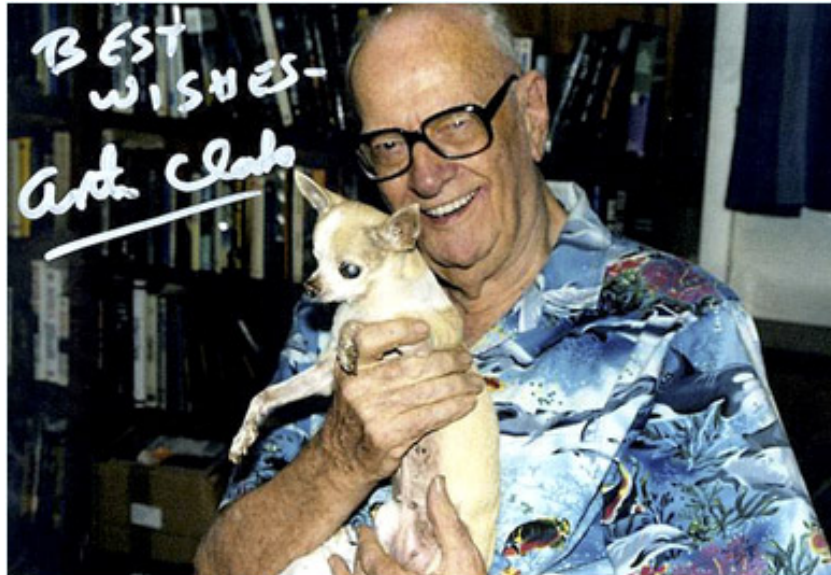


Poetic Diary

TO MANY MORE MILLENNIA DEAR SIR ARTHUR...

Dedicated to the 100th Anniversary of Sir Arthur C. Clarke's Birthday...



December 16, 1917 – December 16, 2017

Sir Arthur with his beloved *Pepsi* (Photo: Bircan Ünver)

I.

Many people used to mention the impossibility of interviewing you...
Once I was influenced by your vision, I wanted to interview you...

At that time, I had read in the newspapers that you were in New York...
I had immediately found out where you were staying and called

This hotel happened to be the one where you had written the book "*2001: Space Odyssey*"
Much later, I also found out that in front of the hotel wall,
there is a placket in your name that refers you've written the "*2001: Space Odyssey*" there...

Another major coincidence is that it was the hotel that I had stayed in
when I set foot in New York for the first time: *Hotel Chelsea*...

I had called that hotel immediately after reading the news...
Unfortunately, you had left that morning to return to Sri Lanka
I was saddened, but there was not much that I could do in that moment...

This situation further fostered my desire to interview you
And I was wondering how I could accomplish it...

Obviously, it was not something that could take place all by itself...
Eventually, on January 14, of 2002, I faxed to you my request for an interview
along with the draft of my set of questions...

I was not even sure if I would receive a response...

Without much delay – just two days later, on January 16, 2002, to be exact,
you answered via fax with your official letterhead containing all your contact details ...
I interpreted that response of yours as an invitation...
You were mentioning a disturbance from polio and that you had to sleep for 14 hours a day...
At the same time, you had answered two-three of my questions,
including the one related to the documentary called: “*Arthur C. Clarke’s Universe*” ...
You had even touched upon the fact that you had just learned
as an anecdote that Tim Berners-Lee had been inspired for the [www](#)[1]
based on your story called “*Dial F for Frankenstein*” [2]

This response of yours instantly triggered the idea
To visit you in Colombo at the end of that same year,
Especially as it was your 85th Birthday...

In the end, I was in Negombo on December 10, 2002...
I sent you a card from there and
made a phone call on your birthday.
You mentioned that you had received my birthday celebration card,
that you wanted to call me back,
but I had forgotten to write my hotel phone number in it
And I got excited all over, with your response of:
“I am waiting for you whenever you can” ...
Eventually, my first visit with you came on December 20, 2002
And that year I had repeated my visits until I left Sri Lanka...

This is how a very rare and valuable friendship had started...

II.



Bircan Ünver's 89th birthday gift to Sir Arthur is "The Essential RUMI" (2004), Barnes Place, Colombo on Dec. 16, 2006. (Photo: Rohan de Silva)

II.

I was in Sri Lanka again for your 89th Birthday in the year 2006...
It was my third trip there...and, was staying for a month each time
And, as long as I was staying in Colombo, I was visiting you there regularly...

One day, when I arrived at Barnes Place around noon-time,
only your personal assistant Rohan was there...
He said: "He is sleeping now. If you wish, you can hang around until he wakes up"
So, I took photographs of the wallpaper of the moon
which made me feel like I was on the Moon
Also, the poster of the film, "2001: Space Odyssey" which was on your entrance wall,
And, by the top of the stairs, the panel which contained an arrow pointing upwards
with the words: **35 billion miles from here to Mars**

Just at that moment, I overheard that one of the phone calls coming
to you was from your brother Fred in England.
Rohan replied to him saying: "Sleeping now, please call around 4 – 5 pm..."

You used to encourage me to watch any of your video cassettes that I wished,
or look at your books in your library.
Every time I came, you used to say: "watch whichever one you desire..."

As Rohan also knew this,
 he had taken me to your library while waiting for you to wake up...
Most of the time, I used to watch the NASA documentaries...
Upon waking up, you were pleased to find me in your study room...

