



February 2018

Tatjana Debeljački vs. Germain Droogenbroodt

Interview

Can you tell us something about your hometown and growing up?

Actually I was born in a small village where the only cultural source – which I discovered – was the library. But soon I wanted to see more, so by bicycle no older than 14 rode by bicycle to Holland and Germany to “discover” other countries.

I also went to Bruges, the capital of the province, and discovered not only the beauty of the medieval city, but also Flemish primitive painting, such as the works of Hans Memling. A few years later, during vacation I was a guide in the city. Later I went to Brussels to study where I became member of the German and French libraries, devouring poetry (Goethe, Schiller, Eichendorf, Rilke and Baudelaire, Verlaine, Victor Hugo...) as greedy as Americans devour hamburgers.

When did you publish your first book and how did the success follow later?

Originally I wrote and publishes short stories and some poems in magazines, later travel stories and literary critics. But the stress of making a living did not offer me the tranquility I seem to need to write poetry. As a Chinese proverb goes, to be successful in life one needs to have a son, a house and...have written a book. With my 40th anniversary approaching I found it was time to complete that and make a drastic change in my life. So a monk alike, I went to a foreign island (Madeira) to write my first book of poetry with the warning title "Forty at the Wall". The neo romantic poetry received plenty of positive reviews. Moreover I started up POINT with the idea to do something, however little, for a better understanding between human beings, translating and publishing modern international poetry. Moreover I sold my house and moved to the South (Spain) to change my life completely.

The true purpose of art is to uplift humankind, inspire reverence and morality, and instill in people's hearts a true sense of beauty?

At least that is what I believe and aim for since my 40 originally with POINT and since the last four years with the Poem of the Week, although I notice that at international poetry festivals there are also a lot of "selfies" which care only about themselves. But these are fortunately exceptions and great artists, writers, composers, painters left us masterpieces which are a delight for the senses and for our lives.

Translator, publisher and promoter of modern international poetry?

*Well, having some language talents (I speak 6 and read 8 languages) I allows me to read poetry in many original languages, Contrary to most Flemish or Dutch contemporary poets, my poetry initially as inspired by German nature poets and since my book *The Road*, by Oriental philosophies, Confucianism,*

Dao, ZEN, Sufi.

But yes I have been using my language ability to translate, publish and promote mainly modern international poetry, especially from poets which had not the possibility to be published in other languages such as poets from Korea, Taiwan, Palestine, Bulgaria, ex-Yugoslavia... We live in a quite selfish (see the success of selfies) world, also novels, art, have become business. The only expression of art, of human feelings, is poetry for the simple reason that it has no economic value in a world dominated by a handful of shamefully rich companies and enslaving the majority of people with their addicting and brain washing toys or so called social networks, which are all but social, but just filling their bank accounts with billions of money. One of my customers told, publishing poetry is the most elegant way to lose money. Especially in such a marginal language like Dutch it is.

As founder and editor of the Belgian publishing house POINT Editions (POetry INTernational)?

Being a Flemish poet, originally writing only in Dutch, the official language, I noticed the need to give poets, writing as well in marginal languages or with few possibilities to be published in other languages. Finally it is only the poet who holds his finger at the pulse of his people and writes about their misfortunes, their hopes:

Paul Celan in his dramatic Fugue of Death about the Jews in the gas chambers, Mahmoud Darwish about the Palestine, not even officially be allowed to have a nationality, the disappeared in Argentina, the Kurds being bombed by a NATO member although giving their lives for us to fight the barbarian IS...

Set up a new poetic movement, called neo-sensacionismo with the famous Chinese poets Bei Dao and Duo Duo?

Well, as all artistic movements started in Europe, one night, after having

finished several bottles of wine, Bei Dao and Duo Duo, Chinese poets at that time in exile and my guests, we found that we should start a new movement. I just had received the text of a friend's doctorate about Pessoa's sensacionismo. My Chinese friends were quite enthusiastic about the idea to write poetry of the senses. A bit as a protest against hermetic poetry of that moment. In 1996 I organized here the international poetry festival La Costa Poética (The Poetic Coast) with the invited poets giving a reading about neosensacionismo. The Flemish poet, professor philosophy Annie Reniers, compared the poet with a swimmer, but you only talk about the swimmer, argued Satish Gupta (famous Indian artist). The Spanish poet Alex Susanna pretended that he never had participated at such a spiritually high event.

