

1, Strawhall Villas,
Carlow,
Republic of Ireland.

26 January 2000

Dear Jaleh,

At last I've got round to writing to you. It was so nice meeting you in London and receiving your warm hospitality when we were visiting Feargal, Olive and Éile. I do hope that both you and your husband have been keeping well in the meantime and that you enjoyed Christmas and the New Year.

The month of January as usual flew for me with very little in the line of writing done. I find that with so many family comings and goings at this particular time the most I can do is jot down thoughts. However, I'm now settling down to another year's work.

How about you? Are you managing to write anything new? I'll be looking forward hopefully to reading your work soon, and as we said in London who knows what the future will bring - you may get an opportunity to read in Ireland!

Wasn't it interesting that Séamas Heaney won the Whitbread prize last night and for a translation of Beowulf? I think at this stage, like Ted Hughes, he can't be-bypassed. It is interesting too that Heaney had very little interest in the job when originally asked by Norton to do so. I must say that when I was reading English at University way back in the fifties, I found Beowulf wonderful in its original form although not accessible to the general reading public. The question presents itself - does this translation make it any more accessible. Without doubt, the general public would prefer Adrian Mole! That said, we are naturally very proud that Heaney has brought off another major prize.

I'm enclosing this book of Irish women's poetry, published before Christmas, in which you may be interested. You will see I am included complete with translation. I have a fourth collection of poetry in Irish coming out soon. Have just finished proof reading. It would be of little use to you without translation but with any luck I'll have a chapbook in English quite soon.

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We're having such dreary days here with mists and fogs that don't rise all day. I'm really looking forward to the spring. We have a large garden - much too large for two people to manage - but i love plotting and planning and enjoying plants grow. In recent years, I've been doing a lot of container gardening. It is very satisfying coaxing pots into a riot of bloom that last until the early frosts.

We have no holidays planned. Last year we went to Australia since our youngest daughter was there for the year. This year we'll stay closer to home. I see there is going to be an amazing Art Nouveau exhibition in the Victoria and Albert museum, starting in April, if my memory serves me right. It would be an excuse to visit London again, not that we need one with Feargal and family there.

Do remember me to your husband and give him my best wishes for his good health.

With warmest regards to you both,

Seide Brennan

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1st April 2000

Dear friend Deidre,

Thank you for your heart felt letter and "The White Page" book which you have sent me, its kind of you to think of me. I read your poems and I have to congratulate you on your wonderful work.

I am sorry if I didn't write to you sooner but only recently one of my close friends who is also one of the most acclaimed and famous poets in Iran sadly passed away, his death has been a great loss and shock to me personally and I have been invited to give speeches at several tributes held in his memory.

I have also been involve with completion of my autobiography which is called "Shadow of The years". I am glad to say that only two days ago its publication was completed and the book with 440 pages was published in Germany. During all this time I was also suffering from pain and discomfort in my eyes, so I hope you forgive me for not writing to you sooner.


Subject

On 20th March we were celebrating the Persian New Year "No Rouz" that goes back to thousands of years. It's celebrating the first day of the spring when the day and night are exactly the same time. The new year celebration goes on for 13 days when we have to visit friends and relatives.

As you can see I have been extremely busy, but I hope we write to each more often.

I am glad that I am living next door to your son Feargal and his family. Finally I wish you all the best with your work and I as a woman am so proud of such a talented and hard working artist, may you continue to achieve the best in whatever you do.

With Warmest Regards.

Jateh 

P.S. I have included some of my poems with this letter

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1 Strawhall Villas,
Carlow
4th July 2000

Dear Jaleh,

I was really delighted to get your letter and so was shocked to realise how much time has passed and I haven't replied. I also feel privileged to have had the opportunity to read your fine poetry. I especially liked 'Let us Imagine' and 'My Birthday' I as a woman particularly identified with the sentiments in the latter and its lovely lyricism.

I do hope your eyes are better. It is not surprising that they should suffer considering all the close work involved in writing your autobiography. Still, it is very satisfying to have produced a work of such magnitude. You'll be able to rest on your laurels for a while! Some day, I hope *Shadow of the Years* will be translated into English. My German is of a minimal variety.

It was sad to hear of your fellow-poet's death in Iran and most upsetting for you when you are so far away.

I too have been quite busy. My fourth collection of poetry was launched in early May and I have been reading at various literary festivals which is time consuming but the sociability of these occasions balances the loneliness of writing which of its very essence is anti-social.

I have just completed a one-act play so at the moment I'm doing a bit of gardening and catching up on things which should have been done months ago. I don't have to tell you! You quite understand.

You described in your letter the celebration of the Persian New Year which coincides with the Spring equinox. This was most interesting as in our Celtic tradition the year was divided accordingly into quarters and we have ancient monuments such as Newgrange which are aligned to capture the sun's rays in a narrow chamber at the summer and winter solstice. The first day of Spring was called 'Imbolc' and was celebrated in olden times with much ritual and celebration. 'Samhain', the autumn quarter was actually the Celtic New Year. It is still celebrated throughout the country. Fascinating that the Persian New Year celebrations on 20th March go on for 13 days.

We had Feargal, Olive and Éile visiting us at the week-end. Olive's father was celebrating his 70th birthday so they came as a big surprise. Unfortunately, the visit had to be short as Éile had to be back to school. She really enjoyed meeting all her little cousins once again.

I continue to type my letters to you as I think my hand-writing is a bit indistinct. Many, many thanks for your letter. Apologies for being so slow in replying. Congratulations on your autobiography and my regards to your husband and family.

Take care of yourself.

With warmest good wishes,

