



THE WISE OWL

Roseate

&

Gold

ONLINE MAGAZINE

Editor Speak

July 2023

PB Shelley in 'Prometheus Unbound', poetically muses about the 'roseate sunlight.' 'Roseate', with its connotations of literary lyricism, strength and optimism stayed with me as I worked on the July Edition of The Wise Owl. So, we decided to baptise the July issue as the Roseate & Gold Edition.

Cecilia Woloch, a poet, writer, teacher & performer and Kohei Yoshihara, an illustrator & printmaker from Japan add weight to our Interview segment. We also talk to Dr PK Padhy about his forthcoming book 'I am a woman'. Poetry, stories, musings, reviews, visual arts and podcasts by our poets brighten up our ezine. We had started a new initiative last month with The Daily Verse. The resounding success of this segment, emboldened us to start The Weekly Yarns, where we will upload stories, flash fiction, anecdotes & musings on a weekly basis. I am also happy to inform our readers that our magazine will now be available for download by our subscribers and contributors.

Happy reading!!!



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INTERVIEWS



The Interview: Cecilia Woloch

A poet, writer, teacher & performer

The Wise Owl talks to **Cecilia Woloch**, a U.S.-born poet, writer, teacher, and performer based in Los Angeles. Her honors include fellowships from the Fulbright Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, CEC/ArtsLink International and the Center for International Theatre Development; her work has also received a Pushcart Prize and been included in the Best American Poetry Series and in numerous anthologies. Cecilia has published six collections of poems and a novel, as well as essays and reviews. She is the founding director of Summer Poetry in Idyllwild, The Istanbul Poetry Workshop and The Paris Poetry Workshop. She has also served on the creative writing faculties of several prestigious universities around the World

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The Interview: Kohei Yoshihara

An Illustrator & printmaker

The Wise Owl talks to **Kohei Yoshihara**, a self-taught illustrator & printmaker from Tokyo, Japan. Kohei was born in Osaka and follows his Muse, even as he holds down a demanding corporate job. Currently, as an artist, he is mainly active on social media, where he shows his works under the name of kohei1975. His artworks have been featured in a collection of tanka poems.

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The Interview : Cecilia Woloch

(Rachna Singh, Editor, The Wise Owl in conversation with Cecilia Woloch)

The Wise Owl talks to **Cecilia Woloch**, a U.S.-born poet, writer, teacher, and performer based in Los Angeles. Her honors include fellowships from the Fulbright Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, CEC/ArtsLink International and the Center for International Theatre Development; her work has also received a Pushcart Prize and been included in the Best American Poetry Series and in numerous anthologies, including *Die Morgendämmerung der Worte: Moderner Poesie-Atlas der Roma und Sinti* (The Dawn of the Words: Modern Poetry Atlas of the Roma and Sinti.)

Cecilia has published six collections of poems and a novel, as well as essays and reviews. *Tsigan: The Gypsy Poem*, her second collection, originally appeared in 2002 from Cahuenga Press, was published in French translation as *Tzigane, le poème, Gitan*, by Scribe-l'Harmattan in 2014, and was issued in an expanded and updated English edition by Two Sylvias Press in 2018. The final poem in the new edition was featured in a commemorative exhibit by Daniel Libeskind at Auschwitz-Birkenau. The text of *Tsigan: The Gypsy Poem* has also been the basis for multi-lingual, multi-media performances across the U.S. and Europe.

Born in Pennsylvania and raised in rural Kentucky, Cecilia has travelled the world as a teacher and writer. She has conducted poetry workshops for thousands of children and young people throughout the United States, as well as workshops for professional writers, educators, participants in Elderhostel programs for senior citizens, inmates at a prison for the criminally insane, and residents at a shelter for homeless women and their children. She is the founding director of Summer Poetry in Idyllwild, The Istanbul Poetry Workshop and The Paris Poetry Workshop. She has also served on the creative writing faculties of The University of Southern California, Georgia College & State University, Western Connecticut State University MFA Program in Writing and The New England College MFA Program in Poetry. Most recently, she taught in the summer program at Sichuan University in China in 2019 and taught on a Fulbright fellowship at the University of Rzeszów in Poland in 2020 and 2022.

Thank you, Cecilia, for taking time out to talk to The Wise Owl.

RS: You are a prolific poet with 6 poetry collections under your belt. Please tell us a little about your journey as a poet.

CW: Well, that journey has covered a lot of territory, at this point! Like many, many people, I started trying to write 'poetry' as a teenager - that is, making secretive scrawlings in notebooks. I think it was William Stafford who, when asked when he'd started writing poetry, responded, "When did everyone else stop?" I was one of those people who just never stopped. As a teenager, I got a lot of encouragement, especially from one high school teacher in Bullitt County, Kentucky, Joann Bealmear - or Ms. B, as we called her. She was responsible for getting my first poem published - in the Kentucky Journal of Teachers of English - and it was a requirement for her 'Modern Song and Verse' to keep a daily journal. I've kept a journal for most of my life, and almost everything I've written has begun in my journal, with a kind of free-writing I do almost every day, at the end of the day, hoping to get somewhere I didn't know I was going. Because that's what I want most from poems, as a writer and as a reader: to go somewhere in language that I couldn't get to any other way.

On my best days, language still has a kind of magic for me, a magic I first became aware of as a child, when my mother read to me. As a young poet, I worked as a poet-in-the-schools, and working with children and young people was a big part of my education as a poet. I was always trying to find poems that I responded to passionately, and that I hoped my students would respond to passionately. From that spark comes the fire of one's own creative energy. And because my students in Los Angeles and around the world came from such diverse backgrounds, I was always searching for the kinds of poems they could relate to, so my reading and my study of poetry became very wide and deep. I was also searching

for ways to engage students with poems that might be considered 'difficult,' to show them a way into poems whose subject matter might seem far from their own experience. I remember a student in a fifth-grade class, who was growing up in south L.A. at a time when gang violence was rampant, who wrote about sleeping on the floor beneath the window to reduce the chance of being hit by stray bullets, and how moved she was by the poems of Miłosz. So I learned not to underestimate the ability of children to 'get' poetry that was nuanced and complex.

I enrolled in an MFA program at forty, just after my first book was published, when I wanted to challenge myself to go further into the craft of poetry than I'd previously gone, and to try approaches I hadn't tried. The MFA program also helped me to prioritize time for writing, to think of reading and writing as my job, to really think of myself as a writer. And then the kind of life I was able to make for myself, as a writer — teaching independently and creating networks of friends and fellow poets and other artists around the world — allowed me to begin to travel, and then to travel almost relentlessly, and that travel, and those connections have been an important part of what fuels my writing. So, it seems all of a piece to me, at this point; my writing isn't separate from the rest of my life. I stopped traveling during the pandemic and was surprised to find myself contented to be in Los Angeles for a whole year without going anywhere, for the first time in about thirty years. I thought maybe my wanderlust had finally been quenched. But that seems not to have been the case. I spent part of 2021 and all of 2022 as a Fulbright fellow in south-eastern Poland and, as I type this, I'm preparing to return to Poland for several months.

RS: Our readers would love to know what or who were the creative influences in your life? How did they influence your poetry, in terms of the themes you write about and the structure & framework of your poetry.

CW: As I've mentioned, my high school teacher Ms. B. was an early influence; she introduced me to contemporary poetry when I was still a teenager, the poems of Sylvia Plath and Lucille Clifton, for example, poems that showed me that my own life, the world around me and the world within me, were sources of poetry. And then my long-time mentor the poet Holly Prado was a big influence; she encouraged both wildness and discipline but above all devotion to the writing process. And, as I've mentioned, the reading and studying I did on my own in order to teach myself how to teach; I used poems by Whitman and Dickinson and Langston Hughes when I worked with kids, poems by Gertrude Stein and Andre Breton, Nikki Giovanni and Joy Harjo and Sandra Cisneros and Basho and Issa and William Carlos Williams — such a wild variety of poets, and I think immersing myself in that variety had a big effect on my writing and my poetics. The poetry of H.D. has been hugely important to me, and the poetry of Akhmatova, also Lorca and Celan, and the work of contemporary poets, particularly Wanda Coleman and Sharon Doubiago, both fearless in their writing, Merwin, Bukowski and Terrance Hayes, and the friends with whom I share drafts, Carine Topal and Sarah Luczaj and Carol Muske-Dukes, who are as generous with their criticism as with their praise and whose work inspires me to keep working. I think it's important to read widely and deeply into the canon, as well as in the margins, all the way back to Sappho and all the way into the present, to enter that long and ongoing conversation among poets throughout time and across geographical borders. In my own work, landscapes have been important, especially the Carpathian landscape and the landscape of rural Kentucky, the natural world and the human-made world, cities like Paris and Istanbul, my travels and also my family — the center of so much of my creative work — and my friends, all the relationships that make up the world in which I live, which is in constant flux. I think I always want movement in poems, and travel has been a source of that dynamic. In terms of structure, I just keep trying different things.

RS: I was reading your poems. I especially loved your poem, 'My mother's pillow'. Our readers would be keen to know the creative process behind your poetry writing- how you pick a theme for your poem, how you decide on the genre of the poem etc.

CW: I can't remember the genesis of that poem precisely; I think I may have had a line or an image in mind when I began — 'My mother sleeps with the Bible open on her pillow' — which may even have been a line I wrote in my journal. But fairly early in the process, I decided to try to work with that material in the villanelle form. I seldom 'decide on' anything, when it comes to writing poems; usually there are a handful of words, some melody I hear and try to write toward, or there's an image I want to explore. In this case, though, I did decide to work within the constraints of the villanelle form, just as an

experiment, to see where that form, those constraints, might take me. It's always a back-and-forth between form and content, working within a received form, one influencing the other, sometimes the images or language pushing harder against the form so that I have to bend the form, sometimes the form pushing harder, so that I have to keep digging to find language, and thus imagery, that serves the form. Really, that's the case whether I'm working with a received form like the villanelle or inventing the form for the poem as I write.

RS: You are a poet of repute with honours that include fellowships from the Fulbright Foundation, the National Endowment for the Arts, CEC/ArtsLink International and the Center for International Theatre Development etc. Your work has also received a Pushcart Prize and been included in the Best American Poetry Series and in numerous anthologies. What advice would you give budding poets about how to grow and evolve as a poet and how to hone their craft?

CW: I would give the advice poets always give: Read and keep reading. Writing is its own reward. Focusing on achievement or prizes can be a trap. James Baker Hall once said that focusing on 'pobiz' can drive a wedge between you and the work that's most sacred to you. As Ginsberg advised, follow your inner moonlight.

RS: You are the founding director of Summer Poetry in Idyllwild, The Istanbul Poetry Workshop and The Paris Poetry Workshop. You have also done workshops with children, senior citizens and with criminally insane. What inspired you to start these workshops? How do you structure the workshops to cater to such different participants?

CW: I don't think my approach varies that much from workshop to workshop; I'm always trying to create a little magic, to instil or nurture a love of poetry and a reverence for language. Teaching is a two-way street for me; I'm always learning as I'm teaching, learning from my students and also discovering what I didn't know I knew before I tried to articulate it for them. Teaching inspires me and reinvigorates my love of poetry, and working with very different groups of students stretches me as a teacher and as a poet. I've learned as much from working with children and inmates as I have from working with graduate students. One of my early teachers, Jack Grapes, told me that the way to teach something you love is to love it; that's always worked for me. And I don't know if I've so much been "inspired" to create workshops as looking for opportunities to teach - and to earn a living, by the way! - and creating those opportunities for myself and for other poets.

RS: You have published 6 collections of your poems (Earth, Carpathia, Tsigan, among others). Our readers would be curious to know (as I am) if you write poems on various subjects and then collect the ones that have a similar theme in one book, or you decide on a theme and then write poems in tandem with the theme/subject.

CW: I would say that I mostly 'write the best I can about the things that concern me most,' at any given time, and then, at some point, when I feel I've exhausted a particular vein or source and might have a body of work, I sift through the material and try to discern how the poems might speak to one another and how they might cohere into a whole. I often feel that I'm trying to create a kind of narrative arc in how I sequence the poems, but that arc may not be apparent to the reader, which is fine - I'm just looking for a way to structure a whole. Although with *Tsigan: The Gypsy Poem*, I set out to write a long poem in sections around the theme of my own connection to that identity and about the mysteriousness of 'Gypsy,' or more properly, 'Roma' people. I wrote 'toward' the poem for a long time, writing various fragments and putting them into a file, and I did a lot of research and a lot of travel, and then I gathered all of these fragments and worked to put them in some kind of order, to create a kind of narrative as well as texture and music, and by then I knew I wanted the poem to be a poem of witness, in some sense, to un-erase a part of my own history and a part of Roma history. I had to create a structure that would hold all of these things, and I had to write some additional pieces to fill in 'gaps' that I only saw once I'd started to assemble the pieces. In the end, I created a structure that interwove very personal, lyric poems, and observations about the Roma I encountered in my travels, and a timeline of the history of the Roma people. I think if I'd known, when I started, that I was attempting something this 'big,' I might have been too intimidated by the scope of it to continue. This is why I try not to look too far ahead, to focus on the process instead of

the final product, and that's true of almost everything I've written that has amounted to anything. Although I also believe that, as poets, we shouldn't be afraid of making messes, creatively, that might not 'amount to anything' at all - it's all part of the process.

RS: Are you working on a poetry collection now? When will it hit the bookstores?

CW: I'm working on several things at the same time, which is usual for me, and I'm a little superstitious about saying what I'm doing, or trying to do, until it's done. Again, this is part of keeping my focus on the work in front of me as much as possible.

RS: If I were to ask you to describe yourself as a poet in three words, what would those be?

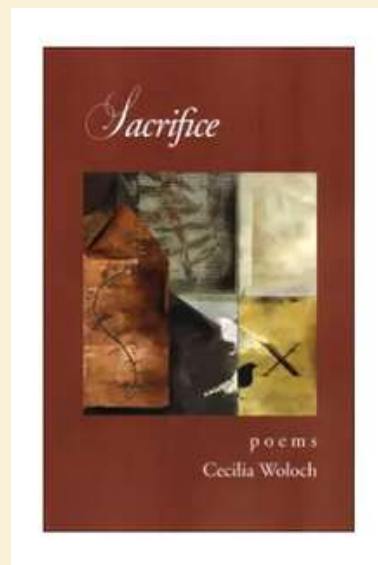
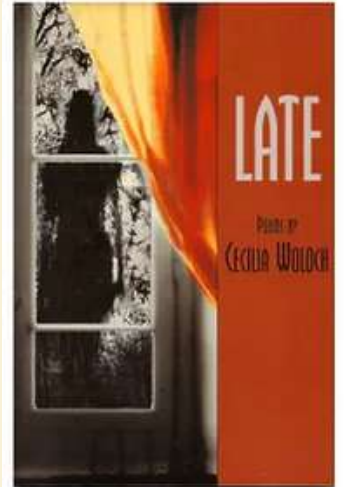
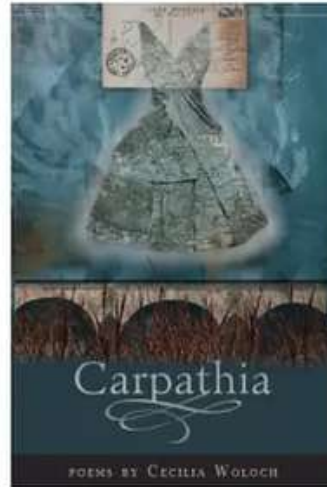
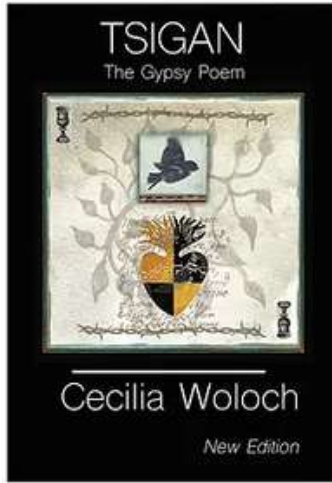
CW: I don't know if I can say this about myself, but what I would like to be able to say about myself - what I aspire to be as a poet - is passionate, precise, courageous.