During his sojourn at the Palace-Fortress "Neemrana" in Rajasthan completed the poetry cycle "The Road", (read TAO) a poetic bridge between the East and the West?

Well, I had been more than 60 times in Asia, had studied its philosophers and poets and yes, they greatly influenced my way of thinking and life. Talking about religion I ever wrote, in a poem entitled Religion: My spirit is a cosmic dancer. I thought that book, 30 short poems, never would find readers, but I just had to write it for myself. It became my most successful book, published in 28 countries...

Is there anything that connects poetry and painting? How do you see them together?

Since the beginning, with POINT founded in 1984 I wanted to bring back poetry, painting and music, just as it has been in the past. Therefore, all POINT publications have as cover a painting or sculpture and some also inside illustrations. All of my own poetry books have been illustrated by well-known artists, mainly by the great Indian artist Satish Gupta who also introduced me into Eastern philosophies (I made him to start writing poetry).

Believes in the randomness and richness of life, and that every day is a possible adventure?

Carpe diem. As I wrote in my poem Enlightenment, instead of being slaves of materialism, smart phones (I do not use) Fake book & Co. we should appreciate again simple things, like those offered by nature and which do not cost anything. But as Oscar Wild pretended, more than before, people know the price of everything and the value of nothing...

What can you tell us about your work, prizes, journeys and friendships?

As the Spanish poet José Valente pretended, poetry is not a description of something we lived, but a search for something new, for a new reality, enlightenment. So is my poetic work, starting with The Road, published in Chinese as TAO. As I wrote in the short poem TAO, the Road has no goal, the goal is the Road. As you can recognize in the titles of my other poetry books, Counterlight (the light that, contrary to artificial light does not blinds, but brings enlightenment), In the Stream of Time, Meditations in the Himalayas, The Ephemeral Flower of Time... As to prizes I received prizes as a poet and as a promoter of international poetry in Bangladesh, in Italy (special prize at the Capitol in Rome last year), in Japan, in Mongolia, Paris, in Romania, a h.c. in Egypt and long ago even in Belgium. More than enough. As to my journeys, other than years a few weeks at my favored Lake Como in Italy for finding rest to write, my travels are where poetry (festivals) lead me to: all over the globe. And friendships, well, like most people, I have a handful of friends I always can count on, even to come with me to the end of the world, like my Spanish friend-guitar player Vicent Ballester who came with me to give a recital in Shanghai. But I have friends all over the world, so all have the face of a friend, whether they are Arab, Chinese, Indian, Korean, Mongolian, or Western.

Do you think you have outwitted the expectations?

I am, amongst other believes, a Taoist. The Tao pretends that although apparently happens, things happen. I spend at least 95% of my time promoting poetry of other poets, but year after year, because of recommendations of friends and readers I am invited yearly at more international poetry festivals than I can attend, books published in 28 countries. What would I desire more as a poet. I Is there anything that you could pinpoint and tell us about yourself between dreams and reality?

What are your plans for the future creative work?

Cultiver mon jardin (cultivate my garden, the real one – I love gardening, seeing seeds grow, my relation with the cosmos , but also the spiritual and the human one.

Have you achieved everything you have ever wanted to and if you could live your life again would you be an artist again?

The only thing I would have loved to be is to be a violinist, my favorite instrument and yes, I believe that, although poetry can move people more than one thinks, that music has more power to do so. But poetry is my choice, so yes, I would wish to come back as a poet.

Is there anything you would like to say that you think is important and that I haven't asked you ?

Intelligent questions. Maybe you only could mention the project Poem of the Week. In fact the international continuation of POINT with the same goal: to do something, however little do make this world a little bit more human by a better understanding, though poetry. Started 522 weeks ago, the Poem of the Week is now weekly translated in more than 20 languages,

DIOGEN pro culture magazine & DIOGEN pro art magazine -ISSN 2296-0929; ISSN 2296-0937

Publishers online and owners, Assoc. Prof. Dr Sabahudin Hadžialić and Peter Tase

E-mail: contact_editor@diogenpro.com / WWW: <http://www.diogenpro.com/>

sent weekly to + 10.000 readers all over the world, published at a Dutch and English magazine and at websites in Catalan, Dutch, English, Italian, Japanese Kurdish, Romanian, Japanese

It was a great pleasure talking to you and you are always welcome to our house "Diogen pro culture".

Thank you.

PR

DIOGEN pro kultura

<http://www.diogenpro.com>

NEKOPRATI