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The Enchanting Poet for ISSUE XIX November 2013

Amy King

Of Amy King's most recent book from Litmus Press, I Want to Make You Safe, John Ashbery described her poems as bringing "abstractions to brilliant, jagged life, emerging into rather than out of the busyness of living." Safe was one of the Boston Globe's Best Poetry Books of 2011, and it was reviewed, among others, by the Poetry Foundation and the Colorado Review. King was also honored by The Feminist Press as one of the "40 Under 40: The Future of Feminism" awardees, and she received the 2012 SUNY Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Scholarship and Creative Activities.

I Want to Make You Safe was published by Litmus Press, 2011. Amy King is also the author of Slaves to do These Things, I'm the Man Who Loves You and Antidotes for an Alibi, all from Blazevox Books, as well as The People Instruments (Pavement Saw Press), Kiss Me With the Mouth of Your Country (Dusie Press).

King works on "The Count," conducts interviews for and is a board member for VIDA: Woman in Literary Arts. She also edits the Poetics List, sponsored by The Electronic Poetry Center (SUNY-Buffalo/University of Pennsylvania), moderates the Women's Poetry Listserv (WOMPO) and the Goodreads Poetry! Group, and teaches English and Creative Writing at SUNY Nassau Community College. Her poems have been nominated for several Pushcart Prizes, and she has been the recipient of a MacArthur Scholarship for Poetry. She was also the 2007 Poet Laureate of the Blogosphere.

Open Mouth, Insert Prison
By Amy King

We are countries long and grow
equidistant daily. That is, we are the same
as when we first began
but nature has her way with our natures
to the point of nurturing us to
territories we think we become. Outlaws.
Gender, sex, the mechanic who, in his backroom,
wears dresses to pump your oil out.
He charges little.
But that's just one way we know ourselves:
apart. As refuse and privacy,
private moments as costume.
We don those moments
with leashes to lead us
back to stage lights de facto. Another is Art,
which allows us to see how we have
a common enemy, the independent eye
to favor looking back at us nightly.
Not even Godard could replicate
this sense of midnight staring
down the pupil's pinprick where the soul tethers
a sense of something not-us
we wish to our psyches.
We fear music's emotion
when we glimpse the seed it spirals out.
The mirror apes us for free.
Mirror muscle agape.
Some will call this
chronic time or speaking in ghosts.
I don't know if molecules get the truth
any closer than we teeth dimensional selves
by air or sky or oxygen's debris, but we breathe
each other in and down into the pelvis
where everything hits, one stop at a time.
There is no getting off until the countries
we've become are faces in moons,
and we see the man overlooked for inspection
become entire lives and take a step back …
until he becomes.

Sit awhile now; don't throw your night sight

to call attention to anything.
Walk the plank in moonlight.
See the sky for the setting it becomes.
I think of you in between time's markers too.
I burn every evolution
just to find a field where crop circles
pretend your name.
Note how the unidentified
impregnate desire. Set scarecrows afire
with the good speed of song.
Death metal and pins on carpet alight
the tips of the universe
in their own discrete ways,
parting gifts for while we're here.
Move with volume,
adjust the air's adult layers. As if I drive
your truck when you're not looking, as if I roll
down windows for passing hurricanes, as if I'm
the underside of grief that smiles
without knowing. I know your return fare,
more countries are coming, even where
the night watchman forges on,
forgetting the boatman's fate.

The Little Engine's Death
By Amy King

If I give you my depression, will you excise
the bruise and the veins that feed it? I have failed
the system in this fashion:
I cut myself but no tears come.
No disappearing wounds avoid crushing
the sidewalk egg I'm in
and the fake antlers I'm under,
without cruising beats to writhe to.
Plastic beauty in its arcades moves
among us moving us with plastic
beauty's entrails swaying mirrors
that we need just to see how virtual we really are.
When the dandelion field is not enough.
And other tales to help assuage our guilt.
This is one existence we have grown up feeding on.
You happen on my cartoon side,
putting on your best Janeway face, readying
to save Seven of Nine from her Borg-side. She is alone
and lovely and you've known nothing as delicate
as her strength, as the lessons
buried deeply in her facial age.
A few car crashes later, the surface of the city
lifts and we can see through each other again.
The heat of each status is reflected off
Us for one instance of transparent brain barriers,
but then the photos begin.
I've forgotten more than I can remember—
that is the burden of Ghost.
The handgun of many. Are you amazing me
or am I hiding in the shotgun transsexual agenda
of what comes first masters no one?
The little engine's death tells me otherwise.
Little engine's death is no bigger than poetry.
It fits in the palm of your screen and tells us everything.
You do you. I'll do you too. We'll be the first.

The Sea Was Too Far Away
By Todor Chalovski

The sea was too far away
for me to paint its bed in your eyes
The star lost its path
and now we are besieged from both sides by silence
Utter that curse about the sun
and the forest will always remain in its place
Only the blossom will come near us
for its solemn heritage turns into ashes
our living thought at noon
I do not know any longer whether
in me still blossoms
my father's apple tree
flooded by an invisible river
that flows from all sides
There is a moment wavering in the distance
that I will imprison in my trumpet
and like a small constellation on a palm
I will raise it to mortal heights
Neither the stone nor the water
accept our real heritage
you remain to be a spring of two querulous banks
and I a rock upon which the soldier lay
after the battle, closer to home.

Born 23rd August 1945 in Gostivar **Todor Chalovski** is a poet, literary critic, essayist and translator. He worked as a journalist in a number of newspapers including "Studentski zbor", "Vecer", "Makedonija" was the editor of the Cultural Desk for culture, literature and art at Radio Skopje. He has edited the journal "Belezi" and "Razgledi", was editor-in-chief of the Macedonian Writers' Association review "Stozer". He served as secretary and president of the Macedonian Writers' Association and was Member on the Board of the Struga Poetry Evenings Festival. He was also the President of the Assembly of the Macedonian Writers' Association and has been a member of the Macedonian Writers' Association since 1969.

Some of his notable works include Night in which you are not (poetry, 1969), Nocturnal book of hours (poetry, 1971), The Sirdar's Ailments (poetry, 1981), The core (poetry, 1984), Threshold (poetry, 1988), Magic boundaries (poetry, 1989), Proniz (poetry, 1994), Gifts (poetry, 1994), Galica (poetry, 1996), Awake House (poetry, 1998), Poems (1998), Critical views (essays and criticism, 1998) & Supportive voice (poetry, 2000) etc.

His awards include: "Miladinov Brothers", "Mlad borec", "Studentski zbor", "Mladost" (Belgrade), "Misirkov", "Grigor Prlichev" (for translation) and the award for best literary critic of the year in Macedonia.

Winter, with Child
By Aliki Barnstone

"Winter," Paul Klee, Color Lithograph, 1939, 10" x 14"
Anderson Center Permanent Collection

If I could have painted my soul pregnant,
we'd look like this lithograph, the weight
of my dreaming body written on stone
with fourteen lines or less. And where my hand
cradled you moving in my belly is
a bright red heart, more brightly hued than me,
the bare stick trees, the landscape, or the moon.
A ruby shape childishly drawn, a tender
symbol for you who were invisible
but felt, a part of me, apart from me,
your heart beat the iambs I could not write.
You grew in winter and the words inside
were seeds, dormant 'til the April you were
born, breathed, and filled your name with life, my Zoë.

Weeds
By Aliki Barnstone

I like dandelions, though most say they're weeds.
In Greece they're called wild greens.
Every day the sun shines this stormy spring,

I swear I'll harvest, steam, and serve them
with extra virgin olive oil, lemon, and salt,
yet I don't make the time because I'm not

a wizard who knows how to rip the minutes
and hours out of the universe by their roots
the way I used to pull up dandelions and clover.