RS: I ask this question of all poets that I talk to. Do you think interest in poetry and literary & creative writing is dwindling?

CW: No, I don't think it's dwindling at all, although I sometimes wonder if some of the interest is misplaced - that is, if a lot of people are writing poetry for reasons that have more to do with personal ambition and a bid for attention than for the love of the art form itself, a love of what language can do. I also find it worrisome when poetry becomes kind of inbred. I mean, poets have always been speaking to one another, holding this conversation through time and space; but I want poetry to reach beyond that, too, and engage a wider audience. I don't mean that poetry should in any way try to speak 'down' to an audience - or speak to an audience at all! - and I don't mean that poetry should be yet another form of mass entertainment, or that it should be 'easy' in the name of greater 'accessibility,' rather that it should be so compelling, so engaged with what matters most, that people will listen, and maybe even be changed by it. I think of two quotations that have meant a lot to me. One is something Galway Kinnell said in an interview, something along the lines of, "*In poetry, it's mostly the inner world. But when you go deeply enough into the personal, suddenly you're outside everywhere.*" In other words, that deep engagement with one's own inner world can, paradoxically, result in something that's universal. And then there's what William Carlos Williams said in *Asphodel, That Greeny Flower*: "*It is difficult to get the news from poems/ yet men die miserably every day for lack/of what is found there.*" I do believe that poetry is that important, that urgent, that necessary to all of us.

Thank you so much Cecilia for taking time out to speak to The Wise Owl. We wish you the best in all your creative endeavours and hope we see more of your beautiful poetry collections.

Works of Cecilia Woloch



The Interview : Kohei Yoshihara

(Rachna Singh, Editor, The Wise Owl, in conversation with Kohei Yoshihara)

The Wise Owl talks to **Kohei Yoshihara**, a self-taught illustrator & printmaker from Tokyo, Japan. Kohei was born in Osaka and follows his Muse, even as he holds down a demanding corporate job. Currently, as an artist, he is mainly active on social media, where he shows his works under the name of kohei1975. His artworks have been featured in a collection of tanks poems. He can be found on Instagram at [instagram.com/kohei1975](https://www.instagram.com/kohei1975) and his twitter handle is twitter.com/kohei1975_tw.

Thank you Kohei for taking time out to talk to The Wise Owl. We are indeed delighted to talk to you about your Art.

RS: For the benefit of our readers, please tell us a little about your artistic journey and the creative influences in your life.

KY: When I was a small child, cartoons and anime were the teaching materials for my brother and I, and we both wanted to be cartoonists (that's why my works still have a cartoon-like touch). In junior high school, I started making postcards for myself and my family to use. At first, they were trivial, but as I grew older, I became more and more conscious of capturing the fragile, ephemeral sentiments associated with seasonal scenes and anchoring them in my works. I do not know how this happened, but it may have been influenced by my love of old poetry book illustrations and small illustrations printed on small letterheads, which were small but well symbolic of sentiments and seasons. It may also have something to do with the fact that my mother is an amateur tanka poet.

RS: Please tell us a little about your art. Is it based on traditional art practices in Japan or is it a melding of traditional and contemporary art forms?

KY: My art is not traditional one, in fact, there are few traditional art techniques, but I think there are unconscious influences of traditional Japanese art and culture in my style. On the other hand, there are also influences from pop culture such as cartoons and anime.

If the appearance of my works gives the impression that they are related to Japanese traditions, this may be due to the frequent appearance of traditional motifs and the woodblock-like textures of some of the pieces. Another reason may be the small number of elements I depict in a single painting. In some of my works, I try to highlight the poetic sentiment I want to express by consciously reducing the number of elements I depict. This is similar to how haiku and tanka poems convey emotion to the reader by cutting down unnecessary words, within a limited number of syllables. I believe that consciously reducing the number of elements, not only in haiku and tanka, is a traditional Eastern attitude to effectively convey the essence.

RS: I really loved your New Year card for 2023, New Year card for 2021 and your work of snow and sunshine (Jan 16, 2020, tweet) as well as your gallery of images on Instagram. Those of our readers who are artists would love to know your favorite medium, and the paper and colors you use to bring your work to life.

KY: I am so happy to hear that you like my works. The three works you specifically mentioned are all digital works. However, I do not paint only with digital tools from the beginning. I use watercolors and brushes on paper, scan them into digital data, and then layer them on PC. It is like recording the sounds of analog instruments and assembling them into a single piece of music on PC; the final form is digital data, but the material is analog in origin.

When painting with paint, I use watercolours or acrylics on watercolour paper. In many cases, I use pale, somewhat dull, and subdued colours. This may have been my own way of balancing the color with the white of the paper that remains in the margins and around the painting, but it may simply be a matter of taste.

RS: You say you are an occasional Illustrator. So are you a storyboard illustrator or a product illustrator or work in other segments. What does your work entail?

KY: I am neither a storyboard illustrator nor a product illustrator. The works I have produced includes illustrations for my own personal postcards, and book illustrations (only one book; it is a collection of tanka by my mother). Other works exist on their own rather than as adjuncts to something else, my title might have been more appropriate simply as an artist rather than an illustrator...

RS: You are also a printmaker. Our readers would be eager to know about the techniques used by you for printmaking, which is a very complex art that needs expertise in etching, lithography etc.

KY: I had used a '*Gocco Printer*'. A *Gocco Printer* is a simple manual printer previously sold in Japan, and the process is a variant of screen printing. A user draws a manuscript in carbon-containing material, makes a plate, and prints one postcard at a time. I printed about 100 to 200 copies per work. I would often make five or six plates per work, repeating the process as many times as the number of plates, so I would press the printer 500 to 1200 times per work... It was a gruelling and enjoyable process, but when the manufacturer stopped making the printers and supplies, I moved my art making to digital.

A *Gocco Printer* may have been more of a toy than a tool for art, but this period is important to me. I brought the idea of multi-printing that I had been doing with *Gocco Printer* into the layered structure of the digital drawing tool, and the result, as I mentioned earlier, was a way of making art that involved layering analog-derived images on PC. I believe that I am still doing analog-like printmaking on PC.

RS: Do you have any favorite traditional or contemporary artists? What is it that attracts you to their works?

KY: When I think about it, I realize that I love the works of some cartoonists more than those of world-famous artists. I like the lyrical works of Fumiko Takano, Yoshiharu Tsuge, and Susumu Katsumata, works that have poetic sentiments that can only be found in them. Sorry, I think some of them have English translations, but many of them may only be read in Japanese.... If we are talking about artists other than cartoonists, I like Settai Komura, who is known as an artist of Shin-Hanga. I respect his sense of cutting out traditional objects with sharp composition.

RS: What advice would you like to give budding artists, illustrators and printmakers?

KY: I have not yet been successful enough to give specific advice to other artists. Every artist has different characteristics. I have little drawing skills or technique, but I manage to create images by mishmash of what I can do. I think one doesn't need to follow the standard approach, but should pursue what they are able to do best at that time.

RS: If I was to ask you to define your work in three adjectives, what would they be?

KY: How about '*serene*', '*poetic*' and '*airy*'? I may change my answer if I come up with more appropriate words...

Thank you very much for the opportunity to present my thoughts and work!

Thank you so much for sharing your thoughts with The Wise Owl. We wish you the best in all your creative endeavours and hope you continue to create beauty through your artworks.

Some Works of Kohei Yoshihara



Sugadaira



Awai Hikari



Awai Hikari



Summer holidays in Shimoda



White Magnolia



Japanese Cornel

POETRY



I am waiting, with thanks to Ferlinghetti
Peter A Witt

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Snowflakes
Ann Privateer

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One day you're dead and the next you live for
Gale Acuff

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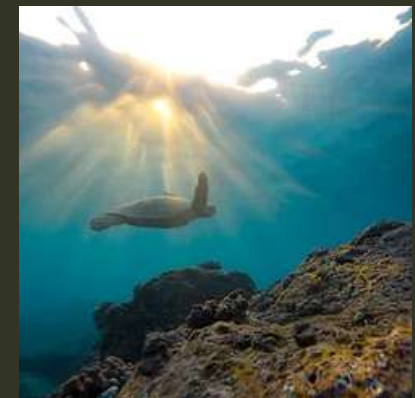
Music Box
Sekhar Banerjee

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Already
Deby Cedars

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The Satin Blue...
Kavita Ratna

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POETRY



Positions
Kathlynn Somerville

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A Family Legend
John Grey

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Midlife Zephyr
Ben Nardolilli

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There are days I think you are a bird
Lucretia Voigt

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About A Raven
George Freek

[Read More](#)



Nails
Jyothsnapanija

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I am waiting, with thanks to Ferlinghetti

By Peter A. Witt

I am waiting for the sun to rise
the moon to set and a cold glass
of ice tea on a hot summer's day and
I am waiting for the kitchen
to prepare my free range chicken salad
sandwich on whole wheat bread
with a pickle on the side and I am waiting
tables when I should be an accountant, and
I am waiting for god to reveal herself
which my father says should be soon,
and I am waiting for Halloween so
we are that much closer to Christmas,
and I am waiting for plastics to disappear
and everything to come wrapped in
biodegradable tissue paper, and I am
waiting for planes to take off on time, and
I am waiting for the newspaper front page
to only feature good news, like
stories about people being kind
to each other and the Dodgers
finally winning the world series,
and I am waiting for Billy Thomas
to invite me to lunch and pay the
check rather than sticking me
with the bill each time we go out,
and I am waiting for bluebirds,
robins, and orioles to make
their way back from their
southern migration, and I
am waiting for gardeners
to only plant pollinators

and natives, and I am waiting
for statues of civil war traitors
to be moved to museums,
and I am waiting for Rebecca
to come to her senses and marry
my cousin, and I am waiting for
this poem to end so I can eat

a chocolate éclair and take a nap.

Poet's Note: *Inspired by I Am Waiting by Lawrence Ferlinghetti*



Snowflakes

By Ann Privateer

billow of them on a lazy night
of open jackets, they catch
my eyelashes, invade loafers
as I slide like a snowplow
two high school girls unload stuff
through a basement window beneath
the Art Theater where X movies play
where they build their emancipation
from living with parents, smoke freely
while The Little Drummer Boy
plays in a neighbor's apartment
a rat a tat tat, an accompanying
their dream on Christmas eve.



One day you're dead and the next you live for ***By Gale Acuff***

-ever in the Hereafter in the Good
Place or Bad but if I have to suffer
in Hell I'd rather not live at all and
my Sunday School teacher laughs and says Aye,
there's the rub, whatever the Hell that means,
it must be the Bible or Shakespeare or
Stan Lee or that Harry Potter writer
or maybe Stephen King but then she says
To live forever, Gale, we have to die
but then we never die again but be
-fore I can stop my thoughts rising
in my throat and out my mouth as words I
say (not ask) Just how the Hell do you know?
Then she starts to cry so I guess that's how.



Music Box

By Sekhar Banerjee

Glow worms/ restless/ are further out than the stars/
like small drones /
silently doing an outstation manoeuvre /
around the tea rest house/riveted at the centre /
of the iron curtains / of the shade trees/
in Singalila ridge/ in Darjeeling hills//

A heavy moon looks on/
like an old strobe light / with multiple loose connections/
Stars rise one by one/
like spill overs of the glow worms/ flitting in the hollows/
between the small worlds /
of the trees and shrubs/ and the roof of the universe//

Silence throbs unemotionally /like a retired typewriter /
and quietly scripts hallucinations/
for the deaf/
on every leaf of the dark pine trees/
down the slopes/
and fills the night up to the steely brim / of its blue organdy
emptiness//

We have not listened to such perfect notes /
in a music box/ for a long time//



Already (Pop song)

By Deby Cedars

*As we go about this day,
We already know good things are coming our way.*

As the tide begins to turn,
We already know what we have yet to learn.

You and I are already at peace now!
You and I are already in love!
It's a love that will never cease now!
It's a love that's a blessing from above.

You and I are dancing through the dreamscape!
You and I are dancing on a cloud!
Flowers are blooming on the landscape!
We are expressing love out loud!

Through it all,
You are my avowed supporter.
As we see what's already around the corner.

I made the plan fifteen years ago.
How it will end I think I already know.

You and I are already at peace now!
You and I are already in love!

It's a love that will never cease now!
It's a love that's a blessing from above.

You and I are dancing through the dreamscape!
You and I are dancing on a cloud!

Flowers are blooming on the landscape!
We are expressing love out loud!

Fortune and fame will catch up to me.
I hope it's all they say it's cracked up to be.

Even though there is no guarantee.
All this and more I can foresee.

You and I are already at peace now!
You and I are already in love!
It's a love that will never cease now!
It's a love that's a blessing from above.

You and I are dancing through the dreamscape!
You and I are dancing on a cloud!
Flowers are blooming on the landscape!
We are expressing love out loud!

I predict my name on the Marquee.
All this and more, I can foresee.

And us going on a grand shopping spree.
Tell me now if you disagree.
Tell me now if I'm wrong.
Tell me now if I'm out of bounds
For writing this song.

Tell me now if I'm fooling myself
And being over optimistic.
Tell me if I'm dreaming now
And not being realistic. Cause

You and I are already at peace now!
You and I are already in love!
It's a love that will never cease now!
It's a love that's a blessing from above.

You and I are dancing through the dreamscape!
You and I are dancing on a cloud!
Flowers are blooming on the landscape!
We are expressing love out loud!

You and I are already at peace now!
You and I are already in love!
It's a love that will never cease now!
It's a love that's a blessing from above.

You and I are dancing through the dreamscape!
You and I are dancing on a cloud!

Flowers are blooming on the landscape!
We are expressing love out loud!



The satin blue...

By Kavita Ratna

The satin blue
turtle on my quilt
quietly wades
through
Africa, China
Japan, New Zealand,
gliding at will,
into Buddhism, Hinduism,
Christianity,
splashing into
indigenous faiths,
fluid, like the wave it rides,
here a symbol of fertility,
of wisdom, patience,
there, of power, longevity,
tenacity,
a bearer of secrets,
a prayer, a wish and a hope
that the meaning of life
will endure,
as mother earth, as
the very foundation
on which all else
exists.

It's hard shell the heaven
its soft underbelly,
the life beneath.

It moves,
unhindered, unhurried,

unstoppable,
here, there
everywhere.

Soul-speak
has no
word
for boundaries.



A Family Legend

By John Grey

There he was,
half flesh, half ghost,
at the far end
of my cousin's huge backyard,
curled up in a plastic chair.

From a distance,
he seemed more wrinkle
than flesh,
legs dangling,
bony arms crossed.

