorite poets. When he was captured by the terrorists, he went back and forth in the basement at night to recite a poem by Bahrianyi. When they took him out in
the morning, he thought they were going to execute him, but he felt that something had strongly fortified his spirit. In his own words, poetry truly saved him.

In 2019, I started writing "Sonnets of Victory" as a prayer for the still distant victory of righteous Ukrainian warriors, which became a healing expression of hope for me.

I'll recite one of these sonnets in English from the anthology "Sunflowers: Ukrainian Poetry on War, Resistance, Hope and Peace" edited by Kalpna Singh-Chitnis.

I also translated poems by other poets, including two soldiers, for this collection. Volodymyr Tymchuk recommended the anthology to me, and to another poet who uses the pseudonym Anatoliy Anatoliy, due to service requirements. Sharing the translations of Ukrainian poetic voices globally was healing for me.

This is also the mission of Volodymyr Tymchuk’s project "In Principio erat Verbum. Ukraine: Poetry of War", a series of bilingual anthologies focusing on the war that started on February 24, 2022. I'm editing the Ukrainian part of the first Ukrainian-French edition being prepared for publication.

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From the Sonnets of Victory

Written and Translated by Olena O’Lear

O the Almighty Judge, O Thou, the High!  
I humbly pray Thee: let the righteous win!  
And let the holy spear, so light and thin,  
Drive out the armored foes and make them fly!

Oh, let the triumph of Thy host be nigh!  
Let on the hopeless brink a Cherubin  
Come down from Heaven in the battle’s din  
And make the enemy, defeated, die!

And let Goliath fall to David’s feet,  
So that the bright-faced Victory can greet  
The saint anointed King that comes to reign!

And even though the war’s end is not seen,  
I humbly pray Thee: let the righteous win!  
Oh, let the righteous win, I pray again!

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But Why Aren’t We Dead, Our Lieutenant?

By Anatoliy Anatoliy, Translated from Ukrainian by Olena O’Lear

But why aren’t we dead, our Lieutenant?
We laid down our lives, as you taught:
we heavily bled, our Lieutenant,
bit into the ravings we got,

we sang psalms of old, our Lieutenant —
the songs of the wild virgin land,
expected the cold, our Lieutenant,
did everything at your command.

There’re milestones ahead, our Lieutenant,
beyond there’s a bridge to the blue.
But why aren’t we dead, our Lieutenant?
We got out, our brother. And you?

Swims like a colossus, Lieutenant,
above us a whale to the shores.
Look: there are the crosses, Lieutenant.
And somewhere among them is yours.

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Poetry as a Means of Healing and Transformation in Times of Trauma and War

Can Poetry “Heal”?  

By Octavio Quintanilla

Although I have not been to war, it sure feels as if we are constantly in one. Just take a look at what is going on with Ukraine and Russia. Turn on the news, scroll on your social media feed, and see what is going on in the Middle East. These images can be traumatic for us who are witnesses to history; and for people living in these countries, it is not only traumatic, but it is also devastating.

I have a brother who did go to war, however. He did several tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. And he saw action. He saw suffering and he saw death. In a way, knowing that he was out there in a conflict zone, knowing that he was exposed to danger, knowing that he could be killed, caused me and those who loved him a trauma that in many ways still persists. It’s hard for the body to let go of trauma. For this reason, I must say that I’m not sure that poetry has the power to “heal” me, or heal anyone else.

In my first book titled, If I Go Missing, I wrote about my brother. Looking back, it made me feel better to write about him, which is to say, I was writing about myself and how I felt about him being out there, facing death. I think it helped. But I am still trying to figure out how.

Although I was born in the United States, I lived in Mexico till I was nine years old, and at this age, I returned to the United States without my parents and younger siblings to live with a relative and attend school. For most of my life, I have tried to find the words to articulate this traumatic experience. As I think about the topic of this panel, I am beginning to see this experience as a sort of war—a war between two countries—The United States and Mexico—and the difference in the quality of life in each. The United States promised economic stability and a “good” education, something that Mexico could not do. And so, as it tends to happen in many wars, my younger brother and I were torn from our mother’s arms and sent to a land we did not know, to a language we could not speak. And this is another way trauma is born.

But a traumatic experience such as the one I went through of familial separation is hard for anyone to overcome all alone. I can only imagine what my brother, who went to war, must feel like. Even now, as he raises a young son who will soon be old enough to enlist.

