

*Poetry Editor Hezekiah Sretch with Strider  
Marcus Jones*

Greetings, O Glorious Bard!

Tom and Charles asked (or was it badgered) me to select the poet of my choice for the Poetry Interview to be published in Issue 10 (November) and you were the one.

If you'd be interested in participating I've some questions for you about your poetry and your writing in general. I am brashly smitten by your work and all I want to do is read more, more and more.

Answer as you please. There is no word count so your answers can be as long or as short as you like. I would need them no later than October 31 (if I'm not to end up in the dog house with its flea-infested mat). Looking forward to hearing from you.

*HS: Can you describe what aspect of your nature draws you to write poetry?*

SMJ: I have always been sensitive to people and my surroundings and often sense things before they happen. My father thought I had inherited this mild psychic reaction to things and situations around me from my Gypsy grandmother. Perhaps, and with the forward looking Aquarian in me and my two Piscean fishes – one swimming through radical and unnatural changes into the future, the other time travelling back into the past, writing poetry has been my natural form of expression about the interconnectedness of Life, Nature, Science and the Arts.

I believe that most things are sentient – the universe, people, animals, bees, the mountains, forests, bodies of water, air and land. In the distant past, we understood this and that the symbiotic relationships once formed co-existed with each other. Through the quest for progress and profit, humankind has lost its way, thinks it is smart enough to go it alone and rule like usurping Gods over everything else. Myths and Legends exist as warnings from the past. Humankind wants the power and discards everything else. I explore these metaphysical relationships when I write poetry and feel their influence on the world.

HS: *The breadth of your writing is replete with classical references and metaphysical reflections; do you find such profound thoughts intrusive in your day-to-day life and feel obliged to exercise them on the page...avoiding costly therapy sessions?*

SMJ: I am not a classics scholar and knew nothing about my metaphysical reflections until a novelist friend pointed them out to me. I write what I feel and sense, often in fluid stream of consciousness. I hate punctuation – it looks like dirty marks in a poem – when you think and the lines come in your mind, you don't think capital letter, comma full stop. The run on lines, line breaks and where the thought ends are the natural punctuation and rhythm in my poems. I like to leave the reader some freedom to interpret this in their own way. Classical references, I have absorbed subconsciously on life's road sometimes pop into my head as I write. I don't know how, or why and I am just as likely to reference Monty Python underpants, Thomas O'Malley the Alley Cat, Tom Waits and whisky, Monk's jazz or Picasso's and Hopper's paintings and Birlini's sculptures in a serious or comical way. I don't find them intrusive in my day-to-day life – more like old friends meeting up in a café cos it's been a while. I don't know any poets who can afford therapy sessions. A therapist would need a therapist after a consultation with a poet.

HS: *Do you set scheduled time aside to write your poetry? Or, like a saxophone, you just pick it up when the mood strikes you?*

SMJ: I prefer to be a free spirit, not a robot. I have no set times to write, but am a night hawk – love the quiet hours to write or play my sax and clarinet badly.

HS: *Can you attribute your muse in part to your legal training, blowing into brass instruments, civil service or some other tragic event?*

SMJ: Like most people, I absorb what life throws at me and try to stay strong. I am not afraid to change the road I'm on and have done so when the road forks in this lifetime. My muse has a will of her own and the urge to write just occurs. I don't know how, or why. It just happens at any time and place, so I always have a pen and scrap of paper in my pocket with other man-junk to scrawl down the idea or opening lines. My legal training and civil service work has given me a forensic way of thinking mellowed by listening to Jazz and tooting my sax.

HS: *Who do you like to read or have been influenced by in your writing?*

SMJ: From the past – Chaucer, Tennyson, Shelley, Keats, Blake, W.B. Yeats, Auden, Langston Hughes, Hart Crane, Sexton, Plath, Kerouac, Heaney, Lorca, Orwell, Dickens, Tolkien, Steinbeck, Heller, Donaldson, P.D. James, Ian Rankin, Vonnegut, Dostoyevsky, Rilke, Rumi, e.e.cummings, Neruda..so many.

From now – They know who they are. I have published their work in Lothlorien Poetry Journal.

HS: *Do you as often labor over lines or do they more so flow as you go once the spirit moves you?*

SMJ: Most poems start off as a thought or idea coiled tight, like a clock spring or ball of string. I don't force the process. The subconscious finds the thread, thinks it through and the poem begins to unravel on the page. When I was younger, I tended to let it just pour out and the poem was what it was. I did not have the craft or discipline to edit it. I have lugged around a hold-all full of journals and notebooks, with over 800 poems I wrote between the age of 13-25. Bad poems with some half decent ideas that make me cringe and want to burn them. Since then, I have tended to care about the poems since they care about the world and the people in it. Now, I can labour for days and in some cases years, over lines and words and structure, crossing out words and whole lines until they feel right now and after I have popped my clogs. Butchering your own work feels barbaric in the moment, but enhances your poetic voice and the honest impact of a poem on the reader.

HS: *Last question. How do you feel about growing?*

MSJ:

“yéni ve lintë yuldar avánier”

-“the years have passed like swift draughts”

Peace, Love and Light,  
Strider

*Lovely work, Thanks for an illuminating interview!*

*Hezekiah Scetch*

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