I'd heard the stories
of the family hippy,
the drugs, the many-stickered guitar,
the rusty VW van
he drove cross country,
up and down,
across and back,
and never did park
any place for long.

But now his bones
did the parking.
As did a heart
as threadbare
as tufts of white hair
that protruded from his skull
like spinifex.

"Do you want to meet, Abe?"

my cousin asked.
I slowly followed him
toward the disheveled, disgruntled,
man in question.

Drawing close,
his gaze met mine,
such brown, inquisitive eyes,
all that remained
of his restlessness.



Positions

By Kathylynne Somerville

The air was poised. Stretched like a pair of obsidian stockings leaping a Grand Jeté swallowing the studio in the body of a feather, bones of a girl who strung from the final row to the first, ribbons fastened across slippers she'd stitched with dental floss because thread didn't hold to detour past the girl's whose guts gestated recriminations at her technique, and the instructor who piped, *Enough of that rubbish*. To be placed inside the air's molecules, floating with soft arms, glowing, rounding, filaments of a light globe, landing upon the hardwood floor, an egg set in a porcelain cup by a spoon - no silverware nor power saw could break.



Midlife Zephyr

By Ben Nardolilli

Bind me with the wind, the world of stones and water
is too hostile, nowhere I go holds me well enough,
the ground is too hard, the branches too weak,
the still surfaces pull away and let me sink until I touch
the earth I was trying to flee all over again,
but with wind I will be welcome in every small space,
drifting along and finding openings to my liking,
there will be no roots, no home either, but I have neither
of those awaiting me in this current world,
if the breeze can pick me up and carry me away, fine,
it deserves a chance to show me a new way to live.



There are days I think you are a bird

By Lucretia Voigt

There are days I think you are a bird
maybe the cardinal
that sits
on the window-
sill by my desk
while I write.
Or the red-
bellied woodpecker
that clears
his throat
between bouts
of bug searching
while I wait
on the deck,
morning coffee
in hand. I could
believe
you are the squirrel
with the tail
so bushy
it should
topple over,
but doesn't,
the one
that frequents
the maple tree, staying
just far up enough
to aggravate
Pi, make him stand
at attention, waiting
for a chase. Deer

use the front yard
as a highway
but you couldn't
be one of them,
so skittish
they run
from the motion
sensor light.
I am sure
you are the
hummingbird
that levitates
in front of
the dining room
window, so
still as if held
by the hand
of God.

Poet's Note: *Those we love that pass on are always with us. After the unexpected early death of my husband, I felt his energy all around me and in the animals that visited my home and yard. Nature is helping me heal.*



About A Raven

By George Freek

I wake in a cold place.
Dead leaves fall
into the river to float
I don't know where.
I don't care.
From his tree, a raven
stares at me.
Like nature itself,
his intentions
remain a mystery.
But I'm not what
he wanted to see.
He flies into the dying light
and disappears from sight.
Tonight he's let me be.



Nails

By Jyothsnaphanija

Ice can guide you polish correctly then you can re-apply
Your version of second quoting.
On hands easily, on walls with some effort.
Styler in hand,
Checking her upside downed word fly tattooed arms
Figment of water sheltering chick peas.
A lover who sends
Her pictures of pastel.
Thrilled of his short-lived boyhood
hurts her ways
Water dance and thick
Liquid soap pleasuring her stratosphere skin
Drawing of a pencil inside of the greeting card
Rubbing her desire for perfection on the soft surface of nail cutter
She knew that she forgot her long years
Of growing invisible.
Peeler on mirror
Avoiding she holds with care the sliced star fruit
Asks him to slow the ride, collecting fallen slices
Of salted street delights.
Thinking how she was drinking orange juice while someone was driving.
Wiping stains
Wind of night.

FICTION



Deathwatch
Richard Lutman

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Me, Again, Your Muse
Tom Ball

[Read More](#)



Dappled Lights (Part I & II)
Mehreen Ahmed

[Part I](#)

[Part II](#)



Deathwatch

By Richard Lutman

Will two outlaws pay for their sins?

In the middle of a vermillion-colored basin, where the horses of the outlaws halted, a rifle exploded over the dust. A vulture squawked and toppled over into a pool of blood.

"Good shot, amigo," said his companion, the tall man, Jose Luis.

Carlos Villareal laughed and slid his rifle back into its saddle holster. The other vultures angled a few feet upward and then floated back with great commotion. Their wings flapped like shredded pieces of black canvas.

"I kill him good," said Carlos. "Right in the heart. They are the birds of the devil, I think, wanting to eat your soul. But they will never get mine. I am too smart for them because I will be in the finest casket buried deep in the earth."

The air bore the stench of heat and dust. Carlos gently urged his horse forward. Dust puffed up from the hooves turned a brilliant crimson in the dying sun.

"When I wake up in the morning," said Carlos. "I look up where God lives, and I say, 'God, I love you. Do you love me?' I say, 'How are you, God?' If you do not talk and listen to God, then you are all by yourself. I love God because he is just like a girl, not mean like a man—always jealous at the world...."

Carlos reined in his horse for a moment and peered ahead. An old man dressed in a worn white shirt and pants rode out of a red-walled canyon. His silver embroidered hat shone in the dying sun. A heavily laden burro waddled behind his horse. He halted when he saw the two men.

"Hey, amigo," said Carlos. "What have you there?"

The old man squinted at them. His red and watery eyes stared out from his unshaven face white with a bristle.

"Nothing, I am a poor man," he said. "Just a woodcarver. Wood, wood is all I have."

"Then you do not mind if we see for ourselves," said Carlos.

Jose dismounted and poked about the burro's sacks. The old man's eyes followed his every move.

"Wood—he is right."

"What is your name, old man?" said Carlos.

"Miguel."

"I am Carlos Villareal, and this is Jose Luis, my partner. You have heard of us?"

The old man nodded and squinted for a better look at the famous outlaws. Carlos' thumb eased back the hammer of his pistol and fired.

The bullet stunned the old man, and he sat breathing for an instant with his mouth open, before he toppled over his saddle to the ground. Carlos laughed as the old man's hat, caught by the wind, bounced away. Jose knelt and searched the body.

"There is not much," said Jose.

"Keep looking," said Carlos with a sneer. "These people always have something."

Red dust covered the countryside, and the sweat of their horses dripped like blood. Carlos took a drink from his canteen, then coughed and wiped his mouth.

"We must get more water. My canteen is almost dry."

"A watch," said Jose. "He had a watch."

"Let me see."

Jose gave it to him. It spun like a small golden sun at the end of the thin chain.

"They always think they can hide such things from us, but they never have," said Carlos. "They forget who we are."

Carlos glanced back. A wheeling vulture landed and hopped on the new feast, tearing greedily at the choicest parts with its red beak.

Ahead of them, the walls of a small adobe hut shimmered in the light of the fading sun. The two men stopped, dismounted, and brushed the dust from their bodies. They pushed aside the blanket hanging from the doorframe and strode inside. The hut was soaked in years of sweat, half sweet and half-sour with the smell of smoke. An old woman knelt in front of rough-carved figures of saints with one towering figure of Christ on the cross. The body tearing itself from the frail wood of the cross. The mouth was open in a scream, the arms twisted, and the brow bloody beneath the desert thorns that had been placed above Christ's head.

She looked up at them, her eyes milky and darting.

"We need water," said Carlos. "Our canteens are dry."

She nodded, rose, and disappeared into the darkness of a back room.

Carlos took out the watch and let it spin. It hung in the dark space like a fiery vulture's eye.

The woman shuffled back. When she saw her husband's watch dangling from Carlos's hand, she tensed. "You need something stronger to help you with your journey," she said. "I will get it for you."

Carlos nodded, and she disappeared. He filled his canteen with the large wooden bucket she had brought. Water splashed over him in a silvery sheet and fell to the floor. The woman reappeared with a green-tinted bottle. Carlos grabbed it from her, pulled the cork out with his teeth and spat it to the floor, then took a deep drink. The liquid had a bitter taste, and he coughed. Jose followed and then passed it back. They each had one more drink, then turned and started out.

"May the Lord bless you," she said as she crossed herself. "And the Devil be happy..."

The black vultures mounting their constant, patient watch squatted from the twisted trees and roots that surrounded the hut.

Carlos felt the pain in the pit of his stomach and looked at Jose. The watch slipped from his hands and fell to the ground in a splash of glowing dust. They slid off their horses to the ground, hands spread outward into the red vapor of the sunset.

The old woman knelt next to Carlos and picked up her husband's watch from the dusty ground.
"The watch belonged to my husband," she said to Carlos as his eyes closed.

And the vultures like giant prehistoric creatures bobbed back and forth, their red beaks clicking.



Me, Again, Your Muse

By Tom Ball

A writer's conversation with his Muse

Hey, it's me again. Your muse. I am the dark side. I am your woman. You ask what use have you of a muse? I say, without a woman you can share your ideas with you will be unbalanced and insane. You say you are a rock of sanity, but I say no one today is a rock of sanity. Everyone is fragile and spoiled. You say nothing nor no one can drive you mad. I say, if I left you, you'd be crushed and maybe wouldn't recover.

You opine, you have written some good books. I say I've brought you to the dark side. The mysterious sexuality of a genius woman poet. I know you are obsessed with my poetry, though you deny it. You say I'm a witch. Let me just say I can do magic, like hypnotism. You let me hypnotise you and now you are obligated to love me, though not exclusively. You say hypnosis is not that powerful. I tell you sometimes you are totally ignorant. Humans are all programmable machines. Its as if aliens had created us or past shamans had allowed only people who could be easily hypnotized to survive. You say you can't fathom that. I tell you the smarter one is the better one can be programmed. Just make sure you don't let anyone cross-hypnotize you.

And you ask, what about the book, 'Digital Man, Speed 4,' which you have written? You say everyone will live in fast forward in the future and will be cyborgs with computer minds... I say it is true life is getting faster and its hard to keep up. I say I'd like to retire from the rat race and just take it nice and easy, I have no desire to be a homo machina. You say it's a loser's philosophy, but I tell you I am tired and have had enough. You say new drugs speed up your heart and thoughts and its all very congenial. I say it is not congenial and I want no further part of it.

And you point out that you have written, 'All the Days...' about wasted years and say you are hungry for success. You say almost everyone today wants to be a success. But to me success is empty and useless. You say that I am successful as your muse. I guess you have a point there.

And you want to know how I feel about your book, 'On the Verge of Darkness? You say it is possible that we will bomb ourselves back to the Stone Age. I say that's where progress is leading. And it will be the triumph of the dark side once

and for all. People will learn that progress only leads to oblivion. And in the chaos, I will be Queen. And you say if I am Queen, what will that make you? And my answer is you will be my slave. You will be my slave no matter what happens. It is your destiny. You need a woman who is cleverer than you and few women are as clever as I am. You admit you love me despite everything.

And you say I inspired you to write, 'Dream of Insanity,' about losing it over a woman. I never asked for your love. You came to me, you searched me out, and I searched for you. You are attracted to me because of my intelligence and sanity. You know you crave sanity in this mad World. Well! OK, you've got me! I like your mind, but just think you are unstable and prone to follow the trends too much! You say actually, you laugh at the trends and are just following the other intellectuals. I say you need courage to go against the flow, and I can give you that courage. You say you are not a wimp and can make your own moves irrespective of my wisdom. But I doubt you can go against me. It would be an act of insanity for sure. And did I sense you want to mind read with me? I feel together we would be a Super mind! And I feel, you have pure intellect that is hard to find anywhere. I know I have searched and searched and am not your muse for nothing.

And you say I inspired you to write, 'Dreamworlds of the Cheschm.' It was about a fictitious people the Cheschm, who live short lives and spend their time in philosophical debate. And die after they come up with some original philosophy. Like new ideas about how to live or wisdom to live by. I say everyone who is clever is capable of original thought. You say most clever people are wasters and throw it all away. I say people do what they feel is best and we all have to live with that.

And you say I inspired you to write, 'Superdrugs,' which is about new drugs that enhance one's intelligence. And such drugs are in the experimental stages. But I wonder if we can absorb more intelligent people. I kind of feel we should enhance peoples' EQ first before we improve their intelligence in general. We have too many clever nerds and clever wallflowers.

And I know you wrote, 'Chantal's Dreams' about the future of dreaming. How people will dream with Mind Reading Technology (MRT); stream of conscious day dreams. You say you are proud of that book? I think it is noble to dream.

And I wrote, 'Strange Love' which was my take on our love affair. I think loving you is Superhuman but is also strange. It is a somewhat unhealthy obsessive relationship for us both. We both can't think of anything else other than each other. And we know each other so well with constant MRT, so much so that we have lost our independence. We will sink or swim together. Knowing what you know about me I know you can't consider loving other women.

And why don't we write a book about future love? How MRT allows people to have intense love affairs and be able to share their thoughts and keep sane. You say MRT will not lead people to be saner, but rather the opposite. I guess it will depend on the lovers in question. It works for us, anyway, you can't deny that. And we can co-author, 'Decade of Loving,' about how we have managed to keep the flame of our love affair burning for a decade. Few people today are sentimental or monogamous, but I think it would be good if they were. And I think one day you and I will be King and Queen. They don't come any cleverer than the two of us. It is destiny for us to rule. I say we could require everyone to communicate mainly with MRT and make it obligatory for people to have at least one lover all the time for the sake of their sanity. And as rulers we could slow down AI and keep it manageable for the common human. And make sure we don't render humans useless... And we could have everyone hooked up to paramedics so if they try to kill themselves with an overdose, paramedics will revive them. And people will mind read with everyone and know when someone was suicidal and would try and help them. And so on.

And I know you are fictitious, you are not real, you don't exist, but I feel free to imagine you and daydream about you. And converse with you, my special secret friend. I'd like to create you in the lab one day and make you a Superhuman.



Dappled Lights

By Mehreen Ahmed

(Part I)

A rare love story

Two women sat on the brink of a Long River at sunset. One had a salt and pepper mane, the other a shaved head. The salt and pepper-haired woman held a red lantern. She pressed her lips until her cheeks dimpled. Her pupils darted over the rippled waves. Her eyes appeared dull and teary; eye bags sagged underneath. She had a bulging pouch on her lap tied up in double knots. The first two knots were tied out of two ends of a square loincloth forming rectangles; the remaining rectangles of the cloth were knotted over the first knots.

Boats arrived and left. She didn't get on in any of them. She yawned, but she was lucid as she communicated with the shaved head. The shaved head woman nodded. Salt and pepper took out a water bottle from her pouch and offered it to her. Leaning against the great banyan, she then spaced out.

A sprightly teenager, she was a dancer in the academy of the fine arts. Her dance steps were as nuanced as she was poised. The center stage scented the lily perfume she wore in rich profusion. Her mane was dense monsoon rain, long and flowing down her slender waist. Her fame spread a fair bit. People could smell her lily perfumed body, even as they breathed, hear her anklets ring, and feel her delicate moves when they dreamed.

A certain man came along one evening, as she was dancing on the floor. The man entered and unlike all other men, boldly crossed the floor and held her hands. He too began to dance with her following her intricate choreography. Naive as he was, she took it upon herself to teach him all; taught him how to dance, forever they shall dance. In her beating heart, dance reigned supreme; it melted any walls. They stepped outside the dance court into The Garden of Love and Delight. Entwined like vines, they danced as she unlocked the secrets of her arts to him; the dance which had been locked in her heart. This garden was their shrine.