If time were a garden, I guess the sunset hours
would be the peonies and rarest fragrant roses
and the weeds would be the seconds that spread

into minutes and hours and choke the life
out of what I most cherish. Perhaps.
If I could harvest the dandelions and cook them

perfectly, I wonder if my concoction would be
eternity served on a white platter with a tall carafe
of red wine and a basket of homemade bread
to a table crowded with all my loved ones.

Aliki Barnstone is a poet, translator, critic, and editor. She is the author of seven books of poetry, most recently, *Bright Body* (White Pine, 2011) and *Dear God Dear, Dr. Heartbreak: New and Selected Poems* (Sheep Meadow, 2009), and the translator of *The Collected Poems of C.P. Cavafy: A New Translation* (W.W. Norton, 2006). In 2014, Carnegie Mellon University Press will reissue her book, *Madly in Love,* as a Carnegie-Mellon Classic Contemporary. Among her awards are a Senior Fulbright Fellowship in Greece and a residency at the Anderson Center at Tower View. She is Professor of English and Creative Writing at the University of Missouri, Columbia, where she serves as Series Editor of the Cliff Becker Book Prize in Translation.

Flying into the Wild Kissed by Sunshine
By Ambika Talwar

Kissed by sunshine. Color hay. Grass that blows. Seeds that wander. How green is the valley from the heart to the stars? Softly tread now! The earth's weave is dreams and desire. *Thanatos! Thanatos! Omphalos! —*

How green are the trees that fly in the wind? Kissed by sunshine. Color hay. Grass that blows. Seeds that wander. Hair that sculpts. Eyes that look down. Pensive and wild. Eyes that look down. Feet that wander from earth to stars. In search. In search.

Waters are turning to face the mirror. What is the color of the new world? Who is the love arriving in the dominion of mirrors? How shall we recognize him, or he us? Kissed by sunshine. Color hay. Grass that blows. Seeds that wander. Settle.

How green are the stars that look down at us? Caress! Caress! So, Undress! Stand naked—Stand empty. Fill with light. Silent delight. All shattered with gold! Color hay. Grass that blows. Blows as it sows itself seeding earth. How green! How green! How lovely and green!

Kissed by sunshine. Color hay. Grass that blows. Seeds that wander. From stars to shine. Faces in mirror. Fingers that touch. Hands that hold. How green are the trees that fly in the wild!

Kissed by sunshine. Color hay…

Ambika Talwar is an educator, poet/artist, & award-winning filmmaker. She is the author of *Creative Resonance: Poetry—Elegant Play, Elegant Change* and *4 Stars & 25 Roses.* She's published in/by *Kyoto Journal, Chopin with Cherries, On Divine Names, VIA, Poets on Site* collections, *Tower Journal, St. Julian's Press,* and *Inkwater Ink, vol. 3*, and has been interviewed on KPFK. A Los Angeles resident, she practices holistic medicine and teaches at Cypress College. http://goldenmatrixvisions.com - http://intuition2wellness.com - http://creativeinfinities.com

like birds we flock,
By Rohith Sundararaman

every year
our feet, all kind
of feet trundle over
hallowed paths carved
out of rocks, wood, water,
what-nots, over bridges
swaying under the drumrolls
of steps, each a measure
of unwavering faith, unwave-
ring faith of our steps
over bridges that sway
above the rising gurgle,
swish swoosh swirl,
it is awash
in our beliefs, we who
dive in it,
mouth muttering syllables
which peel away destinies
we do not know of,
there it goes,
there…
swish swoosh swirl
into the gurgle,
it rises,
a crescendo to our drumroll,
we march over swaying bridges,
swaying sight, watching destinies
flowing beneath us slowly
catching up on us, on-
us with the unwavering faith
on above, a bit of drizzle,
pelt
pelt
pelt,
it's from a darkened room,
coaxing more of us to peel,
but hey,
we are a bit hard
of hearing, so we march
further over swaying bridges,
whooooo whoooo whoooo
in our ear, and a crack!
what's that?
the gurgle is upon us,
the swaying got us
dizzy to where the bridge
no longer sways, the way
they no longer sway, hey
below, march on,
us of unwavering faith
in above, feet no longer
kind of on hallowed paths
which led us,
of the unwavering faith, to you,
oh immovable rock, or hey,
a few left hanging,
their unwavering faith
on an immovable rock under them,
feet rooted to destinies yet unpeeled
as many other slowly begin to surface

Rohith Sundararaman is a 28-year old writer from Bombay. His work can be found online at *Ghoti Mag, Eclectica, Orange Room Review, The Story Garden, Pratilipi* and other places.

the snare drum is my Genesis, part i

By Brad Henderson

in my beginning is my end

before i knew
the drums
i felt the creek's funky beat—
heard the sublime range harp
& Wild West whistle
the soundtrack of wood thump
wire click & real thunder

in my book of music self
i could not embrace
the parlor piano nor my father's
proficient clarinet. i chose
the way of the rebel
rancher's daughter
my first drum teacher
was my mother
who could kick my ass
on the snare—rip out whip-crack
flams, five-stroke rolls, & ratamacue
stagings, not unlike a fearless
firm halter snap
against the chaos of animal bucking

onto clean-cut kid with impish smile
high school issue traps
ca-chinkin' at the Monterey
Jazz Festival, then playing my own
offbeat "&s" of 70s
disco & polyester stretch & that
one-night gig at the Capitol
there was Linda Ronstadt &
Jerry Brown hob-nobbing
in the Governor's Ballroom
dosing my soon-to-manifest
brazen & affected rocker's pose
cocaine silver cruise
beyond adolescent sighs &
athlete & cheerleader leaps
the timid slow dance

& what of my tough sonofabitch
grandfather, his stoic grin & straight
talk
about all this:
  y*eah, i'll go*
  to my grandson's show
  even though the other youngsters
  in that combo
  have flat-out hippie hair & look
  like they don't work.
ironic, i could already outdrink
all my mates
but wasn't so stupid as
to go and look like it…

& what of court & country
disconnect, the half-breed
beau w/ his six guns
for the city—percussion: closest kin
to speed, horse sweat, & unboxed sky
the saturday night peacock
& herding instinct?

the snare drum is
my Genesis, part
ii

By Brad
Henderson

in my end is my beginning

& what of court & country
disconnect, the half-breed
beau w/ his six guns
for the city—percussion: closest kin
to speed, horse sweat, & unboxed sky
the saturday night peacock
& herding instinct?

somewhere, somewhere...
my first snare drum & original sticks
stunk-up felt in a cracked black case
Ludwig eight-lug dirty yellow-white
sparkle, a hole or two
in the bottom skin
& somewhere there are

snapshot photos of me playing 60s
marching tracks—theme from
Hogan's Heroes, *Hawaii Five-O*,
maybe a little John Philip Souza
or a Clint Eastwood
bad dude parade

i know the answers now:
would you like to hear me
smack quarter-note two & four shots
on my snare? would you like to hear me
beat my mother
playing tom-tom paradiddles
w/ syncopated slurry, sledgehammer
sticks, and full-on wicked
cross-sticking? would you like to hear
me
play sixteenth-note triplets
like John Bonham on a single-kick?
i am a cowboy who doesn't look a
cowboy. don't fence me in.