Although I am not convinced poetry can “heal” a traumatic experience, I must say that poetry, and more specifically, the creative act, has allowed me to live and function in society. I think that’s it. Function. And so, I try to live my life as “normal” as it is possible, considering myself one of the fortunate ones who has found a friend in language. But by its very nature, language is a failure, and it is this failure to truly name who we are, or who we think we are, which keeps most of us poets writing and messing with it, trying to figure out what it can truly do. For years, I had been dissatisfied with the way I articulated and wrote about my traumatic experience of familial, geographic, and emotional dislocation, and this dissatisfaction with language kept me from completing my second poetry manuscript for twenty years. Nonetheless, the book is done, and yet, I persist in finding the poetry in an absence I cannot fill, but that I hope, one day, completely heals.

Night Music

Brother,
where did you leave your crutches?
Where is the glass-eye given to you as a gift
in Kabul?

No more asking what is consciousness.
No more games of hide-and-seek with our mother’s voice.

I know you still live
because enough coffins remain
for those of us who wait to die.

No more booze to soothe the crippled and the dead.
No more fondness for spade and trowel.

Brother,
whose knife carved a star
on your nape?
It burns into your skin,
mixes with the blaze inside of you.

No more music leaping out of windows.
No more phone calls to those who wait.

Brother,
the song you sing can’t prove
you have existed.

No more heaven for the baptized.
No more doorways for your empty suit to walk through.

Wait for us to bring lightning, brother,
and fill you like a fire fills a house
when everyone is home.

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**The Poetics of Separation: A Micro-Essay**

Poetry remembers that distance can be made of suffering.

Distance between blood cells.

Between two words on this page.

Between a mother and a son.

And so, I carry my past like a bag full of dirt,
but I can’t make words grow out of it
and write what I can’t remember:

What is the Spanish word for water?
What is the Spanish word for longing?
What is the Spanish word for failure?

My relationship with language absence,
one I can’t shape with my hands.

Not like clay.
Or fire.

I try.

And for this trying, I rely on what my body thinks it knows.

I allow it to speak to that part of me for which I’ll never have words.

This poem doesn’t want to tell you a story that you can follow.

It wants to take you to a river, blindfold you,

lower you into its veins.

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I believe in the healing energy of true poetry. Defining what true poetry is can be historically and philosophically complex, but as a poet, I have my own response. True words are born in a poet's heart, spanning the vast expanse from heaven to the deepest depths. This is why I can't agree enough that today the world is experiencing Times of Trauma or Times of War. In my poem ‘Donetsk Airport’ (2014), I wrote, 'This world is only an interlude of war'.

Another key point is the function of poetry. Every year, poets from around the world read the message from the Director-General of UNESCO dedicated to World Poetry Day. As I have observed over the last several years, the speaker of the annual ‘Poetry Messages’ often attempts to confine poetry within an artificial golden cage – pure poetry about the profound sense of life, the beauty of untouched nature, and certain aspects of the Red Book, which includes indigenous groups. In this sense, the Times of Trauma are very real. Humanity has always generated trauma, from ancient times to the present, and will continue to do so, influencing not just literature, but art, economics, cultural trends, and more. Such a state of affairs naturally requires some form of healing. Poetry, and the arts in general, then become servants of life and the traumatized world (see "Beteg a világ, nagy beteg..." from Endre Ady’s 1899 poem, "Karácsony – Ma tán a béke..."). By accepting this role, poetry ceases to be genuine poetry.

It's far more intriguing and demanding to live in a world characterized by Times of Challenges and Answers. The magnetic pull of continuous discovery is the essence of poetry's birth. The field of exploration doesn't matter – whether it's the human heart, the industrial revolution, the touch of nature, or wartime hardships. A true poet harnesses the energy of the challenge and channels it into their words (or not only words). The poet proclaims, even through the quietest and smallest verses, that they are alive in this era, in sync with a time that has no beginning, or end. The poet becomes a unique manifestation in eternal time. Through their hidden yet evident writing or creation, they influence Time, Space, and the Human Essence. The size of this effect doesn't matter: those who have a minor impact will face minor questions, while those destined to change the world will face more profound inquiries.

So, dear poets, writers, and readers, let's focus not just on traumas as outcomes of actions or inactions, but also on their underlying causes. Every war originates from some kind of trauma.