She felt replete, she realized she had been incomplete. By far, her reality had been a confusing blur until now, a deficiency which had barred truth from entering. The duo danced in the dappled lights in The Garden of Love and

Delight; within the shrubbery, boughs and vines; broad, aged leaves of the banyan trees, whose twisted knots made for a sturdier dancing plane. The duo danced till the glowing lights of the Sirius, the bright Dog Star, illuminated the night sky.

One night, however, since day and night were equal to the dancers, who had lost count of time through countless encounters, without tomorrows or yesterdays or todays anytime, one day she made herself unavailable for the schooling of this young man. She neither appeared in the court, nor in the garden, but made him wait until he departed, despondent not understanding what had happened to her overnight. Looming dark clouds gathered in the turbulent sky; a storm was coming; thunder cracked the firmament.

Still, he didn't give up hope; the young man mused; perhaps she hadn't come because she couldn't. Perhaps, she was held up by the storm, which was about to start soon. As the day progressed, all dreary and white, his body and soul ached for her. The man stayed on, waiting even as midnight arrived, trying to remain steadfast to her memory but she never came. His pain grew. This academy had become a barren place.

It soon came to pass that the mistress had disappeared without a trace, as though she had dissipated. She wasn't seen on the dance floor anymore, when he'd peeked through the open door one night, there was another young dancer, who looked at him through the corner of her keen kohl eyes. He wasn't mesmerized. Enticing as she was, her seductive glances failed to arouse him. He wondered why this had happened. What had happened to the pleasures of his flesh, why could he not be aroused by this new enchantress? She approached him in person and took his hands in hers. She led him into her own bedchamber of brick and mortar, away from the besotted Garden of Love and Delight. The severance from his own mistress made him feel he was nothing more than shards of jagged glass. The bedchamber felt like a cold crypt, its walls closing in; he felt claustrophobic. Here, Kohl tried to pick up the pieces, to piece him in.

Why was it futile? Why had she failed? Kohl asked. Was she any less in the art? He returned a smile and said he needed to re-tune himself to the new tunes, readjust his moves, if only he could, none of it was her fault. She must dance along with or without him. A moment of self-realization, his own mistress had once taught him, only too perfectly in tune with nature that his flesh had absorbed it all. Kohl looked at him, bemused, what school of philosophy was he in? Why was his young heart so hard like the chhurpi aged cheese?

She understood nothing of it, and retreated into her chamber with a frown of reproach which the young man saw but did not care about. Scratching his beard, he left her to her flutters and moans. He had embarked on a different path to seek out his elusive mistress; smitten by her, he would wait it out; a lifetime of waiting, maybe, he resolved. Maybe, it was all his fault; scathing self-criticism unveiled a deluded notion.

Godot had waited. He did too, like him he waited for the phantom, the woman who never returned. Who vowed under a white noon moon, never to leave him. Why had she become a Godot phantom? Or Lilith, perhaps? He, a seafarer, was going to return to the seas after all, at some turning point of the waves, or travel to another port where he would dock his ship, hence Lilith decided to rebel and leave?

Albeit the dance was flash; in a flash, it had fleshed out onto the esoteric realm. Such was the nature of their dance—in the moment, it had mediated through the body and reached a zenith into the souls; her anklet bells chimed an undying finesse.

The body and the soul went hand in hand, philosophy of religion, as Aristotle held. In its intrinsic oneness, the body couldn't function without its soul. Bereaved, his own soul had broken down, starved, long gone. The academy had mirrored such flashes of self-realization, that these dances were well beyond the physical expressions.

The beaches were lonely, oyster shells lay bare, amassed and garnered strength along the coastline like a garland of growing void etched in his heart. Tides were tied with time. Just as tired, the ship was bound to their flips of tiered motions. He used this time well. He used the seas to look for the phantom, and to try to turn the tide around. But glad tidings awaited still, scarce, he braced himself for the worst as he continued to search. Was she just plainly whimsical, capricious, or seriously dancing with him? His heart was brimming with many questions, and with many quiet expectations.

Still, she was close by, her breathing was intense upon him, the winds sprayed the sultry smell of the sea; swelling waves crept in and retreated from the ocean shore, he heard her humming a moonlight lore, as though, she still protected him and tried to preserve this rare dance of sanctity. Or was it all a fallacy?

He persevered. It was a virtue. Was she even beautiful? While they were engaged in the dance, he had not noticed enough to see through. He beheld beauty when he saw her chiseled, dimpled cheeks framed within the delicate bones of her face. Her face shone every time he closed his eyes now, he heard her sighs. He danced the tango with her. He smelt her perfumes. Her crooked dance fingers dug into the porous skin of his neck, beauty was only skin-deep, her allure, and her unflinching wisdom cut the insides of his turgid heart, he heard her sweet calling, her raw moans; he heard them as if it was yesterday, to which he responded with a slight, 'oou?' Until his hammock swung in the misty ocean brew.

There was a clue. Words had been whispered through the wild night, softly narrating the story of the enchantress who had disappeared; they hadn't caught his ears. An unnamed merchant had asked her to teach him her art; she had refused because she already had a partner. But the merchant was livid. He made an extraordinary threat. He strode across the dance floor and ordained that he would behead her if she continued in The Garden of Love and Delight with another man; that he would behead the man too. She fled to lie still in the dark so she couldn't be found. She escaped to the southern fringe of the city by the Long River to live in solitude.

She wasn't just a nameless educator. She had a name that she went by in the academy. Her name was Nirmala. The young man's name was Siddhartha. She didn't have the courage to tell him, because she feared the wealthy merchant, a powerful man, would come after him and have them both beheaded. Instead, Nirmala started a life in hiding with her mother. But every morning she walked up to the river and yearned for Siddhartha, hoped for a reunion.

Her mother was blind. But a seer in blindness, she noted that a page had been turned in her daughter's life. A flower had blossomed in her heart as she doted on a man. She felt her profound sorrow. One day, however, she heard Nirmala throwing up. She perceived the nature of the malady for it was a sweet love child she carried. With little to eat, her mother asked Nirmala to find work for the sake of the child, at least. +Nirmala wasn't showing at that stage. She found work on a farm, not too far from where they had lived. This farm grew poppies, mace and nutmeg where Nirmala's job was to crush the mace and the nutmeg. The resin from the nutmeg often clouded her breathing space. The poisonous powder gave her dizzy spells. Weeks of hard toil at grinding, inhaling the nutty, mace powder in a mortar, one evening before sunset Nirmala lost consciousness. An on-duty supervisor tried to wake her up, but to no avail. She lost her job.

But she recovered. Nirmala found herself out of a job. Determined to get her job back, she wanted to meet the big boss. After all, she had been unfairly relieved of her duties. She asked the supervisor to arrange a meeting. After much deliberation, she agreed, and a meeting date was fixed. This day, Nirmala decided to dress to kill. She wore her best costume and jewellery to impress him. She knew this would work. She was exceptional. She put on her magic lily perfume which her mother could smell and wore the anklet bell, her mother heard tinkling gently. Her mother was unhappy by this turn of events. With a sense of foreboding, she forbade her to meet him but to look for work in another place. Work was hard to find, and being a court dancer, Nirmala had very few options. So, she paid her mother no heed. Clad in gold jewellery she had from her dancing days, she looked stunning. She had also tucked something else in her clothing. Nirmala hid a small kukri, inside the nivi, the top fold of her body, should the boss's behaviour turn sour and unworthy. She

hoped for the best outcome although she didn't know his true intent. Who was he anyway? She never met him, just the supervisors.

Nirmala kissed her mother's forehead, took a deep breath and stepped outside into the open. She walked towards the mace farm in her white loincloth. A single garb costume, wrapped around her shoulders and waist and extended around her two legs, was belted with a gold waistband across her underbelly and exposed a satiny midriff. On her way, she plucked a fragile white lily from a roadside tree and slipped it into the masses of her tightly plaited tresses. Her fair skin looked translucent, her classical nose dazzled a diamond stud; gold conch-shell for earrings matched the golden anklets and the intricate bracelets, the gold band around her forehead. What people wouldn't pay, and pray to be with her? If she made it as an enchantress in her court, then she could make it here too, as a priestess of nutmeg-crushing load. This was a different kind of dance to switch into, this new dance mode. The Garden of Love and Delight, once full of unspoken pledge had become a place of discontent.

One step at a time. Her nimble feet wore red alta. She proceeded towards the gated mansion where her employer waited to meet her. A slight autumnal breeze murmured a tune and blew some curly locks across her fine facial bones, the guards opened the gates. She entered and walked along the way, such a long walk, where his mansion stood at the end of this peat path. A maid let her in through solid mahogany doors. She led her down a mosaic corridor, dimly lit into a room of many ornamental sofas and high-backed chairs where yet another door, a door within a door, within a door bridged this long wormhole of a corridor.

At last, the last door opened, she stood on its precipice and saw a man standing several steps below, a wine glass in hand. She was ushered in by the maid; the maid left rapidly; she was hemmed in on all sides, and all doors slammed. She climbed down the long staircase, shortly. He turned around. She was astounded by whom she saw, too late. Who else, but the formidable merchant, who had caused her so much distress? She stood rooted to the floor petrified. She turned around to flee. Fight or flight. The villain squinted and gasped, "You? Is this really who I think it is?" He strode towards her and looked straight into her long-lashed eyes. He smiled with a twinkle of victory in his own, while beads of sweat emerged on her upper lips, he slid a finger down her bare shoulders. His grasping fingers dug into her velvet arms; he pulled her closer while she trembled with fear. Of course, he was willing to give her a job, but not the job of a crusher of the nutmeg and the mace, but to fan a fantasy that had been gnawing at him for so long.

The thought of the child knocked her back to consciousness. She fought tears of despair. She would kill him. She knew she had the kukri, but reason prevailed. Killing this man would only bring more danger, inevitable jail, and possibly the gallows. She tried to negotiate.

"Could I have my old job back, please?"

Even she thought she sounded naive.

He laughed. "What I'm about to offer you is much more worthy of you? All this? All this could be yours if you taught me to dance and made me slave and student to your nuance."

"I could do this no more than you could grind your own mace. I'm with child," she said.

"I remember why you shunned me at the academy. I had vowed to behead you if you didn't submit."

"I beg you, I still can't, I carry a baby inside of me."

"Then I shall imprison you at once, I don't care about the baby you carry in that impure womb of yours."

Her hand fumbled through the folds of her clothing reaching down for the kukri. She took it out and lunged straight at his eyes. In a frenzy, she punctured one of his eyeballs until the man's vision blurred and he screamed in agony. Blood was on her hands too, she hid the kukri under her layered clothing, and running up the stairs, she flung open the doors, one after another running along the corridor. Staggering and stumbling, she made her way through this fluid wormhole. Back on the peat path, she saw that the guards were having tea. She quietly unlatched a small gate and slipped out unnoticed.



Dappled Lights

By Mehreen Ahmed

(Part II)

A rare love story

She entered her hut; she was befuddled. She asked her mother to pack a cotton pouch because they would have to leave as soon as possible. Thankfully, the merchant was blind only in one eye; he had not died. But the sore eye was enough to pour sour into their lives. The situation was grave; this merchant whose long hands, she feared, could grab her from any of the four corners of the world, but she would take her chances.

She led her mother to the edge of the Long River. Beneath a yellow bindi sky, they waited for a boat. In this short while, they could hear scuffles behind a tree. The full moon sheds some light on the men who entered the empty hut shell. Darkness wrapped Nirmala and her mother, who lay low in the dirt path of the bank masking themselves with soft mud in the semblance of camouflage. The men came as far as the riverbank,- they even looked down, but all they could see was mud and a murky water body stretched far out with the moonbeam frolicking. Nirmala and her mother were right there, under the feet of those men, hiding down in a black hole as it were.

A boat came by like an apparition through the dark, with a skeletal boatman at the helm. He took them on board and paddled away. He rowed his boat until the morning's first dew dropped on the grass blades. While the merchant was ramping up violence, setting the hut ablaze, the smoke was high up in the sky, smoke that she saw and knew was from their ramshackle hut.

By now, a banyan tree was sighted along the Long River, and the boatman rowed them up to the shore, and secured the boat for his passengers to get off. Still covered in the dirt, he couldn't see their faces at all on which the mud had dried up. They jumped off the boat with a thud, the maiden took her ring off and paid the boatman, who was only too happy to receive real gold; the treat was rare. On the shore, the mother and the daughter trod slowly, they knew not where to go, so they walked on till they found a shack where some tea was brewing in a pot, a tea boy stood with a tall and lanky man. When they approached them, the boy was frightened to see their faces and bodies caked with dry, cracked mud.

The mother and the daughter needed to rest. However, this was no place to rest. The man offered to take them to his house, which was close by, so they could wash up and rest and be fed, and then decide on the next leg of their journey. The man asked them to wash in the river, and return, while he prepared breakfast. Nirmala washed her mother first, then herself. She carefully took off all her jewellery and put it in the cotton pouch which carried their clothes and some bric-à-brac. Her mother asked her to give the man some jewellery in lieu of his kindness if he would let them stay, as he didn't seem to have a family of his own. They could perhaps be his family, cook and clean for him, while Nirmala had her baby. The man heard the unbridged tale of the vile merchant's acts. It was a grisly story of terror and of tragedy. He offered them solace and his home; he felt nothing but sorrow for them. They couldn't turn down such a kind offer. On life's unpredictability, Nirmala felt her luck was turning, her baby was growing through all trimesters.

One August evening, as they sat down to have dinner, she went into labour. The man rushed out to find his neighbour, whose midwifery delivered a strong baby boy. The man told his neighbours that the baby's father had passed away, she was his niece, her mother, a stepsister had come to take refuge here because of misfortunes elsewhere. Their hut had burned down. That plausible story stuck.

More misfortunes lay in the offing, yet. Nirmala's beauty could not be blighted. Men in the neighborhood ogled at her and regarded her covetously. Since no one aided, these men inched in closer, but she also had a baby, and was a lactating mother. One day, a young man proposed marriage provided Nirmala left her baby with her mother. An outraged Nirmala refused his offer. The man went away seething in anger but hatched a terrible plan. He kidnapped the baby from the napping mother in the fading light on an August day. When she woke up, she couldn't find her baby anywhere. Half-crazed with sorrow, Nirmala looked for him everywhere, mostly along the riverside, and then heard a familiar cry coming from a boat nearby. Nirmala followed the cry and ran to the boat; she found her child in another woman's lap, a woman who had bought the baby from the kidnapper.

"My baby is not for sale," she screamed and snatched it from her lap. In return, she gave the woman her only diamond nose stud. The woman grabbed it and returned the baby. Nirmala's joy was boundless. Walking life's bumpy road with courage, she wondered which way her Siddhartha had gone.

The Long River laid many dead bodies. Her baby's kidnapper was also one among them. Who killed him? Why? The cause was unknown. His death and the police-search for the culprit acted as a deterrent for the other suitors, who were frightened and did not dare leave their dens.

With each day, her burning beauty slowly waned; she was aging and aging fast. The boy was growing up, looking more and more like Siddhartha. The enchantress, once renowned for her performance, on whom countless doted, had only melded with one. Her fair complexion was several notches paler, she had less appetite, and her taut body slowly loosened.

