

# THIS SAME SKY

*A Collection of Poems from around the World*

*Selected by* NAOMI SHIHAB NYE



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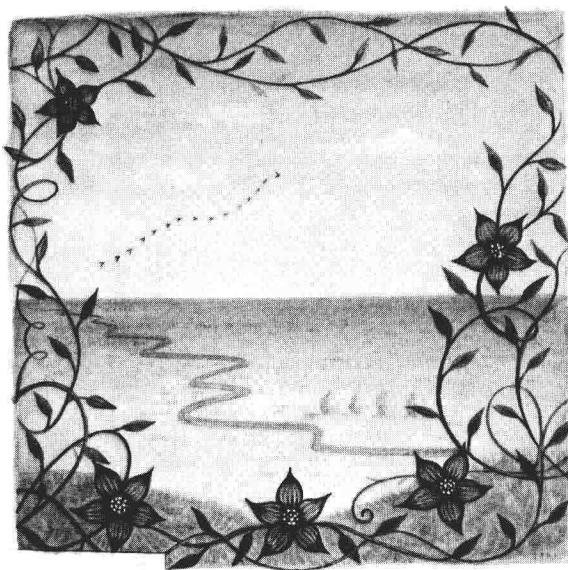
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## INTRODUCTION

The Turkish poet Kandemir Konduk writes about the "apple worm": "All he knows, all he has seen, all his joys, all his cares, are as big as his apple."

We cannot live like the apple worm, as much as we may enjoy thinking about him. From over on the next tree, voices are calling to us—from the next orchard even! How are our branches different and our stories similar? And what lovely, larger life becomes ours when we listen to one another?

Poetry has always devoted itself to bringing us into clearer focus—letting us feel or imagine faraway worlds from the inside. During the Gulf War of 1991, when the language of headline news seemed determined to push human experience into the "sanitized" distance, I found myself searching for poems by Iraqi poets to carry into classrooms. Even if the poems had been written decades earlier, they helped to give a sense of human struggle and real people living behind those headlines.

Those of us living in the United States often suffer from a particular literary provinciality, imagining ourselves to be the primary readers and writers of the planet. We forget that our literary history is relatively brief. Writers in Bangalore, India, asked me what it is like to live in a country with "such a young soul." When a writer in Dhaka, Bangladesh, said, "We try so hard to know what people are writing in the United States—do people in your country try as hard to know about us?" I felt ashamed.

Over the years, working as a poet-in-the-schools, I have taken special pleasure in finding poems from many countries that are accessible to younger readers. Not only may we discover more about writing through these poems, but we may also catch a glimpse of so many distant friends. I think of a house with a thousand glittering windows. I think of poets over the ages sending their voices out into the sky, leaving quiet, indelible trails.

A. Z. M. Obaidullah Khan of Bangladesh has written, "Every true word uttered by the tongue/is poetry/Every ear of corn in the

ploughed land/is poetry/One who has no ear for poetry/Shall hear  
only the moaning of the storm/One who has no ear for poetry/Shall  
lose the inheritance of the horizons . . ."

Because of the number of fine anthologies featuring poets from the United States that have appeared in recent years, I have decided not to include writers who were born in the United States in this book. The poets here have shared the twentieth century from many other vantage points.

Deep appreciation to the dedicated translators who labored on all horizons to make these border-crossings possible. Whenever someone suggests "how much is lost in translation!" I want to say, "Perhaps—but how much is gained!" A new world of readers, for one thing.

This book gathers long-favorite poems together with others that were sent directly to be considered for this volume. The poets of Guyana, South America, and Mauritius, Indian Ocean, were particularly generous with their correspondences. Special gratitude to Don Hausrath of the United States Information Agency for spreading the word about this anthology, to Arthur Sze in New Mexico, and to Frank Stewart of *Manoa* journal, who shared his wonderful contacts in the Philippines.

Together, from our apples, we grow.

Naomi Shihab Nye  
San Antonio, Texas  
1992

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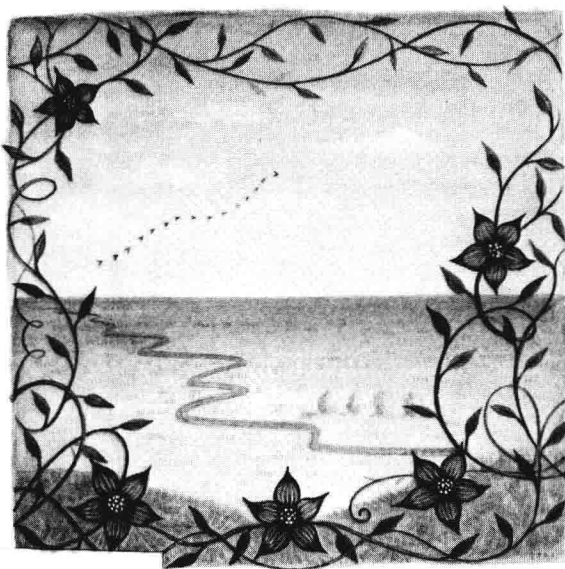
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## HOUSE OF SPRING

Hundreds of open flowers  
    all come from  
        the one branch  
Look  
    all their colors  
        appear in my garden  
I open the clattering gate  
    and in the wind  
        I see  
the spring sunlight  
    already it has reached  
        worlds without number

Musō Soseki

*Japan*

Translated by W. S. Merwin  
and Soiku Shigematsu





# WORDS AND SILENCES

*"Sawdust from under the Saw"*