Brad Henderson's work has appeared in a variety of outlets including *The Journal*, *The Pinch*, *Asheville Poetry Review*, *Fourteen Hills,* and *Hayden's Ferry Review*. The two-part poem appearing here is from Henderson's unpublished memoir in verse, *The Secret Cowboy: the Life and Times of the Rebel Poet Beau Hamel*. His poem, "December calving," also from the *Secret Cowboy* series, was a finalist for *Best of Net 2012*. Growing up, Brad was a city boy who spent his holidays and summers working on his grandfather's cattle ranch in the Sacramento Valley foothills. He is now is a full-time faculty member at University of California, Davis, where he teaches engineering and scientific writing, as well as a freshman seminar on the psychology of drummers—rock, jazz, and blues. An avid drummer since he was 9 years old, Brad is the author of the Phi Kappa Phi award winning novel, *Drums*. And yes, it's true. Back in the 70s, he did actually play a gig at the California State Capitol, and Governor Jerry Brown and Linda Ronstadt actually were in the audience, dancing frenetic disco to young Brad and his band mates' funky groove. Last but not least, Brad would like to graciously acknowledge and thank *Wild Violet* magazine for first publishing Part 1 of "the Snare Drum is my Genesis" as an online feature.

https://twitter.com/bradhenderson1

http://www.bradhenderson.net/

http://writing.ucdavis.edu/faculty-staff/directory/bhenders

In the Days of Leaving
By Karen Carissimo

Fasting on memory, I walked in buried cities, built small castles with skeletons of the dead. I searched for you and saw your eyes in cave light tunnel toward the sea. I formed my first words of prayer from inchoate laughter, repeated holy words whispered in meadow grasses tousled by wind. The noise of the streets, the noise in my mind was put to rest. My dreams received portents from soothsayers in future kingdoms. Amulets appeared under my pillow, tiger tooth, rosewood bead, a witch's comb. Our collided goodbyes landed in neat piles of rubble specked with gems at my feet. Faraway mountain sounds moved in my chest. Our vows lifted into thin clouds, signatures I could read in an extinct language. Snow fell after waves of heat rose in summer mirages off hot cement. My exhaled breath ignited wildfires over dry hills. After a single night of rain, an orchard sprung from the sidewalk. I balanced trees in the palms of my hands. The kiss I left on your pulse hummed for months on my lips. Through a tide of stars, I waded to shore. I heard you, faintly, call my name over an ocean.

Karen Carissimo's first book of poems, Dream City, was published last year by Iris Press. New poems are forthcoming, or have appeared in San Pedro River Review, North American Review, Notre Dame Review, Verse Daily, Western Humanities Review, Valparaiso Poetry Review, Crab Orchard Review, Cimarron Review, and other journals. She is currently working on a new collection of poems and a novel.

Trapeze
By Donna Baier Stein

Oriental woman in a white dress
sits atop a waterfall.
Behind her, woods and rocks,
in black and white.
When Nic Wallenda
crossed Niagara Falls
his shirt shone bright red
against black sky and
the turbulent whites of water.
The long, graceful curve of his pole—
it takes so little to find your balance.
An ocean lies between you and that woman,
but fear can be contained, even loved.
With or without a safety clamp,
something will keep you aloft,
sometimes.

Donna Baier Stein is the author of *Sometimes You Sense the Difference* (chapbook) and *Sympathetic People* (story collection). She was a Founding Poetry Editor of *Bellevue Literary Review* and founder and publisher of *Tiferet*. www.donnabaierstein.com

October Maple
By Doug Anderson

Flame
by
falling
flame,
you set the ground on fire.

Menagerie
By Aparna Mukhedkar

A maddening cacophony of sounds
Pervades, exploding, like a thousand
Utensils clanging and doorbells with
Ding-dongs ringing incessantly in unison.
Where is that sound coming from?
I wonder if it is that madhouse next door,
With their monstrous green triangle of cement
And bricks that crowns their multicolored
Façade, resembling the cream biscuit on the
Tuti-fruiti bowl of ice-cream
I'd eaten earlier that morning.
A birdsong interrupts, a mynah, I think.
Stillness descends for many moments.
Drawing the light blue curtains of my window
The house makes its doleful appearance.
The broken wooden fence reveals
A fresh pruned lawn with a garden of
Sagging red roses and daffodils, mostly blue
And yellow. A drooping pale orange
Awning is draped over their front porch,
Hanging precariously, like genius, hiding
The demons that are lurking indoors.
Peace ponders, interrogating, unthinking.
Something flies past, fast like a jet or rocket.
Alarmed, you see an ornate bath tub
Lying in the yard where it wasn't before.
An armchair, thrown, staggers out, landing
On the primroses, perfect little dots of
Maroon and pink, they were.
A light green pillow falls on the white stone
Curb, where a golden terrier ambles along
Sadly with his elderly master, who is
Wheelchair bound, deaf and mute.
Stunned they are, as out come the
Wares of silver inlaid with copper.
Spoons, forks, butter knives and thick
Bright red ceramic plates, tempura
Bowls and rolls and rolls of soft tissue paper.
A dark oak armoire lies prostrate
At the front door, with a cuckoo
Clock on the top that holds a
Puppet inside, that wields a sharp
Looking sword and a regal presence
Strikes to pronounce the hour of four.
One-two-three-four-
Suddenly, a six-inch plasma TV
Careens like a frisbee landing on
The bright pink Mitsubishi, with a
License plate that reads "IMTRBL".
The window is shattered to smithereens.
Tiny rocks of tinted glass splatter across
The porch in slow motion just
Like in the movies.
A massive red earthen pot, filled with
Cool water flavored with mint and
Lemon comes crashing through
The front door. Flying alongside is
The pig from the sty that lazed around
All morning like a huge slob drinking
The horse's water.
Dumb with shock is the driver of
The midnight blue Mercedes
Screeching louder than a horny tomcat
Veering to avoid the pig now accompanied
By a frightened new born pink calf.
What madness!
This cluttered mind!
What madness!

Aparna Raj Mukhedkar is a freelance writer based in Surrey, England. She writes poems, short stories and essays. Her work has appeared in the *Poetry Quarterly*, *Hoot and Hare Review*, *Foliate Oak Literary Journal*, and *Criterion Literary journal* among others.

Air Strike
By Jon Tribble

Dresden's air ignited—the persistence of curiosity
satisfied by the burning, each breath a flamethrower.
Bhopal's night wind choking sleeping throats,
heavy air drowning the unsuspecting in their sheets.
Chernobyl's clouds raining down future seasons—
silent, misdirected generations under an irradiated sun.
Auschwitz's engines laboring toward unrepentant
showers, the scalding air's unforgiving, inhuman touch.

Satisfied by the burning, each breath a flamethrower,
the kiln fires skin and bone, the common grave like
heavy air drowning the unsuspecting in their sheets.
The oven's heat oblivious to one, a thousand, a million
silent misdirected generations under an irradiated sun
passing to ash or whatever else is left as runoff for
showers, the scalding air's unforgiving, inhuman touch
like acid in the throat, like the last air rising up before

the kiln fires skin and bone, the common grave like
the *Encyclopedia Britannica,* a *World Book,* almanac of
the oven's heat oblivious to one, a thousand, a million
lives that are each only one, so much more than memory
passing to ash or whatever else is left as runoff for
history. This story waits forgotten in the closet, avoided
like acid in the throat, like the last air rising up before
no air remains, no need to reopen the singed pages of

the *Encyclopedia Britannica,* a world book, almanac of
Auschwitz's engines laboring toward unrepentant
lives that are each only one. So much more than memory,
Chernobyl's clouds raining down future seasons,
history—this story waits forgotten in the closet, avoided.
Bhopal's night wind choking sleeping throats,
no air remains. No need to reopen the singed pages of
Dresden's air ignited—the persistence of curiosity.