Many years had passed. Her boy was now fifteen. Her blind mother died on a moonless night. She had a river burial in the same Long River. Her son, a rising sun. Never in limbo, she knew, one day her Siddhartha would return, no matter how ugly she had become; she had taught him a sublime dance, in The Garden of Love and Delight, that would remain untarnished.

Before her mother died, the seer saw in her future that Siddhartha would return. When that might happen was hard to decipher, but time would bring him into her space when oceans cried out in a spate. After her mother died, Nirmala waited in the evenings with a red lantern, regardless of whether the moon had risen or it was a moonless night, near the Long River and sang a psalm for Sirius so he would show Siddhartha the way back to her.

Nirmala named her son Prasada. She lamented and waited for the arrival of a specific boat. Prasada was now much older. She lamented because Siddhartha, whom she didn't believe to be dead, still had not come for her. Her mother had passed with time, and she was laid to rest in the riverbed. Nirmala knew she was next. Her old, gnarled hands, age marks, and the deep furrows burrowed on her face told their won tale of suffering. But she waited patiently on the edge of the Long River lawn, convinced that Siddhartha would be sailing up any day. But her son didn't believe in his mother's madness, and argued and cajoled her to come away with him to the city of Delights she knew only too well, around the same river bend.

Siddhartha lay in his hammock. One night, under a starry sky, a shooting star whispered to him to make a wish, he wished to bring Nirmala back into his life. Without her, his life was bleak and colorless. He fell into a deep slumber. He dreamed that he was rowing a boat along a fertile riverbank. He stopped and searched at every port. It was a long river, with so many hamlets and hurdles to cross that it seemed like an impossible task. But the young face he held in the center of his heart egged him on to seek her out. Only she could put out this feverish fire which bore a hole through his body and his soul. The stars and the moon had not flirted with him, they told him the truth that it wasn't a whim, that he must steer his boat along the Long River bend. She beckoned him with a red lantern, night in and night out, with the flame of her lantern burning bright. He must come, she thought. She must have her last dance on the timeline steep incline. They murmured to him. 'Follow our instructions. Go to The Garden of Love and Delight, and take it from there, before it is too late. Time is elusive, too powerful even for us, though we are celestial and heavenly bodies themselves; in time, we will also burn up.'

Siddhartha woke up with a jolt and felt a chill run straight through him. It felt surreal that he should follow this dream, a dream where he saw Nirmala beckoning him to come to her before it was too late before time destroyed her being. He thought of the distance he would have to cover. A seafarer, he was adept in traversing the seas, he must reach out to her. He was mapping a nautical gauge. He engaged a telescope to see the guiding lights. His ship's handy compass was his destiny. But a storm was also imminent, and he was soon caught up in the midst of it, tackling the high seas, and navigating through a rage-filled welkin was difficult. He fought the storm with all his might, but his ship was wrenched apart. Heaving waves blanketed the ocean's rippled surface. Magnificent lightning cracked up the welkin.

He resurfaced, swam, and tried to clamber to higher ground. For three days, he swam around poisonous tentacles, the jellyfish tantalizingly close. He saw pink sunrises and orange sunsets, buoyed by the waves on his back. Nirmala's memory kept him going: her face, her dance, the perfume of her loading up his senses, until he closed his eyes, and lost consciousness, falling through a rip in the oceanic blanket.

By the red lantern, Nirmala sat alone, looking expectantly at the river in spate. He would come for her, Nirmala believed it. She felt a surge in her heart; she called out his name—"Siddhartha, wake up, wake up, my love, wake up ..." She stood up and began to dance with the cosmos. She moved the heavens and the earth, she cast a spell on the gods, so they would let her Siddhartha dance, she danced, she twirled like the whirling dervishes, Sufis in a trance; time was of the essence; a finale was imminent. In the low, sallow lantern, she viewed the Long River, the waves signaled in the moonlight, a sacrifice had to be made. What sort of sacrifice was it, had she not made enough? Her mother, her dance, her youth, and her beauty. What more? Prasada was all she had left. She couldn't lose him too. What a cruel joke! Have mercy, she cried out to the silent moon; the silver waves gushed grievance. Sentient, they certainly were not.

A fishing boat pulled the unconscious Siddhartha onboard. Sailors tried to resuscitate him; the mute gods heard Nirmala's cries and saw her spell-binding dance with time. They afforded exceptional munificence. They extended the

heavenly fires to him. An enchantress, Nirmala opened up her soul to the gods; her dancing feet never missed a beat until the gods were in step with her rhythm. Siddhartha was half-dead, but it was as though the universe had magically breathed life into his being. His dendrites were incandescent. He sat up. The skipper docked his ship at the heartland of the city of Delight, where dancers danced for the nightriders. He felt better already for the magic word, 'dancer' raised an expectation. The term raised a wand in his mind. He tied a band around his forehead determined to find Nirmala. Fortuitously, this time, he believed she wouldn't be too far down the Long River.

As the stars twinkled, he set out with the sailors toward the dancing school. They met many large-eyed, spirited beauties, courtesans in the prime of their youth, luscious and skillful. Siddhartha went quietly around the back into The Garden of Love and Delight and saw a decrepit bed of roses full of nettles and thorns. The garden had aged, but Nirmala's lily smell, still pervaded the place, tickling his nostrils.

He cried out, "Nirmala, Nirmala." His voice reverberated in the quiet night. An eager owl flew by, and a boy asleep in the darkness suddenly woke up. It was Prasada.

"Who are you?" Prasada asked.

"I heard you call my mother, Nirmala, were you really calling her name out aloud or was I dreaming? I'm her son, Prasada."

"Nirmala has a son. Are you my Nirmala's son?" Siddhartha asked.

"Yes, I'm her's. Who are you?" Prasada asked.

"Take me to her," Siddhartha said.

Prasada had come here to learn about the arts, from this academy of dance, his mother's alma mater.

Along the bend of the meandering Long River, Prasada led the way. Nirmala saw a glow over the horizon. She heard a song she knew too well: time to pack up the boat, my lord, for I'm tired, couldn't row anymore. She stood up and peered into the river long.

The glow was coming from a lantern on the deck of a boat. It came up close, the singing faded, the boat stopped at the edge of the Long River, and two figures jumped out, a silver-haired man with her own, Prasada.

"Who ...? Who is it ...?"

Siddhartha came up to her and took her hand to raise the red lantern, it slipped and fell from his hand on this ebony night. He brought it closer to her face. All the clocks in the world couldn't time this somnolent moment, how long they stood lost in each other. This moment had no past, no present, no future. Their eyes welled with tears of blissful joyf.

He was home, she was his; the boy was theirs; the night cloaked them in a warm embrace. He took her in his arms, she laid her head on his chest. They danced as did the dog star in The Garden of Love and Delight, along with the waves, the tireless cosmos. The steps measured perfectly, one, two, and three, through to infinity, which time could not have wrinkled, or broken.

"You look like the first day," Siddhartha whispered.

"You look like the first day," Nirmala smiled.

NON FICTION



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Cherry Blossom & Glossy Saints

By *Richa Joshi Pant*

Involuntary memory evokes cues without conscious effort, muses Richa Joshi Pant

Involuntary memory is an amazing thing. It is evoked by cues encountered in everyday life, without conscious effort. It's unexpectedly triggered by a sound, smell or even a word and flashes small unimportant details vividly in your mind. No wonder it's even called autobiographical memory.

The word cherry blossom evokes this kind of memory in me. It does not remind me of the lovely bloom that Japan is famous for, but of this brand of shoe polish called 'Cherry blossom' and a loving nun, Sister Thelma. Sister Thelma was my class teacher in grade five. In a white starched habit and a rosary dangling around her neck, she would occasionally remind us in a hushed voice that Jesus was watching us all the time and it would displease him if we misbehaved. This would pass a faint shudder down my naive spine.

She had very exacting standards when it came to black shoes which we wore from Monday to Friday. The shoes had to be polished so well that they emitted light of their own. The whole class would be inspected unfailingly every morning. Many times, I did a spittle trick with a handkerchief to give my shoes an instant face-lift. Every evening I would sit down to polish my shoes for the next day. With a thick layer of shoe polish and vigorous brushing which made the polish disappear and a shine appear in its place. This fifteen-minute ritual cocooned me in the smell of this petroleum product, which I kind of liked. The reward for this was Sister Thelma's nod and sometimes a smile (or did I imagine it). Once in a while, sister would fish out a picture post card of a saint and give it to one of us. There were no rules about who would get the card, but you qualified only if your shoes were luminous. The postcards did not look Indian and neither did the saints on it. They had light smooth skin, hazel eyes. Sanitised, white and with a benign smile, I wondered if they would bless us- the brown Indian children. I still have those postcards with pictures of Saint Dominic Savio, Mary Mazerello, Don Bosco and many others.

I moved to another school as my father was posted to a new city and I recall writing a letter to Sister Thelma. I remember the day, when I received her reply. It was on a picture post card, in a blue envelope with Mother Mary on it. She had drawn a small cross on the top and written that the class missed me. She ended by saying that Jesus loved me

(this idea induced delirium in me which lasted for rest of the day). Our exchange of letters did not last long. Years later, I heard that Sister Thelma had died of cancer. I am not sure if I believe in after life but wish that she is in a sparkling place with all the saints she introduced us to.



Putting up a show

By Gita Viswanath

Gita Viswanath writes about the sheer magic of the annual display of artwork produced by the students of the Faculty of Fine Arts of the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda.

Art is not a handicraft; it is the transmission of feeling the artist has experienced. - Leo Tolstoy

From time immemorial, one of the major markers of an advanced civilization has been art, along with writing, cities and their social structure, forms of government and so on. Art occupies a unique place in society. Even if it may seem to have no apparent value, its worth comes from its social, personal and political functions. The need to beautify our surroundings is intrinsic to human nature. Whether it is a kolam drawn with rice paste outside a home in Tamil Nadu or a Warli design on the walls of tribal homes in Maharashtra, the function of art is imbued with religious, social, cultural and artistic value. The function of art notwithstanding, it is the experience that it provides for the maker of art as well as the viewer that makes it a significant part of human existence. Perhaps, it is for this reason that art is as old as humankind.

The city of Vadodara in Gujarat, often referred to as 'sanskar nagari' (cultural centre), is witness to the sheer magic of the annual display of artwork produced by the students of the Faculty of Fine Arts of the Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda. This event is eagerly awaited by students, lovers of art as well as the general public. It is a time when creativity, hard work, and teamwork are put to the test to produce a spectacle that inspires awe and admiration.

Like everything else, the display too has evolved over the years. In the eighties, it used to be a small affair that attracted only a few interested people. The entire faculty space was not taken up for the event. No special preparation such as whitewashing, lights, and décor were made. It was a one-day display post jury, that was preceded by a month-long practical exam; a practice discontinued in the early 2000s. According to Prof. Indrapramit Roy, an alumnus of the faculty and now head of the painting department, the display "became the talk of the town in the 21st century."

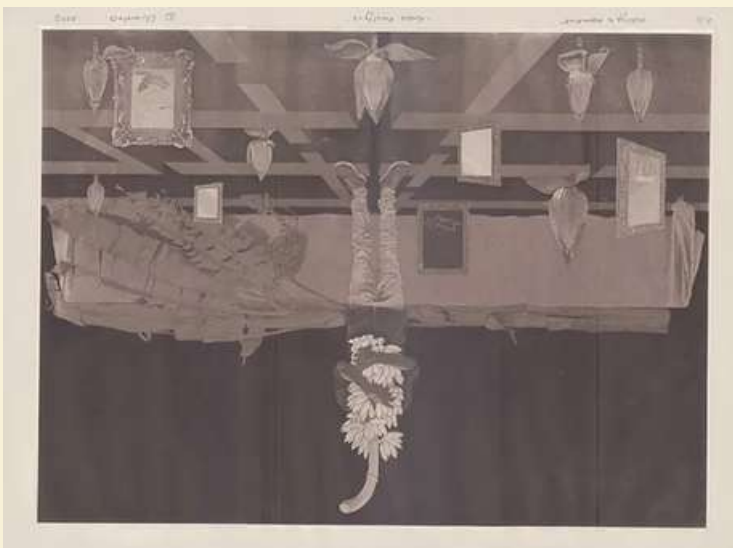
This year's display was particularly special, as it marked the end of a long break of four years due to the pandemic

followed by a cancellation caused by a gratuitous controversy. The first prospectus of the faculty, founded in June 1950, asserts that its mission is to not only empower students to make fruitful careers out of art but to be able to comprehend the inseparability of art and life. In their years of training at the faculty, art students are taught to produce creative work that demonstrates innovative ways of conceptualization, using materials and formal language, alongside art history, theory and criticism of art. The annual display then is the fruition of four years of hard work that highlights the artistic achievements of both Bachelors and Masters students while letting them showcase their work to senior artists, curators, gallerists, collectors and others in a temporary exhibit. The display serves as a platform for students to exhibit their work to a wider audience, receive feedback, and gain recognition. Additionally, the display reinforces the school's reputation as a centre of artistic excellence. To give an idea of the kind of art works displayed, let me provide glimpses of some works produced by the graduating students of the Masters of Visual Arts program.

For Oliva Saha, art is a medium of expression that allows individuals to convey their emotions, experiences, and observations in a unique and creative way. She uses various elements metaphorically and directly to convey her observations of the world around her. One of the unique aspects of the Oliva's work is the use of various mediums. She experiments with different mediums such as watercolour, gouache colour, natural pigment, dye colour on cloth and paper. Her work is like a journal, documenting her thoughts and emotions that provide a glimpse into the complex world in which we live. As Picasso famously said, "Painting is just another way of keeping a diary."

Sneha Lakhotia displayed her work titled *Neend ka Pitaara* (Sleep Treasure) - DIY project, which is an ongoing DIY project that started in the wake of the second wave of Covid in India in 2021. It evolved out of the need to find creative solutions to the underlying problems of sleep anxiety, a by-product of the pandemic. She explains, "The project aims to build a community and inspire conversations around otherwise difficult subjects in a lighter way." In her work, she seeks to represent articles that promote sleep such as chamomile tea and the like. Recycling used tea bags and scrap materials; she creates such items that are touted as therapeutic for sleep disorders.

Ganga Narayanan, the lone student from the Mural Department put up her work titled *Spoliated Memories - I*, using gouache on rice paper. Her practice negotiates the concept of diaspora, and the longingness to return to where one comes from. Born in Kerala and raised in Delhi, elements and rhythmic patterns that she associates with a particular place from her immediate surroundings become mnemonic devices that are used to create her compositions. For instance, she has used patterns from the Agra Fort and Taj Mahal. The *jali* patterns, prominent in some of the tourist attractions in Delhi, bring in memories that she grew up with. As Ganga puts it evocatively, "I see my work as a door through which people can walk through and start conversations about what they think when they hear the word home." The larger purpose of her work is an attempt to highlight the need for conservation.