A few hours had gone by and we were still together
 around your desk and computer that day,
 when your brother called from England again
And this time Rohan had connected the phone to your desk...
When you picked up the phone, I attempted to leave your room
 in case you would have some private things to speak with your brother...

Then, with the phone receiver in one hand,
 you signaled me to come back with the other hand saying: "come, come..."
I came by your side... and suddenly you passed on the receiver to me...
You introduced me to your brother, who was on the other side of the phone
 with the words: "*my love...*"
Not knowing what to say, picking up the receiver handed to me,
 I said "Hi..." and introduced my name...
Then I tried to say something else.
 I guess there was surprise on the other end of the phone just like I was
Because I do not remember a word of what I said,
 or anything I was told from the other side...

A couple of times, I had joined you and Rohan to watch the sunset...
 And, it was time for me to go back to New York...
 I had joined the two of you, in the previous evening too...
I was going to leave Sri Lanka the next morning...
While returning, immediately after watching the sunset
 and while getting off at a street corner on the stop light...
I said: "*I do not know when I can come back again*"
Getting off the back seat of the car, I opened the front door,
 and we hugged each other...
You said: "*I am here, come whenever you want...*"

We said our quick goodbyes with a tender hug in the car,
 hurrying up before the traffic light turned green...

III.

I will never forget the night of March 19th in Sri Lanka
which was the night of March 18, 2008 in New York
Because it was as if you had established communication with me as '*a galactic mind*' [3]...

That night on the subway,
while I thought that I was talking to myself,
I immediately came to a realization that I was talking to you...
"*This is, Sir Arthur*", I said out loud to myself

On the midnight of March 18th in New York,
and very early hours of March 19th...
my body was almost going to exit through my mouth,
leaving my skin like an empty dress...
I woke up with fear at that moment
because only sudden awakening could end this fear.

I had not been able to sleep after waking up three times out of breath
while I was having back to back nightmares—*as if it was looped*...—
Each time, I woke up in a terrifying state, from such a nightmare
Not to let my soul escape out of my skin at that very moment...

While in New York, upon returning home in the following evening after 9 pm
I received the shocking news that you had left the surface of this Earth
through an e-mail message from a friend,
who had attended your 90th birthday[4]...
event that
we had organized for your honor in New York...
I had felt as if I lost my father for the second time and cried a lot that night...

More than ten years have gone by
Since our tender and hurried goodbye inside the car
at the traffic lights on Colombo Circle...
It is still fresh in my mind as if it was yesterday
I still could not go to Sri Lanka again since that day...

While your 100th Birthday is fast approaching,
Despite the 10 years that passed by,
let alone forgetting you,

It was as if you had left this earth, by seeding in me something from yourself...
Because even while you were on this planet
 due to the distances between the continents
 I have frequently spoken to you with the mediation of the stars
Still, I continue talking to you through the mediation of the stars
I am feeling that you have left by planting something in my dreams and thoughts...
Of course, not only to me...
 to generations of human beings outnumbering hundred-millions
 and for many more generations to come...

* * *

Yes, dear Sir Arthur...

*I miss you as if you have never left this Earth and as if you will come back again...
With these lines and through the stars,
I celebrate your 100th Birthday
wishing it will be celebrated in many more millennia to come...*

To many more millennia Dear Sir Arthur...

– “Yours” (this is how I used to sign my e-mails to you.)

– . –

English version by **Fatma SARIKAYA** translated from my Turkish poetry book titled,
“İŞİK YOLLARINDA” (2017, Istanbul). Originally written in Turkish on August 18, 2017, Küçükalyalı, Istanbul.
(in Turkish) **NİCE BİNYILLARA SEVGİLİ SİR ARTHUR... | 100.Yaşında**

Photographs:

- 1) Sir Arthur C. Clarke with his beloved *Pepsi* (Photo: Bircan Ünver)
- 2) Bircan Ünver presents her 89th birthday gift to Sir Arthur: “*The Essential RUMI*” (2004), Barnes Place, Colombo on Dec. 16, 2006. (Photo: Rohan de Silva)

Special Thanks To:

- 1) Initial e-mail address of the Office of Sir Arthur C Clarke provided by **Cüneyt Ayrıl** in Istanbul in September 2001.
- 2) **Fatma Sarikaya**, for her support to speed up this Poetic Diary's translation in order to be published and shared, specifically, on Sir Arthur's 100th Birthday, which is today: Dec. 16, 2017.

Footnotes:

[1] Tim Berners-Lee, the founder of “World Wide Web”.

[2] “*The Collected Stories of Arthur C Clarke*” (2002).

[3] Sir Arthur was described as a “*Galactic Mind*” follow by his departure by **Ramu Damodaran** during a private conversation at the UN in March 2008.

[4] Looking back on the celebration of Two Universal Men: RUMI & CLARKE

https://www.lightmillennium.org/events/rumi_clarke_about_dec5.html

Slide presentation: <http://www.lightmillennium.org/gallery1/index.php/2007-TWO-UNIVERSAL-MEN-RUMI-CLARKE>

[5] Sir Arthur C. CLARKE: 90th Birthday Reflections

https://www.lightmillennium.org/2008_21st/arthur_c_clarke_90th_bday.html

• For the original format of the poem, it is also attached as pdf file>

arthur-c-clarke-at-100-to-many-more-millenna