Jon Tribble's poems have appeared in the anthologies *The Jazz Poetry Anthologya, Surreal South,* and *Two Weeks,* in the print journals *Crazyhorse, Poetry, Ploughshares,* and *Quarterly West,* and online at *A Poetry Congeries from Connotation Press, The Account,* and *storySouth.* He teaches at Southern Illinois University Carbondale, where he is the managing editor of *Crab Orchard Review* and the series editor of the Crab Orchard Series in Poetry published by SIU Press.

Loss
By Patricia Jabbeh Wesley

A Dirge for Wadeh Boah

It is not the losing that makes emptiness
a hollow, a space in an endless place, as if digging

and digging to find gold or to define gold,
or in the finding of gold, you discover that gold

is all rust or not just rust, but empty of what you
thought it was. Loss, when the war took you

so far away like a leaf, and then after so long,
we thought we'd found you. To know that a dead

brother cannot be claimed or that he has moved
on into the other world in the spaces where

time is timeless, where spirits roam free without
a country, like you were, is hard. They say there

was fire, so we cannot even gather your burned
bones, the remnants of what the war could not

consume, of lost particles, and how is it that
people can be dead when you do not see

their dead body? What we do not see remains
alive in the mind's eye, like seeing you, walking

into my yard years before the war, the way
I knew you, not the way a phone call, with its

abstract images, knows itself. It had been just
four months after I discovered that you were

still alive, and I held on to your shirt's sleeve,
only in the images a picture can hold, as if to

retrieve you from the past, as if to recover lost
years, as if to say, yes, the war has left a few of us

to walk upon the soil for which we sacrificed
so many of us, so some of us could live.

What Took Us to War
By Patricia Jabbeh Wesley

Every so often, you find
a piece of furniture, an old head wrap
or something like a skirt,
held together by a rustic pin.
Its years, spilled all over the ruggedness
of this war-torn place
as if years were rice grains.

Relics of your past, left for you,
in case you did return accidentally
or intentionally, in case you did not
perish with everyone else.
Something, hanging on to thread,
hanging on to the years,
to be picked up after locusts
and termites have had their say,
the graciousness of looters,

the graciousness of termites
and temporary owners of a home
you built during your youth,
during the Samuel Doe years,
when finding food was your life goals.
How gracious, the war years,
how gracious, the warlords,
how gracious, their fiery tongues
and fiery missiles.

All the cannibalism we deny today,
and here we are, coming upon
a woodwork of pieces of decayed
people that are not really pieces
of woodwork at all.
This should be an antique, a piece
of the past that refused to die.

Wood does not easily rot, but here,
termites
have taken over Congo Town
the way Charles Taylor claimed the
place,
the way Charles Taylor claimed
our land and the hearts of hurting people,
the way the Atlantic in its wild roaming
has eaten its way into town
even as we roamed, in search of refuge,
the way whole buildings have crumbled
into the sea, the way the years
have collapsed upon years.
What took us to war has again begun,
and what took us to war
has opened its wide mouth
again to confuse us.
What took us to war, my people!

Patricia Jabbeh Wesley's exploration of her Liberian civil war experience and of her life in her poetry has won the hearts of poetry and peace lovers internationally and throughout the United States. She is the author of four books of poetry, and a fifth forthcoming, including *Where the Road Turns, The River is Rising, Becoming Ebony, Before the Palm Could Bloom: Poems of Africa*. She is also the author of one children's Book, *In Monrovia, the River Visits the Sea*. Her individual poems and writings have appeared in numerous literary magazines in the US, in South America, Europe and in Africa. She teaches Creative Writing and English at Penn State Altoona.

Park Avenue
By Ron Starbuck

Here I am with my
  begging bowl in hand—
that only I can see.

I am in the heart of Manhattan,
  dressed in a Canali double-breasted suit,
walking from St. Bart's to the

Waldorf. It's only one block and
  a world away from home. A young
lady passes by, smiles, and that is all it

takes, you know, one solitary smile, and
  my begging bowl is full once more.
Such riches come rarely—such joy

is known as Shantideva teaches, by
  wishing joy to others first. Did you know
that a single smile, like this one, can

save ten thousand worlds, across ten
  thousand universes, as if the first light
of creation has turned back upon the world?

Ron Starbuck is the author of *Wheels Turning Inward* and *When Angels Are Born*, two rich collection of over fifty poems that follow a poet's mythic and spiritual journey across the paths of many contemplative traditions. He has been deeply engaged in an Interfaith-Buddhist-Christian dialogue for many years. Ron holds a lifelong interest in Christian mysticism, comparative religion, theology, and various forms of contemplative practice. He is also the Publisher/CEO of Saint Julian Press, Inc., a new literary nonprofit publishing house that works with emerging and established writers and poets and tenders new introductions to the world at large in the framework of an interfaith and cross-cultural literary dialogue. "Park Avenue" is from the collection *When Angels Are Born.*

Caffé Reggio
By Lola Koundakjian

During visits to the West Village
I find myself stopping at this old haunt -

a pilgrimage for the senses
to a café unchanged

since before the day I set
foot in New York City.

Towards the left, patrons sit on iron
backed chairs and carved wooden
benches

their drinks resting on
marble topped tables.

In the center, the WC's narrow door
quoting Dante's Inferno - *abandon all hope, Ye who enter.*

On the walls painted a medium brown,
artworks hang, the ceiling and moldings

bow slightly, listening to classical music
playing through invisible speakers.

The original owners have passed on
and the laws have made it smoke free

but little else has changed in this *caffé*
since the 30's; neither the size of its
menu,

nor the strength of its delicious coffees,
the affordable pots of tea and
sandwiches.

Patrons still sit in dark corners, wearing
black,
craving to be enveloped in smoke.

Souls eavesdrop the sound of an
espresso
brewing, and steamed milk gurgling.

In this *caffé* one searches for the Beats
and
hippies and the enchantment of
Bohemian life.

*(Inferno, Canto III, 9).
**Dinanzi a me non fuor cose create
se non etterne, e io etterno duro.
Lasciate ogne speranza, voi
ch'intrate".**

Lola Koundakjian, a long time resident of New York City, writes in Armenian, her mother tongue and in English. She has organized evenings dedicated to the ***Dead Armenian Poets' Society*** since her university days, and has curated the online ***Armenian Poetry Project*** since 2006. Lola has appeared in two international poetry festivals: Medallín, Colombia in 2010, and Lima, Peru, in 2013. In 2012, she co-edited with Catherine Fletcher an article for *Rattapallax* devoted to post-Genocide era Armenian poetry. Her translations of modern Istanbul poets have been included in Dora Sakayan's newest edition of Western Armenian language teaching manual. Lola is a 2011 and 2012 *Northern Manhattan Arts Alliance* grantee. Her first collection of poetry, *The Accidental Observer* appeared in 2011 and her second manuscript *Advice to a poet* was a finalist in Armenia's Orange Book Prize in 2012. Her work has appeared online and in print and has been translated into French, Spanish and Ukrainian.

A Scene from a Mughal Garden
In a Miniature Painting
By Ami Kaye

The legend under the painting reads:
Shah Jahan circa 1640 A.D.

A harem overlooks the Mughal
garden;
in the foreground, just beyond the
terrace,
a small group of female musicians
wield delicately-etched instruments.

The woman seated against the bolster
is
looking intently at the man across
from her.
Her mouth is half-parted, her hand is
extended,
palm up.

His left hand is holding a glass of wine
as he leans forward to listen to her
song.
A servant is pouring from a curved
decanter.

