

## EDITORIAL

We now go into our third year of publication! Welcome to the December 2022 #5 Issue of *Men Matters Online Journal (MMOJ)*. Much of world has moved on and we hear fewer and fewer mention of two formerly dreaded words: lockdown and pandemic. As we too look to the future, we are encouraged by the increase in the number of submissions to our journal.

This is our first open theme issue since our inaugural issue. The varied themes we saw in the submissions indicate that it was a right decision. From now on, we will alternate calls for submissions which are based on specific themes and open-themed issues. The current issue has six sections: poetry, novel, fiction, creative nonfiction, book review and a special feature section on Malaysian poet, Omar Mohd. Noor.

The poems in this issue present a good mix of writing from women and men poets, each addressing a different kind of struggle. Anitha Devi Pillai opens this section with “Unspoken”, which addresses the issue of infringement into one’s personal space and a woman’s experience of male impropriety. Khayma Balakrishnan and Loshni Nair have questions for the Brahmachari and a great-grand father (‘mutacha’). The male personae in Isaac Tan’s poem ponders on a lover’s kiss while the persona in Matthew Jerome van Huizen’s “Peace on Earth and Mercy Mild” tries to move away from the past Christmases and claim a Christmas experience that is truly of his choosing. LKN’s persona struggles with “what i could be, /not who i am/ like a hallucination” while Alexander Perez’s persona in “for James” struggles to come to terms with the loss of a beloved. Finally, Scott T. Hutchison’s persona in “Sissy-Boom-Bah” comes to terms with an overbearing and insensitive father while receiving much-needed validation from another adult man.

In the novel section, we present an excerpt from Malaysian novelist William Tham’s latest publication, *Kings of Chinatown*. Blending the genres of historical fiction and crime thriller, it is set in Kuala Lumpur. It is reviewed in this issue by Enakshi Samarawickrama.

All of the short stories in this issue deal with discoveries. There is initially the electric buzz that accompanies any new experience, then it settles down into something ordinary and goes in another tangent.

In "It Went Like This," a man and a woman feel the first pangs of love. But later, they prefer the relationship "to be level-headed, even calculated," in a world without reassurances. Conversely, in "Samar," a man falls out of love with his wife. The love has gone cold: "Once the ember of love making became dim, it became a chore." Disillusioned, he tinkers with things and

one fine day, he begins to pick up prophetic signals "from the remotest places on earth." A young boy, meanwhile, discovers lessons not just swimming in the story, "Swimming Lesson." He learns the art of pretending and feels his first sexual stirrings.

"You'll Never Get Published" deals with two graduate students who are roommates in an American university. Cyrus feels disaffection for his parents, while Mo wrestles with writing a science-fiction story about a robot. "He hated not knowing where his story was going, but he really felt like he was close to the core of it, if could just save C18." In a story reminiscent of the best by Raymond Carver, this story deals with "something about love" or its absence in the postmodern world.

"Packing Out" is a vivid, atmospheric story of the young boy, Jon, and his father settling out to fish in the wilds of Minnesota one cold October week. The horror of the story is leavened by its beautiful writing. "It was their oldest ritual, the thing that hadn't changed after the divorce. It was certainly the reason Jan was there with him now. Fishing and blood. What else did they have?"

"Working Man" deals with a reversal of stereotypical roles. Katie, the wife, fixes the leaking roof while the narrator, an English professor, uses his hand to write and mark student papers. He has an uneasy relationship with his father, a machinist, who only wants him to have a child, to continue the family line. And in the charming story "Vincent," there will be no family line to continue. For our playful young narrator is besotted with other men. "Was it wrong to make single, older men fall in love with him, where he had no intention of committing himself?" He must be in the game of love, seeing it only "as a fantasy" to be played out in different settings and scenes.

Whether they deal with discovery, rediscovery, or recovery, the stories in this issue summon forth the inner grit and strength of the human will, when faced with their fragmented lives--or even worlds from other dimensions. The creative non-fiction pieces come from three American writers; two of these articles are personal essays. In "Cars Standing Still", William Halm examines his relationship with masculinity from childhood to young adulthood. Brian Huba's "Time for Justin Timberlake to say 'Bye Bye Bye'" revolves around the writer's fascination and fixation with Justin Timberlake in a journey of growing up and growing out of that fascination with the pop singer. Finally, Andy Kossowsky's piece begins with "Which day of the week or weekend is your person?" and deals with different types of relationships men may have with women, be it with a one-night stand, girlfriend or wife.

In this issue we focus on a Malaysian poet, the late Omar Mohd. Noor, who we feel deserves more recognition and readership. There is scarce biographical information about Omar Mohd. Noor and we are grateful to Malaysian poet Muhammad Haji Salleh who helped us get some information which you will read in Augustine Chay's article that opens this special feature section. Our cover photograph (by Izuddin Helmi Adnan) presents The Penang Strait in an interesting perspective, alluding to Omar's lived experiences on both sides of this body of water. Omar published in the English language. There were a few poems that had been translated into the Malay language and had been published during his lifetime. The discovery of an entire manuscript of Omar's Malay poems was a surprise. We hope that these poems will eventually be published posthumously and secure him a wider readership.

Throughout his lifetime, his poems had been published in several literary journals and anthologies both in Malaysia and Singapore. His poems also appeared in a journal published by his alma mater, Brinsford Lodge (former home to the Malayan Teacher Training College), England in the early 1960s. To date, there is no single volume of poems by Omar Mohd. Noor. We hope that with the discovery of his forty-six unpublished and the existing published poems a collection of his poems will eventually emerge. There are many gaps and silences regarding the man and the poet. The man, the poet and his poems deserve scholarship and we hope this special feature will act as a catalyst for future research.

A word of thanks to all the contributors to Issue #5 of *MMOJ*. We hope to see you again in the future issues. My appreciation to Augustine Chay, the journal Copy Editor, for his assistance in putting together this issue and for the sneak previews which appear on our Facebook page. And finally, I express my gratitude to our Web Editor, Kayven Chew Kian Tatt, for his technical support for this issue and for the maintenance of the journal website.

We look ahead to the next *MMOJ* issue in June 2023! Do continue reading our journal and we invite you to send in your submissions for the next issue.

Happy reading!

Malachi Edwin Vethamani & Danton Remoto