Chinnarao Degala's Artwork



Oliva Saha's Artwork

Chinnarao Degala's childhood was marked by his keen observation of his surroundings. He grew up in a village where he was exposed to various rituals and ceremonies that were performed on special occasions as well as on normal days. Chinnarao's creative process involves imagining the opposite of what he observes in the world around him. This approach has led him to explore the concept of reverse reality, where the viewer is presented with a world that is upside down and inside out. The inspiration for this work came from his desire to challenge the viewer's perception of reality and to encourage them to question their assumptions about the world. The symbolism and imagery used in his installation, called Reverse Reality are designed to provoke thought and reflection. The inverted objects represent the opposite of what they normally signify, forcing the viewer to consider the implications of this reversal. For example, a tree, which is usually associated with growth and stability, becomes a symbol of instability and uprooting when it is turned upside down. By presenting the viewer with this kind of imagery, Chinnarao hopes to encourage them to think critically about the world.

The entire faculty and all its departments turn into exhibition spaces for two days of the year. Students are assigned their spots a fortnight prior to the date, giving them ample time to plan. As preparations for the display, begun a good two months before the date, the students realise it is a massive task. Several different works in all mediums need to be coordinated and displayed in a way that they complement each other. Learning the important lesson of organising and arranging the art works is part of the game. As Oliva puts it, *"Image making or creating any art is not the end. It is also important to arrange it properly. I think it's a starting point to becoming a professional artist from a fine arts student."*

According to Sneha, an artist can never thrive in seclusion. The works are complete only when the artist and the audience meet and interact. The way the audience engages and moves around the work, which artworks catch their attention, and what gets missed out is quite insightful to know what worked or didn't work. Thus, for her *"the display serves as a testing ground."*

For Ganga, her works being intricate in nature, it was important to ensure each work had its own breathing space and each wall exuded its own essence. After several attempts at curating her assigned space, she realised it was a challenge indeed! Windows were ingeniously converted into a display space by covering it with a canvas and painting over it. A divider was used to separate the studio into two parts where one showed the paintings and terracotta works. The other side was converted into a dark room, which showed a moving image of one of her paintings.

The annual display holds immense significance, almost transformative, for the graduating students. Right from the initial planning stages to the final showcase, they learn about creativity, hard work, and the power of teamwork. A sense of camaraderie and shared purpose brings everyone together. They work tirelessly to make sure that the display is perfect, and in doing so, they become a tight-knit community. Degala not only received encouraging feedback but also managed to sell some of his work. Rutvi Vakharia found herself getting closer to the people around her. The camaraderie and teamwork they shared were truly inspiring. She says, *"I realized that the display was not just about the final product, but also about the journey that we took together to get there."* The day of the display was a moment when each one of them felt a sense of pride and accomplishment as they watched the audience marvel at their creations. It was a beautiful testament to the talent and hard work of everyone involved. Such a moment finds its relevance when pitted against the experiences of those who missed the opportunity.

Nikhil Banodha, a graduate from the department of sculpture, was one of the students from the graduating batch whose display was cancelled due to a controversy over a painting. His work in kinetic sculpture that is a new development in the field could not get an appropriate arena for display. Missing out on the opportunity that the annual display provides to showcase students' work to curators and gallerists was a major setback for Nikhil. Setting out on one own's steam without institutional support still proves to be a herculean task for him. Galleries, according to him, are more open to commercially viable work. Some galleries have a genuine space problem to display his kind of work. His predicament underlies the significance of the annual display in the life of students and their future.

Ayushi Ojha, an ex-student of the faculty, was also one among the many who were denied the joy of the annual display. She found the preparation for the display to be a huge festival, in which the whole college came together to put up a show regardless of the limited resources at the faculty. For her, it was also an icebreaker. It was a time when she got to

know her college mates in a way that she never would have otherwise. Unfortunately, for her, at the end moment, the display couldn't be held. However, she is of the opinion that the display follows an old-school format. With many new formats of display that contest the idea of the white cube, a gallery aesthetic characterised by its square or oblong shape, white walls and a light source usually from the ceiling, the display at the faculty appears *"a little stuck in the past,"* to use her own words.

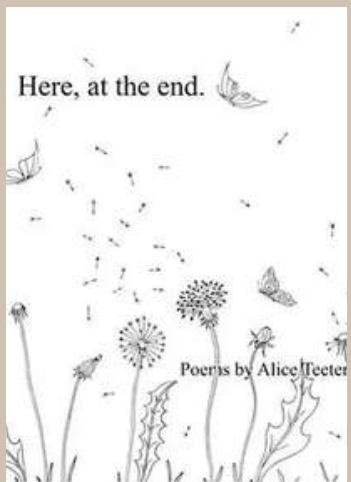
Looking back, most students realized that the display was so much more than just a showcase of artwork. It was an opportunity to learn about the power of collaboration and the importance of hard work and dedication. They also learned the value of cherishing the journey, even when it was chaotic and stressful. Every moment, from the planning stages to the final display, was an opportunity for growth and learning. As Ganga says, *"With paint, dust, and clay all over, the tiredness on the face was written over by the excitement to see the result of their efforts."*

The annual display is a tradition that is steeped in history and meaning, and it is an opportunity for students to build lasting friendships and connections, apart from the more urgent need for recognition. Even if it marks the end of a student's years at the faculty, the display is a launching pad to their careers in the vast field of art that lies beyond the gates of an institution with a glorious past that looks forward to their contribution to the cultural traditions of Vadodara and beyond.

Author's Note: *The author wishes to thank Prof. Indrapramit Roy and all the students who responded to her queries.*

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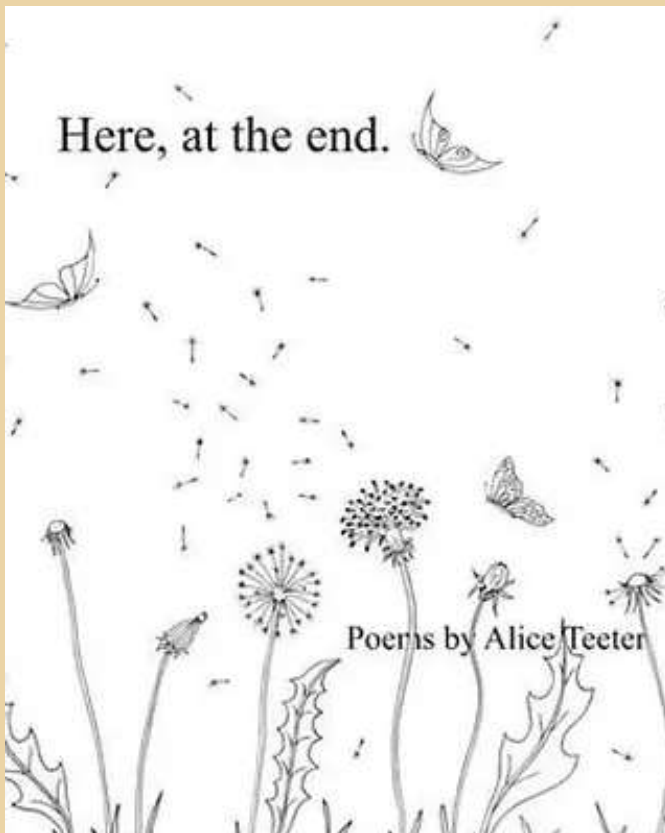


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BookLogix (March 20, 2023)

A review by Donna Rose Mulcahy

I tend to avoid dark subject matters, including thoughts about 'the end', preferring comedies and violence-free dramas over thinking about our ultimate demise. When my thoughts drift to the future of our planet, it is easy to become frozen in fear pondering a potential dystopia. So it was with trepidation that I opened Alice Teeter's *Here, at the end.*, only to discover that all is right with the world, and order has been restored. As a fierce mother who suffers no fools yet loves us tenderly, Alice drives us there herself. The journey is an enjoyable one, despite the destination and the mode of transportation, which happens to be a station wagon we entered by climbing through the only window that would open. Drive we will toward our desolation, with glimpses of beauty that flourish despite our great efforts to destroy.

The poem begins without ease, without ceremony, but with refreshments. We are served flavorless coffee in plastic cups as we are thrust into it, '*swamped and stamped with sizzle*'. From there it is an immediate plunge into the soothing waters of acceptance. Elisabeth Kubler Ross gave us Five Stages of Grief, starting with denial and ending with acceptance. As humans are wont to do, we will inevitably toggle back and forth between the two. Teeter's *Here, at the end*, starts with the inevitable we must accept. The end is here. This brings questions, lots of them. They are not followed by answers, at least not the good kind. Do the questions really matter anyway? Is there a lesson in futility to be found in the asking? Much is considered here, with neither sentiment nor cliché. Our earthly, seemingly important concerns end without answer, and does any of it matter? Who loves us or hates us, what is the proper coffee ground disposal, what should we pack, and should it include a dead man's clothes? We ask if an afternoon nap is appropriate on our last afternoon, then take one anyway. We face a hopeless situation armed with pointless questions. There is cruelty in our denial, as we continue to kill weeds and any beings in our way, even when we are on our way out.

So, who or what is faring better? Creatures who find food in windblown leaf piles for one. They never needed a rake. Fish, trees, flowers, a calm sea as well, described here with beautiful prose; '*...the sounds are silvered edges, softened into saucers to be lapped up, to be spilled...*' The natural order begins to emerge on the reader's dashboard. Beauty remains and grows, despite our best efforts. Slices of hope, even after the mowing and the bulldozing. 'Young pines like

bright green candles' in a 'once-mown field' give us the 'warm smell of juniper' and lead the way. Even humans face the truth in the end, one final communion with nature described thusly: *'you will turn your face into the wind that comes'*.

Yet here we are, confoundingly focusing on what to pack. Stacks and stacks of colorful suitcases. Endless questions about shoes, coats, and hats. Should we bring our best luggage? Pack a few clothes, or everything? Luggage of every color topple over one another and land in their final resting place, the dirt. When the matter is finally settled, all the questions result in grabbing whatever is nearby and placing it in tattered and broken pieces. Like the leaves we blow into piles, our efforts are futile. All this talk of packing, all this effort washed away in an instant by the rising sea. The ocean takes you and your packed things without the bother of asking any questions.

Alice has driven us toward the natural order of things. We have driven away from the sweet birdsong toward our fate and enjoyed the lull before the smackdown. Do bring your party hat, for what is left to do but celebrate? Welcome to the end! Perhaps that could be the final stage of the grieving process. Now it is time for the planet to celebrate. The humans are dead and turning to sand. In the end, our consciousness departs this earthly plane in one stanza. Now hear the wind, the final celebratory whistles. No more human noises with which to compete. While the shoes, now clean, wait for the arrival of new feet. We see beautiful beginnings of plant life. The flowers continue to bloom, all the more lovely because we are done.

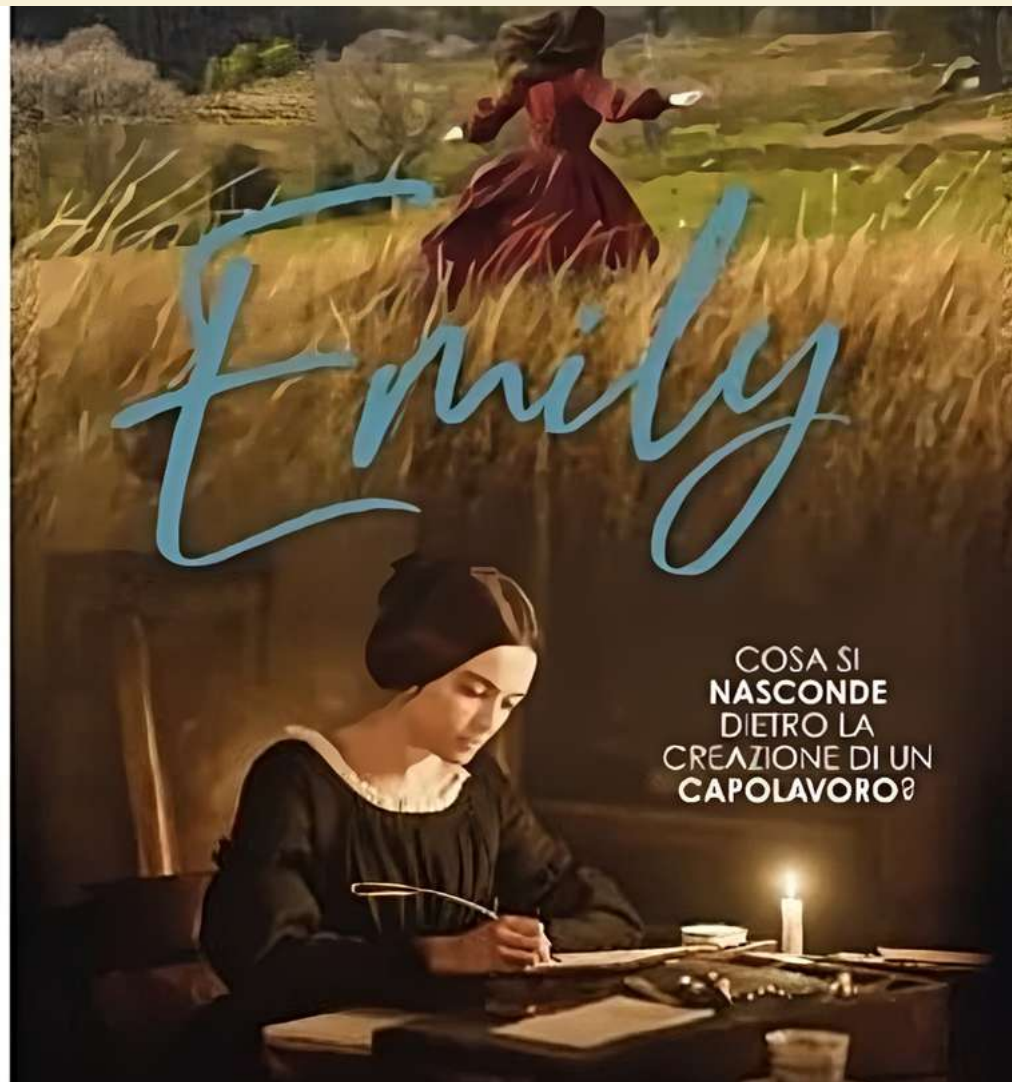
With its completely natural blend of whimsy and foreboding, the journey of *Here*, at the end is replete with irresistible line drawings. May I recommend you read it with a set of colored pencils, making the book your own? We are driving toward our own destruction, but please enjoy the journey!

About the Author

Alice Teeter

A poet, an advocate of art and literature, and a former Lecturer in Poetry, at Emory University in Atlanta, Georgia, Alice has authored several poetry collections including 20 CLASS A, When It Happens To You..., Elephant Girls, Mountain Mother Poems and String Theory which won the Georgia Poetry Society's 2008 Charles B. Dickson Chapbook Contest.





Frances O Connor's beautifully crafted take on Romanticism: Emily

By Dr. Ramandeep Mahal

Sensual and roughly historical film about the author of *Wuthering Heights*, Emily Bronte, by actor turned writer-director Frances O'Connor, evokes the Victorian age with a contemporary sensibility. Francis O'Connor's performances in the films *Mansfield Park*, *Bedazzled*, *A.I. Artificial Intelligence*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, and *Timeline* are what made her most well-known. It's really hard to believe that her outcome as a director was flawless. If you are an avid reader of classics, you must be aware of Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*. Just for your knowledge Emily Bronte was a well-known English poet and novelist best remembered for her solo book, *Wuthering Heights*, which is today regarded as a classic of English literature. Along with her sisters Charlotte and Anne, she also produced a volume of poetry titled *Poems by Currer, Ellis, and Acton Bell*, in which her own poems were hailed as works of artistic brilliance.