In the background,
minarets have turned red
from the sun's farewell ,

a peacock keeps its distance,
nibbling the perfectly
manicured hedge,
but the palace gates have been left
open,
for it is the beloved disguised as a
melody.

She sings with a full-throttled voice
and the evening loosens
its grip on forbidden pleasure

—somewhere,
a pilgrim en route to Mecca
weeps in ecstasy—

music seeps in the air,
flavoring the casket of wine,

spilling around the
polished marble and
his sheathed scimitar—

there will be no beheadings
tonight.

Look at his fingers
and what they hide,
a reward for his rapture?

A shallow pool with
mauve water-lilies reflects

history repeating itself
again and again.

Ami Kaye is the author of *What Hands Can Hold*. Her poems, reviews and articles have appeared in various publications including *Tears in the Fence, First Literary Review—East, Cartier Street Review, Peony Moon, Diode Poetry Journal* and *Scottish Poetry Review*. Her work was nominated for the James B. Baker award, and included in anthologies. Ami manages *Pirene's Fountain*, and is the editor of the anthology *Sunrise from Blue Thunder,* a benefit project for the Japan 2011 disasters. Ami serves as publisher of *Glass Lyre Press,* and is currently co-editing the "Best of PF" anthology. Visit amikaye.com

On Poetry & Poets

by Abhay K.

I have been dreaming poetry
and I see in my dreams
poems written in eyes of the galloping Pegasi
on shells of crawling snails
printed on colourful wings of swarming butterflies
on the serrated teeth of giant killer sharks
on the claws of eagles hovering in the sky
poems on the bodies of naked angels
poems flowing in the veins of buffaloes
on the petals of roses
poems rising as cacti thorns
I see poems swimming like blue whales
rising like a phoenix from the ashes of burnt books
I see poems smiling, whispering to me
in weird voices.

'What is Poetry?'- Most of the poets and even those who are not poets ask this question at one or the other stage while writing or reading poetry.

Poetry has as many definitions as there are poets and poetry readers. Poetry is like a giant elephant and poets are blind men, each with their own description of this humongous creature.

The great German poet Goethe pronounced that those who had no ears for poetry and music were barbarians. Kavi Bhratihari's bold pronouncement - *'Sahitya Sangeet Kala Vihinah, Sakshatyapashu puchhavishanhinah'*, echoes Goethe's sentiments.

For the English poet William Wordsworth, poetry was spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings. This is also the view of Sumitranandan Pant who wrote-

Viyogi hoga pahla kavi/aah se upja hoga gaan/umad kar ankhon se chupchap/bahi hogi kavita anjaan.

But there is much more to poetry than spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings. Wordsworth and Sumitranandan Pant probably forgot about the art and craft of poetry.

Poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge defined poetry as best words in the best order which also holds good for prose or other writings. Charles Dickens, though not

known as a poet, thought poetry made life what lights and music did to the stage. The British poet Matthew Arnold had a philosophical take on poetry. For him poetry at the bottom of all was criticism of life. He thought poets as nagging creatures, complaining about life.

Echoing the sentiments expressed by Goethe and Bhratihari who compared humans with no taste for poetry with barbarians and animals, Russian Nobel Laureate Joseph Brodsky said -'What distinguishes us from other members of the animal kingdom is speech, then literature - and poetry in particular, being the highest form of locution - is, to put it bluntly, the goal of our species.'

Brodsky describes poetry as a unique art form, like no other. In his Nobel Prize acceptance speech he elaborated on this uniqueness of poetry- 'There are, as we know, three modes of cognition: analytical, intuitive, and the mode that was known to the Biblical prophets, revelation. What distinguishes poetry from other forms of literature is that it uses all three of them at once (gravitating primarily toward the second and the third). For all three of them are given in the language; and there are times when, by means of a single word, a single rhyme, the writer of a poem manages to find himself where no one has ever been before him, further, perhaps, than he himself would have wished for.' Poet and poetry readers are surprised at poetry's power to reveal rare and unexpected relationships among words, thoughts, ideas. I have found my own poems revealing to me. For example-

Quark of a poet/blossoming in the subatomic space/writing the uni-verse.

What is revelatory here is quark as a poet and universe as one verse being written by a quark-poet. I have come across such revelation often in my own works that has left me awestruck, breathless.

Pablo Neruda, one of the greatest poets of the 20th century believes that poetry reveals the secret manifestations of nature. He writes in his memoirs- 'I believe that poetry is an action, ephemeral or solemn, in which there enter as equal partners solitude and solidarity, emotion and action, the nearness to oneself, the nearness to mankind and to the secret manifestations of nature.' Here is my poem 'Neem' that reveals relationship between Delhi and itself-

Under my ubiquitous shade/lie scattered cities of Delhi/I and Delhi are one and the same/my yellow-greenish fruits/ delicious when ripe/ bitter when raw/only the wise know the difference.

The great poet from the Caribbean Derek Walcott echoed the sentiments of Brodsky and Neruda when he spoke in his Nobel lecture- 'poetry is perfection's sweat but which must seem as fresh as the raindrops on a statue's brow, combines the natural and the marmoreal; it conjugates both tenses simultaneously: the past and the present, if the past is the sculpture and the present the beads of dew or rain on the forehead of the past. There is the buried language and there is the individual vocabulary, and the process of poetry is one of excavation and of self-discovery.'

One should mark these words- 'the process of poetry is one of excavation and of self-discovery.'

And I made a self discovery when these lines came to me one evening while walking the stretch that connects Kirorimal College to Delhi School of Economics, St. Stephen's College and the Delhi University's Rose Garden-

I was always here/as the blowing wind/or the falling leaves/ as the shining sun/or the flowing streams/as the chirping birds/or the blooming buds/ as the blue sky/or the empty space/ I was never born/I didn't die.

Here poetry rhythmically restructures time. It transforms the mortal into the eternal.

Seamus Heaney, whom we lost this month, called the process digging. A rather well known line from his eponymous poem-

Between my finger and my thumb/The squat pen rests, snug as a gun/I'll dig with it.

As a man dedicated to poetic form he observed- 'Poetic form is both the ship and the anchor...what the necessary poetry always does, which is to touch the base of our sympathetic nature while taking in at the same time the unsympathetic nature of the world to which that nature is constantly exposed. The form of the poem, in other words, is crucial to poetry's power to do the thing which always is and always will be to poetry's credit: the power to persuade that vulnerable part of our consciousness of its rightness in spite of the evidence of wrongness all around it, the power to remind us that we are hunters and gatherers of values, that our very solitudes and distresses are creditable, in so far as they, too, are an earnest of our veritable human being.'

Poetry provides us with daily dose of ecstasy. It takes us to a higher plane of existence away from the quotidian existence. Emerson says 'Take all away from me, but leave me poetry.' I believe Poetry liberates.

Why write poetry

As per Brodsky a person sets out to write a poem for a variety of reasons: to win the heart of his beloved; to express his attitude toward the reality surrounding him, be it a landscape or a state; to capture his state of mind at a given instant; to leave - as he thinks at that moment - a trace on the earth.

The nature of poetry one writes evolves with time. Almost all of us start writing poetry with love poems. Then the subject of our poetry gets diversified slowly with time. The highest stage of writing poetry comes when the poets become the voice of the voiceless.

Brodsky further adds- 'one who writes a poem, however, writes it not because he courts fame with posterity, although often he hopes that a poem will outlive him, at least briefly. One who writes a poem writes it because the language prompts, or simply dictates, the next line. Beginning a poem, the poet as a rule doesn't

know the way it's going to come out, and at times he is very surprised by the way it turns out, since often it turns out better than he expected, often his thought carries further than he reckoned. And that is the moment when the future of language invades its present.

