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# Well-versed in the art of poetry...



Mr Al Qaed  
I want the Western world to know we aren't just here for oil, there are talents

AN anthology of more than 100 contemporary poems by 27 Bahraini writers will be published in English next year.

*Pearl, Dreams of Shell* showcases the work of Bahraini poets, who span several generations, from the youngest Sawsan Dahniem born in 1980 to the oldest Abdul Rahman Rafie in 1932.

The book embraces universal themes of love, frailty, peace, death, exploration and other topics.

The collection was compiled and translated from Arabic to English by Al Qaed Translations general manager Hamood Al Qaed, who has also been writing poetry since the late 1960s.

The Bahraini poet started out his

**By REBECCA TORR**

career as a banker but developed a love for poetry and translation in his spare time.

The anthology took 18 months to put together and was born out of Mr Al Qaed's desire to show the Western world the culture and talents of Bahrain.

"Poets in Bahrain are very well known in the Arab world and this is one of the reasons I wanted to do the anthology because Europe and the US don't know about us," Mr Al Qaed told the *GDN*.

"Even though the anthology is in English, you will feel it is from an

Arabic climate.

"I want the Western world to know we aren't just here for oil, there are talents.

"The media shows Arabs in the desert with camels, but we are civilised and have many talents.

"I want to convey a message of peace and love from the land of Dilmun."

The translator also enlisted the help of Bahrain University lecturer Dr Munira Al Fadhel and American poet Thomas SternerHowe to help with revision.

Dr Al Fadhel holds a doctorate in comparative literature and is the author of *Al Remora*, a collection of

short stories published in 1984 and a novel *For the Voice, for the Fragility of Echo* published in 2000.

Her collection of critical essays on Arab women's writing *Woman, Place and Memory* will be published next year.

Mr SternerHowe has been extensively published in independent literary magazines and online including *Howling Dog Press/Omega*, *Skyline Literary Review*, and *The Storyteller*.

He is the winner of the Marija Cerjak Award for Avant-Garde/Experimental Writing 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2005 and has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize in 2006.

His novels include *Madman*

*Chronicles: The Warrior and Momma's Rain; American Camp; Frail Monsters/Wounded Soul.*

Mr Al Qaed published his first poetry collection *Lover in the Era of Thirst* in Arabic in 1975.

He stopped writing for many years and his second poetry book *Noise of Whisper* was published in 2003 in both Arabic and English.

This book won first prize in the Distinguished Book competition in 2003, which is organised annually by the Information Ministry.

His third collection *Book of Violets* will be published in Arabic and English in the next few months.

"I write to combat depression, when you write it's like you are standing in front of a mirror without any make-up," explained Mr Al Qaed, who has been a member of Bahrain Writers Association since 1970.

"When I was younger I thought I was writing for people, but then you realise that first of all you are expressing yourself.

**Pain**

"You are writing what's inside you, you express pain. Mostly you can never write a poem when you are happy."

Two thousand copies of *Pearl, Dreams of Shell* will initially be printed, with half to be distributed in Bahrain and the rest in the US and UK.

The 27 Bahraini poets are: Ahmed Al Ajmi, Eman Asiri, Hessa Al Buanain, Ebrahim Buhindi, Sawsan Dahniem, Parween Habib, Qassim Haddad, Alawi Al Hashmi, Yousif Hassan, Salman Al Hayki, Ali Al Jalawi, Ali Abdulla Khalifa, Hamada Khamis, Ahmed Madan, Yacoub Al Muharraqi, Saeed Al Owainati, Karim Radhi, Abdul Rahman Rafie, Ameen Saleh, Hussain Al Samahjeeji, Ali Al Satrawi, Layla Al Sayed, Ahmed Al Shamlan, Ali Al Sharqawi, Fawzia Al Sindi, Hameed Al Qaed, Nabila Zubari and Dr Munira Al Fadhel.

## Flirtation of quarry

O' YOU! steenbok of moon  
Whose breath is light  
between  
Love and hazard  
When have I enjoyed a  
night serene  
Extending from your eyes  
and early dawn  
I tapped your wings like a  
child  
And my chest constricted  
with pain  
Here, in your holy silence  
An arrow pursues me  
A hunter halted down his  
arrows  
So might I whisper your  
silence with poetry  
Or intrude you with my gaze  
Here, steenbok of moon  
I have erected the tents of  
my caravan  
Enchanted, I cover the water  
With those nymphs in the  
lake  
Here, as you're breathed on  
the wind to my heart  
I ask  
But am unaware  
Whether the music ever  
flowed from a wound  
Or from a knife on the  
throat  
By Eiroobini Buhadi

## Sweetness...

THE water is fatigued in its myriad escapes  
Fishes are enkindled  
Prophecy of tragedy share virtue  
And dip out their remnants, a selected sacrifice  
Swimming by adorns when burnished  
They profess a night of conquest  
At which door they studied girls  
Lurking behind their backs to ignite their  
bosoms  
As their feet the requirements of chastity are  
woven  
Prophets wear strangers clothing  
And are never true except of wisdom  
Such girls invade the barricades of god  
Disenchanted by their bodies  
They crest the fire with whistled feet and  
scorched hair

And if one is alone with the last of them  
His prophesy would trench the sins of kinship  
and Venus charm  
They thrust you in their sermons and you are  
struck by euphoria of paradise  
The girls dance with their adornments  
Near your breath, emerge swarms full of dust and  
adorning chatter  
And a tree, shimmering with lament  
A redness blazing in their eyeballs entices  
And a sin not committed by an apple was con-  
quered by its desire to fall  
In its evilest water has betrayed and ignited  
ardness in your memory  
Might your dreams of girls exhaust your eyes  
Lids and drive you to perdition?  
By Sawsan Dahniem

## Without which I die

YOU are the scandal  
I cannot conceal  
Like a bleeding wound  
You are my blood  
How can I conceal you?  
Like a furious sea  
And you, my wave  
How can I conceal you?  
Like an inordinate horse  
And you are my neigh  
How can I conceal you?  
You are the fearful beating  
of my heart  
How can I conceal you and  
not die?  
By Qassim Haddad

## In the presence of the one I love

I SIT beside the sea of your  
light  
One evening in the silence  
of night  
The autumn of nights  
Was extending over the  
horizon, a thread of a smile, a  
wisp of weeping  
A sob of age, it appears as  
laughter

But it is not laughter, it is  
pain, it is bleeding  
You are as a soldier now,  
hidden in everything  
Shining like light, your  
sword brings a lightning to us  
Brightening, and your heart  
belongs to the face of a proper  
Clings in the holes into  
the taste of giving  
In the darkness, I open out-  
ers to you  
So I may contemplate a  
secret from you  
Sometimes my soul is

explained by agony  
Other times, worried by  
the pain of negligence  
I listen in reverence while  
you play  
A crowd that never sleeps  
Flips an extremely witty  
word  
I gaze, you are there calling  
My heart is immersed in  
your light  
I come awake  
Drown in a possibility  
by a flock of steepboks  
By Ali Abdulla Khalifa

## Wounds

I LAUGH too much  
When I am with you  
This is what the sky  
Notifies always  
But  
When the mirror faces me  
Or a cold bed embraces me  
Tears flow  
In my heart  
I am unaware of their real  
source!  
By Ahmed Al Ajmi