What is the root cause of the Great War in Ukraine? It's undeniably the embodiment of evil. In whose face does it appear now? In the Russian or Muscovite face. So, isn't it a universal challenge to determine whether one aligns with this evil or opposes it? I believe it is. This challenge is for everyone, regardless of age, profession, or political belief, and transcends nationalities, including Russians and Ukrainians. The only conceivable stance during this war, which began long before February 24th, 2022, is to ask: You are a human, right? Then what side are you on? Are you on the side of light or darkness? It's a straightforward question, demanding a clear answer. Matters of heritage, culture, literature, or history should not cloud this decision. Silence is unacceptable, except a moment of silence to remember the innocent victims of war and fallen warriors who illuminate our world, bring light in this world. They discover and embody the virtues of dignity, sacrifice, and freedom, which exist not just in literature or on film screens. Only words grounded in these truths possess the power to heal and transform, and in essence, they are one and the same.
Spirit of the Eternal Element

By Volodymyr Tymchuck, Translated by Kalpna Singh-Chitnis

“I am the Spirit of Eternal Elements, placed you on the edge of two worlds to create a new life”

It's a new day. That's dawning.
The night has taken its tribute due.
It seems there are no tears left falling,
Without them, I cry. To the war, they all go through.

All who desire to bring life to fruition:
This feeling intoxicates: standing on the brink of two worlds!
To stand! And protect, love, and live with ambition!
Thus, we will triumph, clear even without words!

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When?

By Volodymyr Tymchuck, Translated by Kalpna Singh-Chitnis

When a soldier by the river bank lightly cleans his face and feet,
When autumn leaves transition from one phase to another, two paths meet,
Leaving the choice to move forward or retreat,
And when the rifle would have long been disengaged from the safety catch —
Then, at last, will appear the *one who walked on the water's surface
Who sees no beginning or end to the harvest track
For him — that's where the explosions, blasts, ambushes, attacks...
....And swiftly in the fields of harvest, poppies grow in a pack.

*In Matthew 14:22-34, Jesus walks on water towards His disciples' boat, inviting Peter to do the same. When Peter's faith wavers, he begins to sink, but Jesus rescues him, and they return to the boat, where the disciples recognize Him as the Son of God. This illustrates the power of faith and the importance of keeping one's focus on Christ, even in the midst of fear and doubt.

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Note: Poems of Volodymyr Tymchuck have been translated from the original Ukrainian into English by Kalpna Singh-Chitnis
Poetry as a Means of Healing and Transformation in Times of Trauma and War

By Kalpna Singh-Chitnis

In a world where wars and human tragedies dominate headlines, the silent sufferings of both humankind and the planet often go unnoticed. Hence, the idea of healing through poetry might seem insignificant to many of us. While the majority may neither read nor write poetry, we must ask: who exactly is being healed by poetry, and in what manner? It's crucial to refine our perspective and realistically examine the healing impact poetry has on those who read, write, or listen to it, especially during challenging times.

Furthermore, this discussion should also incorporate more than just the academic and intellectual study of poetry and its impact. After all, poetic language has been used since ancient times in scriptures and religious texts. Its lyrical essence has been a foundational aspect of many religious scriptures and age-old texts. For example, the Vedas, the epics of Mahabharata and Ramayana, and the Psalms, resonate with poetic depth. These revered poetic compositions, rich in grace, have long been the sources of comfort and spiritual rejuvenation for those who delve into them. The recitation of couplets, mantras, and verses from the holy texts that create a healing aura, offer comfort not only to the followers of the faith but also to practitioners of mindfulness.

The restorative power of poetry is intricate and deep. It is not as straightforward as writing a poem and expecting immediate healing. For a poet, true healing arises from the journey of self-expression, emotional exploration, and the subsequent connection with readers. This transformative experience can lead to profound positive shifts in our lives. While poetry grants a unique empowerment to its writer, it's a gift that remains elusive to others. Yet, the individuals who neither read nor write poetry frequently find solace in listening to poetry or songs, yet another form of poetry. The combination of lyrics and music is therapeutic and scientifically proven for diminishing stress levels and facilitating the healing journey.

Every one of us, whether engaged in a war or not, fights our own battles and deals with personal traumas. Death and devastation aren't only caused by weapons. They can also arise from our unmindful actions, intentions, and unforeseen life events. Violence is not always visible in physical scars; many are buried deep within our psyche. They may also carry the traumas we inherit from our environment and ancestors.

To offer a personal perspective: I've navigated through losses and emotional upheavals throughout my life. I have exchanged life's treasures for colossal losses — sometimes by choice, but more frequently due to an absence of alternatives. Leaving my homeland, India, I found a new home in the United States. I relinquished the language that shaped my identity as a poet, only to be reborn as a poet in the English language. The absence of my family and the loss of dear ones paved my path to self-realization, bringing me healing and spiritual fulfillment. Throughout these transitions, poetry has been my anchor and refuge. By reading and writing poetry each difficult day, I have managed to keep psychiatrists at bay. The power of poetry and language never waned for me. Even on days when I felt defeated and insignificant, I remained a poet, triumphant in my losses.