I started writing poetry to express my inner awe and angst, the wonder I and disgust I felt in Moscow. The river of poetry started flowing out of me. There was nothing stopping it. It was Wordsworthian 'spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions'. I had no idea how my poem was going to shape itself. I wrote to preserve the exquisite beauty of the moment against the incontestable ravages of time.

I wrote love poems first. Only afterward death, immortality, nature, heroism, beauty, time, universe, cities, bureaucrats, became subject matters of my poetry.

If you look around carefully, persons whom you love are going to leave you, for heavens or for better opportunities, the career you love is also going to end some day, you are also going to leave this earth one day. Only your words, your poetry will never leave you till you are alive and chances are that your poetry may outlive you. This is one strong reason one should write poetry. Derek Walcott puts it very elegantly- I have kept my own promise, to leave you the one thing I own, you whom I loved first: my poetry.

How should poetry be

Maria Tsvetaeva believes-'Poetry should be delirious and lucid. The very nature of voice in written poetry must be metaphorical, it cannot be literal.' This may be one of the reasons people feel that poetry is esoteric art inaccessible to the common man.

Edward Hirsch writes in his book *How to read a poem and fall in love with poetry*- It is said in great poetry there is always a dialogue between the individual and history. There is powerful dialectic operating in our lives between reality and imagination, between history and philosophy, between the temporal and eternal. Two contradictory elements meet in poetry: ecstasy and irony.

There is no ideal form or content of poetry, only approximations. Each poet and society values its own kind of poetry. Truck drivers all across South Asia cherish their own poetry as Philip Larkin or Sharon Old do or the lovers of *shero-shayari* do, Kabir with his pithy couplets, Walt Whitman with his long prose-poems, each poet to his own.

What it means to be a poet-

Many of us write poetry, few of us are published poets whose works have appeared in various poetry anthologies. But how many poets are sure about being poets, about our art and craft of poetry? Wislawa Szymborska, winner of Nobel Prize in Literature in1996 in her Nobel Lecture interestingly titled ‘The Poet

and the World' said – 'Contemporary poets are skeptical and suspicious even or perhaps especially, about themselves. They publicly confess to being poets only reluctantly, as if they were a little ashamed of it.'

'We are poets' has the sound of outcasts. (Maria Tsvetaeva). 'The poet confronted nature's phenomena and in the early ages called himself a priest, to safeguard his vocation. Today's social poet is still a member of the earliest order of priests. In the old days he made his pact with the darkness, and now he must interpret the light.' (Neruda)

The word poet comes from the Greek word poesis which means 'making' and a poet is foremost a maker. Edward Hirsch writes in his book *How to read poetry* – 'A poet's function is not to experience the poetic state, his function is to create it in others. A poet is recognized by the simple fact that he causes his reader to become inspired.'

A poet never speaks directly or writes literally, there is always a phantasmagoria, figure of speech involved in his writing.

For example here are two my poems titled Delhi & Chitwan

Delhi
My smell
my nakedness
entices
hordes of human flesh
from faraway lands
traders,
emperors,
marauders.

I
pose
nude
up on the hill
below
the feast of eagles-
possessed,
intoxicated.

Chitwan
A river full of crocs
a canoe filled with dreams
rowing.

eerie silence in the jungle
an elephant riding a human
trees strolling

statue of a frail man
at the central square

in the city of rhinos.

Brodsky in his Nobel lecture said- ‘The one who writes a poem writes it above all because verse writing is an extraordinary accelerator of conscience, of thinking, of comprehending the universe. Having experienced this acceleration once, one is no longer capable of abandoning the chance to repeat this experience; one falls into dependency on this process, the way others fall into dependency on drugs or on alcohol. One who finds himself in this sort of dependency on language is, I guess, what they call a poet.’

This addiction, this dependency on poetry, on language for daily dose of ecstasy makes one a poet. A poet gets condemned to poetry as a drug addict to drugs.

Brodsky brings the poet to the centre stage of language and literature stating - 'The poet, I wish to repeat, is language's means for existence - or, as my beloved Auden said, he is the one by whom it lives. I who write these lines will cease to be; so will you who read them. But the language in which they are written and in which you read them will remain not merely because language is more lasting than man, but because it is more capable of mutation.'

Writing poetry I have come up with new words ‘*Bureaucrab*’ or ‘*Spritensual*’ to exactly convey my thoughts and feelings. This only reflects how much language is capable of mutation and the role poets play in keeping the language alive, enriching it with their new words and thoughts.

Neruda has his own thoughts on who is the best poet - ‘I have often maintained that the best poet is he who prepares our daily bread: the nearest baker who does not imagine himself to be a god. He does his majestic and unpretentious work of kneading the dough, consigning it to the oven, baking it in golden colours and handing us our daily bread as a duty of fellowship. And, if the poet succeeds in achieving this simple consciousness, this too will be transformed into an element in an immense activity.’

Neruda obviously was a people’s poet. He was not a recluse as many poets are. He loved to be among the masses, eat and dine with them, share their joys and sorrows. Once he read his poems in a stadium full of over a hundred thousand people in his country Chile. Though at times poets have to find their solitude and confront the blank sheet of paper, abandoning their crowns and glories. For their poetry is finally what really counts.

Dreaming my Animal Selves by Helene Cardona (Salmon Poetry)

Book review by Sonnet Mondal

Helene Cardona's "Dreaming my Animal Selves" is a book with verse which hovers between dreams and desires. Poetry is sometimes a play of words and other times shooting syllables to create an effect similar to that of a punching machine on paper- a permanent, irrevocable one. Poetry at large serves both as weakness and strength of a person. It is a constant effort of choosing colours for a faultless painting which touches the chords of life in closest precision. Dreaming through poetry and making others dream of a world closer to the one the poet dreamt of while penning her poetry constitutes "Dreaming my Animal Selves".

The carefully chosen prologue of the book by Rainer Maria Rilke acts as a window to the book more particularly through the lines "...embrace: a dream once lost/ among sorrows and songs". Helene seems to draw a vaporous line between her sorrows and dreams, choosing the later brushed by shades of joy to embrace her life longs muses.
The very first poem in the book is a moving imagery of shivering water. In the poem, it seems still water has been moved to create ripples by a drop of mishap and the poetess waits for the water to calm down. Here is the poem quoted in full:
"I trace patterns in dreams
Through beings disguised
Undone like particles broken apart
revealing pieces of me.
I pursue elusive sleep
in the hope to heal mishaps
the last chance to anchor my boat"

Another poem very fresh, unusual in tone and worth mentioning in this wonderful bouquet of poems is "Inquisitive Life". Lewis Carol is a symbol of poems which seem to be nonsensical and wildly imaginative in its surface but carries a deeper meaning beneath the shell of imagination.
Helene seems to refresh his legacy.
Below are the lines from the poem which bear a spring fever in impossibility:

"When the colossal wave arises,
The elephant will go on top
Of the giraffe, and you will know
To breathe inside the hollow water."

Helene cannot be termed as a poet of many worlds but she is confined to the strings that tune her memories, ecstasy and hope. A strong lyrical sense in each of Helene's poems

never makes them personal but the balance between imagination and materialism in her poems touches heart several times taking them to a world of fantasy and colours.

The lines "I return home/behind a procession of swans/to an island in the heart of Paris…" from the poem 'Pathway to Gifts' somehow adds a mixed nostalgic emotion of a bond of early days via vibrant pastel colours of babyhood creating a canvas of a person following a line of swans.