Emily focuses Emily Bronte's dynamism, exhilarating and uplifting journey to womanhood, also throwing light on Emily as a rebel and a misfit. Charlotte, Emily Bronte's older sister, asks Emily, who is sick and on the verge of death, about her motivation to create *Wuthering Heights*. At some point in the past, Charlotte, who is almost out of school, makes a visit to her family. While Charlotte was at school, Emily tries to discuss with her the imaginary world she has been building, but Charlotte discourages her from engaging in such childish pursuits.

Emma Mackay who plays Emily, views Bronte's psychological and emotional difficulties as a hindrance or some unlucky calamity on her brief life—the author passed away from tuberculosis at the age of thirty. Mackey's Emily frequently conveys a sour or embarrassed demeanor in response to her surroundings. She frequently sneaks away to quiet places or

just her own mind. She is the family's 'black sheep,' castigated and mistreated by her widowed priest father (Adrian Dunbar). Furthermore, while highlighting the Bronte family's literary prowess and troubles with life and love, the film does not shy away from depicting the terrible reality of their existence. It provides a rare window into the unfettered imagination that helped to mold these exceptional authors (and sisters). One scene I will always remember is the mask-wearing séance scene. It served to deepen the characters' mutual understanding while also being gothic, and creepy.

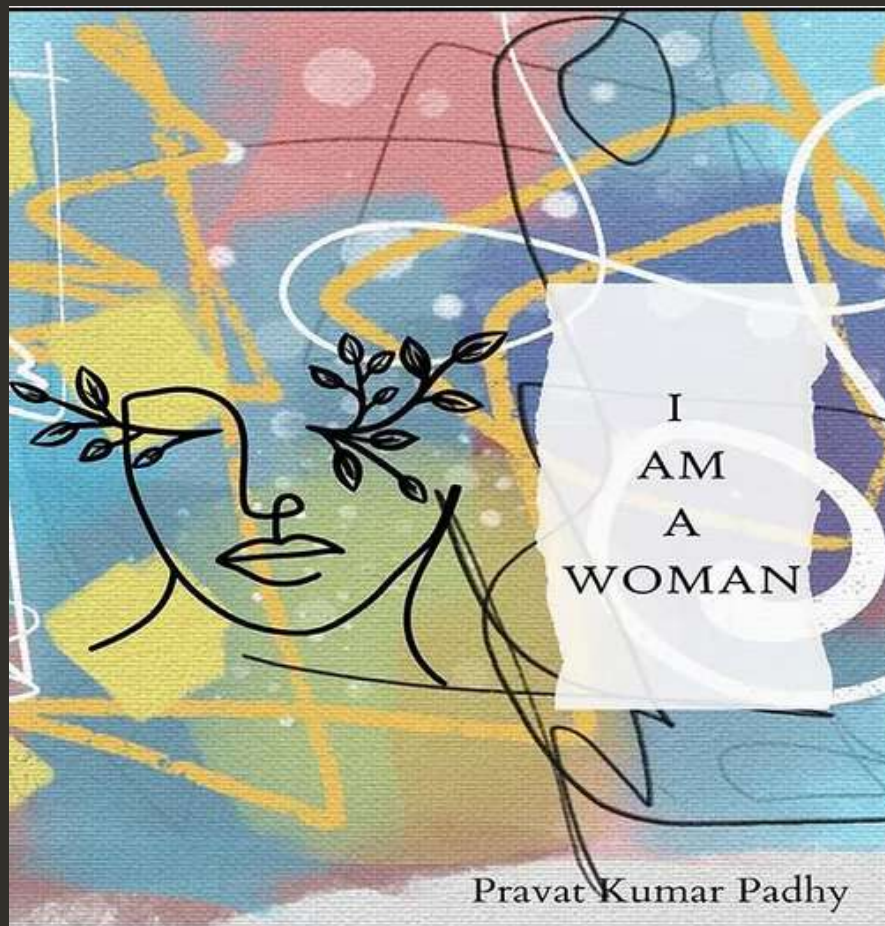
Bronte's problems as a female author in a male-dominated society are also discussed at length, which I found interesting. Oliver Jackson-Cohen plays the role of Reverend William Weightman, a young man divided between his faith and his attraction to the enigmatic and free-spirited Emily. He does an excellent job of making the viewer care about him and at the same time be intrigued about his motivations. We may not be sure about Emily's relationship with William Weightman who briefly resided in the family house or her sluggish use of opium.

Cinematographer Nanu Segal, production designer Steve Summersgill, and Art Director Jono Moles all contribute greatly to the film's outstanding visual language. Detailed descriptions of the moors and the turbulent Bronte sisters' past provide a convincing feeling of immersion in that place. Alexander Dowling plays Charlotte, Amelia Gething plays Anne, Adrian Dunbar plays Patrick Bronte, and Gemma Jones plays Aunt Branwell, with Fionn Whitehead playing the Byron-like Branwell. All of the actors do a fantastic job of bringing these multifaceted and intriguing historical individuals to life, making for an exciting and thought-provoking viewing experience. Any fan of the Romantic period or a student studying the works of Emily Bronte would benefit much from watching *Emily*. What I still believe is lacking in the movie is that there are no flashbacks to her childhood, no gesturing at larger world events to contextualize her place in society.

Watching *Emily* is like reading Emily's writing; it's a vivid portrayal of her thoughts that is just as swoon-worthy and eerie as *Wuthering Heights*. O'Connor intended to reflect the evocative quality of Emily Bronte's iconic work rather than simply making a movie about the author. What I truly loved about the movie was its handheld, subtly shaky camera that gives the impression that it was shot on the Yorkshire moors, where Emily and her characters lived. Don't hold your breath for authenticity, however. It's a touching tribute to a mysterious and intriguing writer. I would rate the movie 8 out of 10 based on the cinematography and the charming sketch of a Victorian lifestyle. Go for this one if you want a psychological insight into the psyche of a great writer.

TALKING BOOKS

Talking Books



The Magic Pen Press
44 Lattice Avenue,
Ipswich, Suffolk,
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United Kingdom

Neena Singh talks to Dr Pravat Kumar Padhy about his forthcoming book *I am a Woman!*

Talking Books



NS: What inspired you to write a book titled 'I am a Woman' as a 'man' poet?

PKP: Thank you, Neena, for offering me an opportunity to speak about my forthcoming collection of verses, '*I am a Woman*.' I record my sincere gratitude to Dr. Rachna Singh, the Principal Editor, The Wise Owl, for featuring my interview in the special column of '*Talking Books*.'

I chose writing poetry as it symbolizes the power of feminism in its tenderness and musicality. In the column 'Letter to Editor, Indian Express', December 5th 1984, I voiced my support for education to girl children to bestow confidence on them and redress social balance. I underline gender equality and respect for womanhood in many poems written during the eighties and the nineties. I once emphatically put forth: '*...Why crazy/ Snatching her surname/ The born identity/ Her parental tie.*' (Poem: *Married Woman*).

Women symbolize creation, beauty, love, kindness, compassion, and harmony. In our culture and tradition, the woman is revered as shakti or power (*Durga*), knowledge and wisdom (*Saraswati*), fortune and prosperity (*Lakshmi*).

Despite progress in gender equality, we have socio-cultural issues related to women and this needs to be addressed keeping in view of the progressive phase of mankind at large. Rightly, Dalai Lama says, "*I call myself a feminist. Isn't that what you call people who fight for women's rights?*"

I feel if male equally realizes the problem and comes forward with a comprehensive solution, it would look pragmatic and progressive. This led me to write the present collection, '*I am a woman*.'

NS: How did you choose this format of tanka verses as a long-connected poem to tell the story of a woman?

PKP: I like to compose micro poetry or shorter verses along with longer verses. Tanka, the Japanese form of the 5-line short poem, has a profound scope to embody human feelings with poetic essence and lyrical exposition. Hence, I chose to write the long poem in this format. We may recall that all the classic works of Japanese diary literature about love, passion, and lamentation have been written with prose along with waka (tanka) poetry.

NS: How did you approach the subject of womanhood in your 5 lined tanka poetry?

PKP: No doubt being a male writer, apparently it looks difficult to delve into the theme and imageries from the perspective of feminist poetry. I have read many poems by female poets namely Eunice de Souza, Amrita Pritam, Gouri Deshpande, Meena Alexander, Mani Rao, Sunita Jain, Kamala Das, Sarita Jenamani, Rupri Kaur and others. I have seen social imbalance, and the sufferings of women. I feel moved by the grieving situation and the psychological torments a woman has to face because of gender bias. I could see the love and affection her parents bestowed on her and the apparent contrast the moment she enters into the phase of her married life. In the present collection, I have tried to sketch the phases of memorable ecstasy with her parents, sufferings and trauma at a later stage and her courage to fight back with feminine modesty and integrity.

NS: Can you share some of the themes or motifs that are explored in your latest book?

PKP: The collection, '*I am a Woman*' is a sort of long poem written in the form of fictional verse with candour poetic styles

and imageries. It portrays the life sketch of a woman named Chandni. She demonstrates her resilience to face socio-psychological challenges. Chandni belongs to a modest family with limited financial support. She recalls the early life of joy *'...mummy holds her/ fondly closing the eyes/ and feels beats of rhythm together.'* But the happiness lasts for a brief period and after her marriage, she wonders: *'she offers /aroma to all/ how strange/ the thorns that protect/ at last, pierce her to bleed.'* The agony she faces as *'he scratches her skin/ like wiping over the doormat / as if a mopping cloth/ he cleanses his dust/ ungracefully pouring the foam of his sin.'* She runs from pillar to post for justice, but to no avail. In spite of the hurdles, she is optimistic: *'like an adrift tree/ she is hurt and drained / trusts the woman of justice / holding the beam balance /on the cover page of the Social science.'*

NS: What challenges did you face in capturing the essence of a woman through your poems?

PKP: It has been a constant striking point to keep the critical balance of expression from the point of view of a grief-stricken woman. The structural fabric of language, rhythm and poetic landscape have been dealt with sensibility and succinctness. As the collection is a sensitive issue immersed in agony and seclusion on the part of the woman, I have to tread carefully with poetic idioms, text, and texture without being didactic or rhetorical. Moreover, I tried my best to portray feminist poetry in its true spirit and translate it with veracity and sincerity.

Diana Webb pens in her blurb: *"...With elements of the elegiac, lyrical and cathartic, it is a paean to the feminine principle, as embodied in the tale of one member of womankind and promises rich rewards for anyone with a poetic soul."*

NS: Did you rely on personal experiences or research to understand the female perspective in your poetry or any particular woman, real or fictional, who served as a muse or influence for your poetry?

PKP: I have been keenly observing the plight of some families and the emotional stories of women. That is what stirred me to show the prevalent domestic violence and patriarchal culture through poetry. Chandni is a fictional character.

NS: How do you think your perspective as a man influenced the way you portrayed women in your book?

PKP: Well, I am conscious of my 'male' self. At the same time, I try and journey into the female psyche so that I am able to articulate a woman's perspective with conviction. I perceive female psychology and immerse myself in the character, in order to highlight them through words and portray reality. Honestly, many such stories remain untold and buried. My poetry is a eulogy to womanhood.

NS: What themes or issues related to womanhood did you explore in your book?

PKP: The attitude of a male-dominated society towards women is one of the striking aspects enumerated in my book. The unbearable pain, anguish, social prejudices and tension that a woman undergoes have been reflected. Post-marriage issues and related family problems are placed before the readers.

Jenny Ward Angyal comments, *"and this book traces the life of one representative woman from childhood, when she learns 'the alphabet of body,' through harsh and despairing adulthood, when 'waves wash away / her lengthy inner script,' to the resurgence of hope as she seeks to 'revise the pristine manuscript for her daughter.' That manuscript is a celebration of woman and a poetic hymn to the feminine principle."*

NS: What message or emotion do you hope readers will take away from 'I am a Woman'?

PKP: I hope the readers will realize the journey of life of a woman is different from man, her counterpart, and the dignity of a woman needs to be respected. I stretched and metaphorically intensified the loneliness Chandni had undergone.

NS: How do you see your role as a male poet in contributing to the ongoing conversation about gender and identity?

PKP: The present time desires an equal space for men and women. Men should not shy away from raising concerns about women. Mutual involvement and mutual respect are essential to build a comprehensive family life. Irrespective of caste, creed and gender, if we feel it is 'our' problem and to be solved by 'ourselves' jointly, then there won't be any dichotomy or bewilderment in family life. As 'Male Ally', jointly we can make a happy and cohesive family life.

NS: What do you believe is the importance of men exploring and expressing the female experience through art?

PKP: Man and woman are two sides of the same coin with distinct symbols on both sides. But the aesthetic value of the coin is unique and the same. Art is a mirror. It is the way one sees, thus reflecting the contours of his thoughts. I recall one of my poems written in the eighties:

'Unveil the art/It is/Alive/It lives/Not in itself/But in your/Angle of/Mind and eyes.'

It is like we have two garden paths. But the breeze carries the aroma in all possible directions. Man needs to inhale to realize this philosophical aspect of life.

NS: Can you share any memorable moments or experiences that occurred during the creation of 'I am a Woman'?

PKP: In fact, while writing the collection over a long time, I experienced the feeling of being an actress absorbed in the cinematic scope of the script. That is an interesting experience. I wish her a happy life when she gives birth to a baby girl. Being elated, I encourage her to cherish: *'life is a poem and music its journey.'*

I became very conscious while writing the concluding stanza of the collection. The last line *'I am a Woman' to prove again'* of the final stanza engulfed me in the pain and agony of my protagonist.

Suparna Ghosh, a prolific writer and visual artist from Canada pens in her Foreword, *"Perhaps, I thought, by intertwining the layers of Devi, the Goddess of my vision, with his view of Chandni, the moonbeam, I would be according a befitting offering to I am a Woman."*

NS: How do you balance the line between personal expression and respectful representation when writing about gender or identity that differs from your own?

PKP: One's perceptions and way of interpretation emanate from the cognitive sphere. I try to remain unbiased and optimistic in my approach to exploring the path leading to the destination. No doubt, as a male author, a critical balance and congenial space are essential. I am particular about the usage of words and try to imbibe as Robert Frost said, *"Poetry is when our emotion has found its thought and the thought has found words."*

I think in art and literature, a sense of integrity and honesty is essential.

NS: In what ways do you believe poetry can contribute to discussions around gender and identity?

PKP: I feel art has immense depth to fathom the aspirations of mankind. Poetry can create a flagship of mutual respect and brotherhood through its rhythm and resonance.

As an allusive to Wordsworth's phrase: *"the child is father of the man"*, I coined the line *"the child is mother of the woman"* in my haibun titled *'Leading the Way'*. Rebecca Drouilhet, the haiku moderator on Inkstone Poetry Forum,

commented: *"Beautifully and sensitively penned. The charm of the place and the relationship grounded me in the wholeness of the feminine."*

NS: Can you share any particular poem from your book that you feel encapsulate the overall message or essence of 'I am a Woman'?

PKP: I feel Chandni has to march ahead with the flow of time with a sense of optimism. She aspires to see her daughter enjoy the dawn of a new life. But we have the social responsibility to erase her apprehension of *'I am a Woman' to prove again.* The following stanzas perhaps encapsulate the theme of the book.