However, I've come to understand that every poet writes for distinct reasons. For me, it has primarily been a medium to converse with my inner self. I've also come to realize the fluidity of my identity — both as an individual and a poet. This wasn't just a fleeting thought, but a profound realization. I sensed a shift, a blurring of boundaries — between me and the external world, and between me and a higher consciousness. It's here that I began to fathom our collective suffering. I began to gravitate more towards nature, understanding the suffering of our planet, and changing my habits to better protect our environment. I started to connect with people in places where suffering was
unbounded. As a result, I founded River Paw Press to publish poetry that addresses both human and environmental concerns, such as the war in Ukraine, the Coronavirus pandemic, and Animal Rights, among others. I made films based on poetry. My recent environmental short film, "The Tree," was inspired by a series of poems I wrote to deal with the trauma caused by a tree's life cut short. Both the poetry and film were published in World Literature Today. Through this endeavor, I realized that while healing through poetry was a deeply personal journey for me, its essence was universally resonant.

However, healing, like other universal phenomena, is not permanent. A section of our body once wounded often remains sensitive, much like how our cellular memory retains the imprints of our injuries; just as our mind carries the traces of our traumas stored in our brain. Our suffering can swiftly resurface through a single misstep in words or actions, whether from others or ourselves. Nonetheless, we must persist in reading, writing, publishing, and sharing poetry.

Runes

By Kalpna Singh-Chitnis

He says I echo Odin, on Yggdrasil,
The Hanged Man on the Tarot Card,
Upside down, dangling from the Tree of life.

He looks at me and wonders,
Why do I hang from a tree? And I share—
Long before Odin's hanging from a tree for rare wisdom,

Women like me have hung from trees across the earth.
But no one wrote their stories and called them divine.
No one printed their images on Tarot Cards.

They are still hung there. They are hung
From every door handle of their homes.
Open your window and take a look,

They are hanging from
The planets and stars in the sky.
Don't be afraid! They are alive.

Look into their eyes—like a sea,
Treasure ships sunken in them.
Runes are written on their forehead.

Kiss their brows,
Unlock the secrets,
Fill the void of the universe.

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The One Who Loves

If you know what’s coming
Go ahead with your free will
And accept all that awaits you.

Enjoy the lovely sight of your beloved Jerusalem,
The swaying of Palm branches and
The crowd cheering for you, while you can,

As very soon, this crowd
Will turn against you, try you in court
For the crimes you have not committed.

Know that the one who washes your feet
With her tears, and dry them up with her long hair
Is not a whore, but the one who loves.

"If you know these things,
Blessed are you if you do them."*
"He knew who he had chosen.

He ate bread with the one who
Lifted his heel against him
And betrayed him with a kiss."*

And all for thirty pieces of silver!
Wash his feet anyway and
Keep your swords sheathed.

Accept the crown of thorns
The world has woven for you and
Carry your cross without remorse.
As the one who dies for love shall return to life.

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*John 13:17-20 and Psalm 41:9*
Panelists in Alphabetical Order

**Candice Louisa Daquin** is Senior Editor at Indie Blu(e) Publishing, a Psychotherapist and author of several poetry collections, including *Tainted by the same Counterfeit* (2022). Indie Blu(e)'s anthology *SMITTEN* won finalist in the National Indie Excellence Awards, and The Kali Project, a collection of Indian women's poetry has just published worldwide. Daquin's poetry is available in most bookstores and she is a long-time animal rights advocate and vegetarian.

**Olena O'Lear** (pen name) is a Ukrainian poet, translator, literary critic, and editor, Ph.D. born in Kyiv in 1976. She is the author of two poetry collections: “My Hand Is on the Headboard…” (1997) and “Pilgrims’ Songs” (2006). She works as a translator in Astrolabe Publishing and translates mainly from English. She translated “The Hobbit" and other works by J. R. R. Tolkien, fairy tales by Beatrix Potter, and prose works of Joseph Conrad, William Butler Yeats, and “Beowulf.” She has been awarded the Hryhorii Kochur (2012), Maksym Rylyskiy (2022) literary prizes, and others.

**Octavio Quintanilla** is the author of the poetry collection, IF I GO MISSING, the founder and director of the literature and arts festival, VersoFrontera, publisher of Alabrava Press, and former Poet Laureate of San Antonio, TX. His forthcoming poetry collection, THE BOOK OF WOUNDED SPARROWS, will be published by Texas Review Press in 2024. He teaches Literature and Creative Writing at Our Lady of the Lake University.

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