What beautiful lines in the poem "Breeze Rider"! The first stanza apart from its connection with life carries a good definition of writing poetry itself.
"Every force of nature has a purpose.
I maintain the planet's balance.
When people feel I'm here
They're lifted."

As a reader one may not be able to relate this book to their lives but will be able to reveal the tone of many great names in poetry in the same tune with added flavours in this collection. Dreams cannot be defined or predicted. They are instantaneous, precise yet momentous. This collection of poems is one with all these adjectives.

Poetry of Kamla Das –A True Voice Of Bourgeoisie Women In India by Dr.Shikha Saxena

Kamla Das was born (March 31,1934) in a Nair family. She hails from the Southern Malabar in Kerala. She opened her eyes in the beautiful lap of nature and blossomed beside a fathomless sea. As her autobiography reveals her maiden name is Madhavikakutty. She attended a European school in Kolkata then the elementary school at Punnayurkulam (her birth place) and then a boarding school run by the Roman Catholic nuns. At the Catholic boarding school, she got ill and sent back to Kolkata where private tutors were engaged to teach her fine arts. She was nurtured in an autocratic atmosphere in her home. About her parents' and their relationship she reveals, "My mother did not fall in love with my father. They were dissimilar and horribly mismatched"1.But her mother's timidity created an illusion of domestic harmony and produced some half a dozen children of swarthy skin and ordinary features. Her parental home was influenced by the movement of Gandhi and its members used to wear '*Khadi'* clothes and even spin '*khadi'* yarn. Gandhi's photo was hung in every room. Her ancestral house was christened as 'Nalapat House'. Her mother was a writer and grand- uncle was a poet.

Formation of a Poet

In her formative years she has undergone various negative experiences. At school level she was discriminated as a dark girl from South India .She recalls, "My mother was worried about the duskiness of my skin and rubbed raw turmeric on Tuesdays and Fridays all over my body before the oil-bath." 2 Her white classmates not only made the fun of her 'dark skin' but thrashed her brother also till he bled from his nose. In her childhood she also missed the caresses of her mother and showers of love from her father. She recalled, "My father was always busy with his work at the automobile firm where he was employed ,selling Rolls Royces,Humbers and Bentleys to the Italian princes and their relatives. Her mother, vague and indifferent, spent her time lying on her belly on a large four-poster bed, composing poems in Malyalam."3When she was nine her father came home and found her to be very rustic and immediately admitted her in a boarding school. In her school days she has undergone a series of negative experiences which she did not even share with her parents. Recalling a particular experience she shares, "When the visitors came, the brown children were always discreetly hidden away …told to wait in the corridor behind the lavatories where the school *ayahs* kept them company."4

At the tender age of 15, she was married to Mr.Das, an official in Reserve Bank of India posted in Mumbai.

Her first encounter with her fiancé was an emotional and physical shock for her. She had expected him to take her into his arms and stroke her face, her hair, her hands and whisper loving words. She has expected him to be as she wanted her father to be and her mother to be. She wanted conversation, companionship and warmth. She expected that he would remove the 'loneliness of her life.'5 She hoped for a more tranquil relationship with a hand on her hair and a voice in her ear assuring him that everything is going to be right. She never expected 'rough hands rising up her skirts and tearing up her brassiere' and "Whenever he found me alone in a room, he began to plead with me to bare my breasts and if I did not he turned brutal and crude. His hands bruised her body and left blue and red marks on the skin."6 .Her life became miserable in the company of her nonchalant and lustful husband. As he was experienced in sex with his maid servants his contact with his wife was usually cruel and brutal. He boasted of his knowledge about 'sluts and nymphomaniacs' and this prompted Kamla to launch into a 'hectic love life'.7 She grew revengeful towards him and reacted in a non-traditional fashion in love-making; offering herself to any handsome or resourceful man who came across her and forgiving even her rapists. Her husband had no soothing words for her. He is busy in official files and Kamla always feel emotionally parched .In 'The Old Playhouse' she yelled,

You called me wife,
I was taught to break saccharine into your tea and
To offer at the right moment the vitamins.
Covering beneath your monstrous ego, I ate
The magic loaf and
Became a dwarf. I lost my will and reason to all your
Questions I mumbled incoherent replies.8

This is actually a strong protest against hollow marital bound which she poured in her writings. The hollow pretension of Marriage was exposed during the preparations of her marriage. She narrates, "Marriage meant nothing more than a show of wealth to families like ours. It was enough to proclaim to the friends that the father had spent half a *lakh* on its preparations. The bride was unimportant and her happiness a minor issue."9

After her marriage she came to Kolkata with her husband .She lost weight rapidly. When her father came to meet her, he expressed that he was expecting that she will put on some weight after marriage and she thought, "I wished then to cry and to tell him that he had miscalculated and that I ought not to have married the one. I did but I could not bring myself to hurt him".10 But the poetess continues to live with her husband and to look after her three sons. When she speaks of love outside marriage, she does not really advocate for infidelity and adultery but merely searches for a kind of man-woman relationship which should guarantee both love and security to a woman .To quote her words, "I Thought then that love was flowers in the hair, it was the yellow moon lighting up a familiar face and soft words whispered in the ear…At the end of the month, experiencing rejection, jealousy and bitterness I grew old suddenly, my face changed from a child's to a woman's and my limbs were sore and fatigued."11

In this pursuit of genuine love she identifies it with Radha-Krishna myth or with Mira-Krishna relationship. There are several poems on Lord Krishna in her volumes, supported by references to this Lord in her prose writings. The reference of Radha –Krishna is witnessed in almost all the collections. The first one contains "Radha-Krishna", the second one contains "Radha" and the third one mentions "prayers to unfamiliar gods", and "Tonight,This Savage Rite" includes "Radha" and "Ghanshyam". She expressed her spiritual salvation like, "Through the smoke of incense I saw the beauteous smile of my Krishna. 'Always, always, I shall love you' ,I shall told him, not speaking aloud but willing him to hear me, 'only you will be my husband,your horoscope will match with mine…"12

It is again a grave mistake to see her love affairs as the amorous adventures of a promiscuous wife; they are like the screams of a wounded and solitary soul thirsty for love and understanding that she seldom found even in the hands of her lovers, to most of whom she was a passing episode in a masculine narrative of heroic romance. She gave a vivid account of the life of 'Nair's woman in reputed families. They never mentioned sex .It was their principal phobia. They associated it with violence and blood-shed. They had been fed on the stories of Ravana who was punished due to the desire for Sita It was customary for a Nair girl to marry when she was hardly out of her childhood and it was also customary for the much older husband to give her a rude shock on the very first wedding night.13

Feminism In Das' Poetry

Enriched with this experience Kamla found art and literature as a mode and repose from all her sufferings. Like other poets of twentieth century she finds her own way to express it. Her voice is different, and sometime her voice takes feminine form as an articulation of person speaking. The growing consciousness among women against all the forms of oppression finds a full potential in artistic expression.

In this transition from ignorance to awareness one may possibly pass three different stages. The first stage of pre-awareness was that of silent submission when women quietly accepted their subservient role in society. The next stage came with the gradual building up of resentment when the female mind started questioning male supremacy and social custom that dictate their duties towards their home and hearth. And the final phase was that of rebellion, when protested against all male

oppressions .Elaine Showalter divides the struggle for female liberation in to corresponding stages- 'the feminine, the feminist, and the female.' 14.The twentieth century, thus has been a witness to the change in the social status of women and the recognition of their individual identity, capabilities and powers. At present female poet has to grapple with an age old male tradition, she has to find her bearings despite all her oppressions and assert herself against all odds.