*wiping tears
gently from her face
with a needle of hope
she threads the pain in between
reading the life, like an anthology of poem*

*she desires to revise
the pristine manuscript
for her daughter
as she reckons with a crescent smile
'I am a Woman' to prove again*

NS: Has writing 'I am a Woman' influenced your own understanding or perception of femininity and women's experiences in any way?

PKP: I have read feminist poetry written by Emily Dickinson, Maya Angelou, Sylvia Plath and Audre Lorde including poets from India, especially Kamal Das. I chose the title of the book using the first-person pronoun 'I' to emphasize integrity and conviction. During writing, I felt the anxieties and sufferings of a woman and her psychological condition.

This reinforces the responsibility of the male counterparts for fostering a happy family and prosperous society at large. In life, if we embrace *"Odd is the beginning of even/Imperfection is the part of perfection / And vacuum is the venue of accumulation"* (excerpt from my earlier poem 'If I were an Ugly Girl') then our world would be a land of the joy of living.

NS: Would you like to share with our readers the writing, editing & publishing process?

PKP: I started writing this collection in mid-2019. I continuously revised the manuscript and focused on the woman-centric emotional cadence. Some of the stanzas have been published in leading journals namely Borderless International, Lyrical Passion Poetry, MoonInk Tanka Poetry Anthology, Presence, Lothlorien Poetry Journal, In Sun, Snow & Rain Tanka Anthology (British Haiku Society) and others.

I added the beginning part of the collection later to highlight the love and affection a girl child receives from her parents. This enhanced the contrast images. I record with great indebtedness to my poet friend Diana Webb who introduced me to John Gonzalez, the poet and publisher of The Magic Pen Press, London. I am grateful to John, Frank Williams and Tony Marcoff for their immense interest and inspiration in publishing the book. Shloka's elegant cover page art made an aesthetic assimilation to the content of the collection.

NS: What advice would you give to aspiring poets who aim to explore and express gender-related themes in their own writing?

PKP: Gender is just a word. *"...wisely nature/ never coins in evolution/ defining a tree: male or female."* Poetry can be an

effective vehicle for social change. It becomes poetically critical to translate the 'voice behind silence' of the emotionally distraught women. Aspiring poets can usher in a beautiful society if we are optimistic and embrace the sense of oneness and spirit of love.

About Dr Pravat Kumar Padhy



Pravat Kumar Padhy holds a Master of Science and a Ph.D from Indian Institute of Technology, ISM Dhanbad. He is a mainstream poet and a writer of Japanese short forms of poetry. His poem 'How Beautiful' is included in the undergraduate curriculum at the university level. Pravat's haiku won the Kloštar Ivanić International Haiku Award, Vancouver Cherry Blossom Festival Invitational Award, IAFOR Vladimir Devidé Haiku Award, 'Radmila Bogojevic' Haiku Award, Setouchi Matsuyama Photo Haiku Award and others. His haiku are published in many international journals and anthologies including in Red Moon Anthology. His haiku are featured at 'Haiku Wall', Historic Liberty Theatre Gallery in Bend, Oregon and at Mann Library, Cornell University, USA. His tanka is figured in 'Kudo Resource Guide', University of California, Berkeley. His tanka has been rendered to music in the Musical Drama Performance, 'Coming Home', The International Opera Through Art Songs, Toronto, Canada. His Taiga is featured in the 20th Anniversary Taiga Showcase of the Tanka Society of America. His Video Haiga are archived in 'HaikuLife: 2022', The Haiku Foundation, USA. Pravat is nominated as the panel judge of 'The Haiku Foundation Touchstone Awards', USA and is presently on the editorial board of the journal, 'Under the Basho'. Presently resides in Bhubaneswar, India with his wife, Namita. His publications can be read at <http://pkpadhy.blogspot.com>

About Neena Singh



A Touchstone nominee in the Shortlist for Individual Poems in 2021, Neena is a banker turned poet. Her haikai poetry is regularly published in international journals and magazines. She has published two books of poetry—'Whispers of the Soul: the journey within' and 'One Breath Poetry'. She runs a non-profit for quality interventions in the education and health of underprivileged children in Chandigarh. Neena loves to play 'fetch ball' with her pet Rumi, and sit in the garden conversing with squirrels and pigeons.

VISUAL ARTS



Painting

Limited Edition Replay:
Taban Peter Pal

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Superbloom by Monica Reddy

Photographs taken in
California

[Read More](#)

Limited Edition Replay
Kerry Ann Lyons





Artist Speak

My major artistic influences are the problems, emotions and behaviours of people in the environment around me. I like to talk about the problems the people in my community and I face and the different beliefs of those people. Some of my works explain my childhood experiences like 'Water boy 1 and 2'. The pieces remind me of the times I used to play freely with water with my friends.

An extract from an interview with Taban Peter Pal, featured in the (Pine Edition (October 2022) of The Wise Owl.

Superbloom by Monica Reddy

Superbloom of California is the stuff of legends and dreams. After one of the wettest winters on record, California hillsides exploded with colour this summer. Swathes of yellow and streaks of orange, blue and purple painted the landscape in brilliant hues. Monica Reddy, a software engineer in the Bay Area brings us these beautiful pictures of the hillsides blooming golden with wild mustard, poppies and sunflowers.



The Stuff of Dreams



A Golden Swathe



Crescents of Gold



Wildflowers



Goldscape

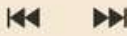


Amber Hues

PODCASTS



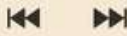
Lucretia Voigt
Lucretia Voigt
There are Days I think you are a bird



00:00 / 01:25



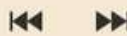
Kathylynne Somerville
Kathylynne Somerville
Positions



00:00 / 01:13



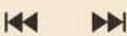
Kavita Ratna
Kavita Ratna
The satin blue



00:00 / 01:11



Sekhar Banerjee
Sekhar Banerjee
Music Box



00:00 / 01:44



NEW SEGMENT

To make The Wise Owl more dynamic, we have introduced The Daily Verse & The Weekly Yarns, segments where we will upload poetry all days of the week & stories/flash fiction/anecdotes & musings on a weekly basis. Just send in your submissions to editor@thewiseowl.art



THE DAILY VERSE

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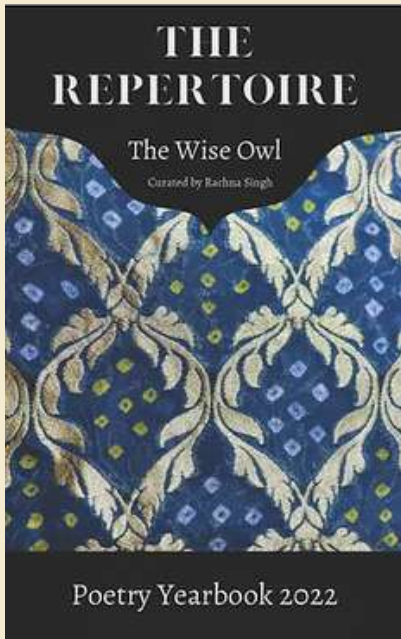


THE WEEKLY YARNS

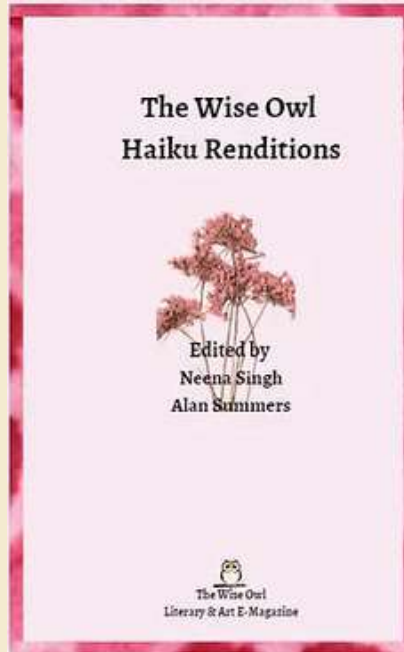
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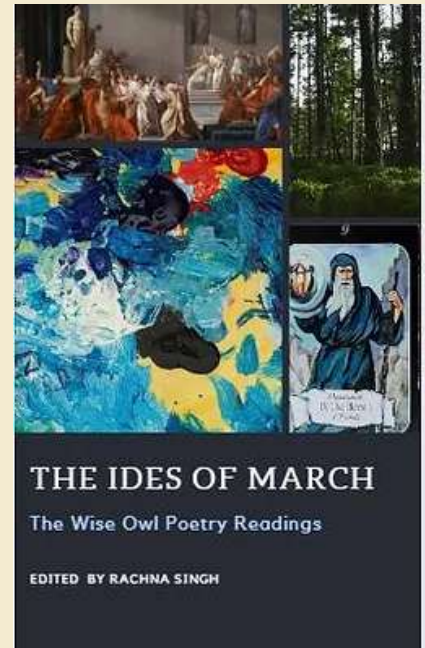
BOOKS



Print Version (January 2023)



E-book (January 2023)



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BIOGRAPHIES

Peter A. Witt is a Texas poet, avid birder/photographer, and researcher/writer of family history. He started writing poetry after 42 years as a university professor as a way of recapturing my storytelling and creative writing abilities, skills lost in the stultifying world of academic writing. His work has appeared in several online poetry publications including Fleas on the Dog, Open Skies Quarterly, and Active Muse.

Ann Privateer is a poet, artist, and photographer. She grew up in the Midwest and now resides in Northern California. Some of her recent work has appeared in Third Wednesday and Entering to name a few.

Gale Acuff is from the Department of English, Arab American University, Palestine. His poems have been published in dozens of countries and in journals such as Ascent, Reed, Journal of Black Mountain College Studies, The Font, Chiron Review, Poem, Adirondack Review, Florida Review, Slant, Arkansas Review, Maryland Literary Review, North Dakota Quarterly, South Dakota Review, among others. He has also authored three books of poetry. Gale has taught tertiary English courses in the US, PR China, and Palestine.

Sekhar Banerjee is a Pushcart Award and Best of the Net nominated poet. The Fern-gatherers' Association (Red River, 2021) is his latest collection of poems. He has been published in Stand Magazine, Indian Literature, The Bitter Oleander, Ink Sweat and Tears, The Lake, Better Than Starbucks, Muse India, The Bangalore Review, Kitaab, Thimble Literary Magazine, Madras Courier, Outlook, The Wire and elsewhere. He has a monograph of an Indo-Nepal border tribe to his credit. He lives in Kolkata, India.

Deby Cedars was diagnosed with a mental illness. She uses creative writing of both short stories and poetry as one of her many forms of therapy. She now lives a stable happy life with her husband in Florida, where she enjoys the many beaches and amusement parks. Her work has been published in Writing in a Woman's Voice, poetryformentalillness.com, as well as Highland Park Poetry. You may have seen her poems & short stories in various editions of The Wise Owl.

Kavita Ratna is a children's rights activist, poet and a theatre enthusiast. 'Sea Glass' is her anthology of poems published by Red River. Her poems have appeared in The Kali Project: Invoking the Goddess within, A little book of serendipity, Triveni Hakai India, Haiku in Action, the Scarlet Dragonfly, the Cold Moon Journal, Five Fleas Itchy poetry, Stardust Haiku and Parcham.

John Grey is an Australian poet, US resident, recently published in Stand, Washington Square Review and Floyd County Moonshine. Latest books, *Covert*, *Memory Outside The Head* and *Guest Of Myself* are available through Amazon. Work upcoming in the McNeese Review, Santa Fe Literary Review and Open Ceilings.

Kathlynn Somerville was raised in Australia's down under. From an ankle-biter's age she scribbled, danced, acted to family, friends, well - to anyone really. Keen on Theatre as a teen, she penned plays which were produced in fair dinkum theatres. Crushing on films, she flew to film school, learned screenwriting, wrote heaps of scripts, landed in L.A., with mates, and optioned a couple. When she became besotted by the worlds literary luminaries created, her mind went walk-about wondering, and she saw a sign that said: write. With massive ambition, she got cracking. Trekking ahead with an open swag, sunblock on, and a hat for all climates, she is ready for whatever goes off, or whatever doesn't get going.

Ben Nardolilli is currently an MFA candidate at Long Island University. His work has appeared in Perigee Magazine, Red Fez, Danse Macabre, The 22 Magazine, Quail Bell Magazine, Elimae, The Northampton Review, Slab, and The Minetta Review. He blogs at mirrorsponge.blogspot.com and is trying to publish his novels.

Lucretia Voigt was born and bred in the Appalachian mountains of Eastern Kentucky. She received her MFA in Creative Writing from Queens University of Charlotte. Her poetry has appeared or is forthcoming in Women Speak: Women of

Appalachia Project anthology, Sheila-Na-Gig, Thimble Literary Magazine, and Still: The Journal.

George Freek is a poet/playwright living in Illinois. His poems appear in numerous Poetry Journals and Reviews. His poem "Written At Blue Lake" was recently nominated for a Pushcart Prize. His plays are published by Playscripts; Blue Moon Plays and Off The Wall Plays. George Freek's poem 'Enigmatic Variations' is currently nominated for Best of the Net. His poem "Night Thoughts" is also nominated for a Pushcart Prize. His collection is (still) published by Red Wolf Editions.

Jyothsna's poems have previously appeared in The Hopper, Quail Bell, Shotglass and others. Her first poetry collection Ceramic Evening was out in 2016. Currently she is teaching English Literature at ARSD College (University of Delhi), India. she blogs at phanija.wordpress.com

Richard Lutman has a MFA in writing from Vermont College and is listed in the Directory of Poets and Writers. He has taught writing courses and had over thirty of his stories published. His novella "Iron Butterfly" was shortlisted in the 2011 Santa Fe Writers Competition. His first novel was published in 2016. A short story collection was a finalist in the 2020 American Book Fest: Best Books.

Tom Ball is currently senior editor at FLEAS ON THE DOG <https://fleasonthedog.com>. His work has appeared in several journals and magazines including 'Down in the Dirt' magazine, 'Conceit' Magazine, Literary Yard, Newark Library Literary Journal, Fresh Words Magazine, Local Train Magazine, Gargoyle magazine, PBW magazine among others. He has also self-published two novels with American Book Publishing, and Xlibris. Tom has also co-authored, 'Of Heaven and Hell,' a graphic novel with Zen Wang.

Mehreen Ahmed is an award-winning Australian novelist born in Bangladesh. Her historical fiction, The Pacifist is an audible bestseller. Included in The Best Asian Speculative Fiction Anthology, her works have also been acclaimed by Midwest Book Review, and DD Magazine. and nominated for Pushcart, botN and James Tait. Her recent publications are with Litro, Otoliths, and Alien Buddha.

Richa Joshi Pant is a teacher in Welham's Girls' School, Dehradun (India)

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Donna Rose Mulcahy is a poet, multimedia artist, and burlesque performer. Her story was recently featured in VoyageATL, and her poems have appeared in The Reach of Song, a publication of Georgia Poetry Society. You can follow her journeys on IG @ blissfulbonfires and delilah_delights.

Dr. Ramandeep Mahal is currently working as an Assistant Professor of English at Guru Nanak Khalsa College Yamunanagar. She received her Doctorate degree from Maharishi Markandeshwar Mullana Ambala in 2018. Her research interests include Anglo-American Literature, Indian Writing in English, African Literature. She is the author of more than twenty research papers.

Monica Reddy, a software engineer working in California, is also an avid photographer, Her photographs have a lyrical beauty and passionate abandon that enchants and mesmerises.



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