Her poetic journey started while expressing her wounded soul in the night on the vacant table of the kitchen when most of the family members are asleep. Her silent submission continued till she fell parched for a genuine men-women relationship. To quote her words:

It was July, a July full of rain, and darkness
Trapped like smoke in the hollows of the sky, and
That lewd, steamy smell of rot rising out of earth.
He walked one step ahead of me,the west wind leafing
Through his hair,and I thought,if I could only want,
Really, really want his love,I shall ride happiness,
Great white seed, trampler of unsacred laws,
If I could only dislodge the inherited
Memory of a touch, I shall serve myself in
Bedroom mirrors, Dark fruit on silver platter,
While he lies watching, fair conqueror of another's
Country.I shall polish the panes of his moody eyes,
And in jealous moods,after bitter words and rage
I shall wail I his nerves,as homeless cats wail
From the rubble of a storm…15

After getting fed-up with the physical and the carnal the poet seeks solace in spiritual love of Radha-Krishna :

This becomes from this hour
Our river and this old Kadamba
Tree, ours alone ,for our homeless
Souls to return someday
To hang like bats from its
Physically….16

In another poem she says,

The long waiting
Had made their bond so chaste
And virgin crying
Everything in me
In melting ,even the hardness at the core
O Krishna,I am melting,melting,melting
Nothing remains but
You…17

Confessional poetry by women is of absorbing interest to feminist readers. For confessional poetry renders personal experience or emotion as it actually is, regardless of social conventions .Moreover confessional poetry expresses truths and experience so painful that most people would suppress them. If a woman feels victimized by a patriarchal society or is revengeful towards it , the confessional mode helps her to express it directly. In 'A Holiday at Panchgani' she expresses her experience thus:

There was a time when our lusts were
Like multi coloured flags of no
Particular country. We lay
On bed, glassy-eyed, fatigued, just
The toys dead children leave behind
And we asked each-other,what is

The use,what is the bloody use?
That was the only kind of love.18

There is true confession in Kamla Das' poetry. The adverse circumstances have left deep-delved marks on her poetic creation. She transformed her personal grief in poetic creation. Kamla's poetry has a strong note of subjectivism. She boldly uses personal pronouns ,Me ,My in her literary expressions. In The Descendents we have the following poetic passage wherein her subjective feelings are predominant:

But
I must pose
I must pretend
I must act the role
Of happy woman
Happy wife 19

Thus she is a typical confessional poet who pours her true feelings in her poems. Her poems give us an opportunity to peep her life that is full of emotional and physical torture; a life wanting in search of a companion in true sense. Her poems represent reliable poetic voice that emerged from her personal experiences in the life. Her voice gives representation to million women of India who humbly succumb to life-long ordeal; who accepts this inhuman treatment mutely just to protect the family honor of their family and parents. They suffer like continuous burning candles who illuminates the world but by burning ceaselessly. Through her poems we come to know about our rotten social orders where a girl child is ideal only when she is performing the role of obedient daughter, a warm wife, an affectionate mother and a caretaker but in such a chain where is the space for her intellectual craving? Kamla's verse gives voice to these unheard cravings.Through her reliable poetic verse she created a distinguished place among Indo Anglian Women Poets.

Notes:

1. Relocating My story, p.xii.
2. Children's Theatre, My Story p..35.
3.Rule Britannia My Story,p..2
4. My Story ,P.xiii.
5An Arranged Marriage,My Story,p.79.
6.An Arranged Marriage,p.79.
7. An Arranged Marriage,p.80
8.The Long Summer of Love, My Story,p.176.
9. An Arranged Marriage,My Story,p.82.
10. My Story, p..86.
11. The Brutality of Sex, My Story,p.85
12.The Brutality of Sex,My Story,p.87
13. My story,p.xiii
14.Elaine Showalter,ed.The New Feminist Criticism:Essays on Women,Literature and Theory(New York:Pantheon Books,1988)
15.Woodhouse Road ,My Story,p.114
16. Radha Krishna ,Summer in Calcutta,p.37)
17.The Descendents,p.9
18A Holiday at Panchgni, My Story,p.123
19.The suicide p.2

Review of "The Dance of the Peacock:
An Anthology of English Poetry from India"
Edited by Dr. Vivekanand Jha, 2013. Hidden Brook Press.

Reviewed By Rob Harle

This anthology is a wonderful smorgasbord for poetry lovers. Delicious morsels tempt the reader on every page. Regardless of personal taste you'll find plenty to satisfy your appetite. One hundred and fifty poets are represented in this extensive anthology which weighs in at well over five hundred pages. Dance of The Peacock does not claim to be a comprehensive collection, "rather it is a genuine and rewarding sampler for the reader who would like an introduction to its riches." (p. xv) I do not envy Vivekanand Jha's Herculean task as editor of this important addition to the literature of Indian, and in turn, global literature. As Dr. Chatterjee notes in the Foreword, "This anthology is a brave attempt to capture something of the Indian English global poetry scene…" (p. xv)
Much to his credit he has included well known established poets alongside little known or neglected ones to create a book that is to my mind truly representative of Indian English poetry both in style and subject matter. Poets selected come from all corners of the Indian diaspora, many now living in the UK, Canada and the USA.
The evocative title was chosen because of the deep significance and connection of the peacock with Indian culture, and of course the peacock is the national bird of India. The spectacular display of the peacock is also a subtle metaphor referring to the dazzling variety and 'display' of poetry under the delightful cover. The book has a Foreword, Introduction, List of Authors followed by the poems themselves, these are then followed by Acknowledgements, Editor's Bio. and Author Bios.
This is a brief general review of the publication, not a critical literary review of the poems per se. The latter would be nigh impossible given the hundreds of different poems presented. However, having said that, the literary quality of the poetry is generally excellent. I find a somewhat gentle and soft tone pervades much Indian poetry even when the subject matter involved is quite brutal.
Shaikh's poem – Kamathipura (p. 7) chilled me to the bone on both first and subsequent readings. It deals with the subjugation of women, accidental incest and the seedy side of life – a few lines:
Fair girl! He orders, a fair girl he will have,
Stumbles into the room, three by four,
The paint wearing down the walls,
And one side of the ply-board, he hears
Thumps from the bitter side,
The room smells of stale perfume,
Of sperm, of sweat of healthy thighs.
Clearly in a volume of such numbers I can only give a few examples to 'tempt' the prospective reader.
Sharma's poem – A Beach Dawn (pp. 437) also includes a young maiden but in very different circumstances, she experiences the dawn breaking on the beach:
From the nearby fisherman's village,
A flower garland in her black hair
Kohl-lined eyes darting here-n-there,

Like a frightened rabbit crossing a road,
The dawn breaks light and crimson,
Over the silent seascape.

The wonderful imagery and subtle use of metaphor is evident in Abhay K's poem – Delhi, here's the entire poem:

My smell
my nakedness
entices
hordes of human flesh
from faraway lands
traders,
emperors,
marauders.
I
pose
nude
up on the hill
below
the feast of eagles-
possessed,
intoxicated.

Wonderful lines such as in Sarangi's poem – My Dream express an almost bitter-sweet desire to recognize young and marginalized individuals, again a few lines:

I can arrange the dreams
Of Indian youth
In indigenous ink,
A narrative that lay bare to readers.
I don't know what you feel
And what makes you weep.
I only reconstruct your stories
And flimsy history.

The Dance of the Peacock will not only give hours of reading pleasure but also serve as an important reference work for contemporary Indian English poetry. The "indigenous ink" of this volume will stay with you for a long time to come. Highly recommended!