

## ALMOST ISLAND

### Contributors: Monsoon 2013

**Kazim Ali** is a poet, fiction writer, essayist and translator. His books include four volumes of poetry, *The Far Mosque*, *The Fortieth Day*, the mixed genre *Bright Felon: Autobiography and Cities* and *Sky Ward*. He has published two novels *Quinn's Passage* and *The Disappearance of Seth*, two collections of essays, *Orange Alert: Essays on Poetry, Art and the Architecture of Silence* and *Fasting for Ramadan: Notes from a Spiritual Practice* as well as translations of poetry by Sohrab Sepehri and a novel by Marguerite Duras. Recently he edited the essay collection *Jean Valentine: This-World Company*. In addition to being associate professor of Creative Writing and Comparative Literature at Oberlin College and founding editor of Nightboat Books he is a certified Jivamukti Yoga instructor.

**Bhuvneshwar** was born in 1910 in Shahjahanpur, Uttar Pradesh, and died, in abject poverty and mostly forgotten, in 1958 on a railway platform in Lucknow. A protégé of Premchand's, who published many of his stories and plays in the journal *Hans*, Bhuvneshwar also wrote criticism and poetry (in both Hindi and English). He published only one book in his lifetime - a collection of one-act plays, *Caravan*. Highly regarded among Hindi writers but not well known otherwise, he is credited with bringing modernism and experimentation to Hindi literature. His short stories are now regarded as precursors to the Nai Kahani movement, and his most famous work, the play *Taambe ke Keede*, predating Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* by some months, is regarded by many as the "world's first absurdist play". His collected works, *Bhuvneshwar Samagra*, edited by Doodhnath Singh, were published on his hundredth birth anniversary, finally bringing this important writer back into print.

**Mark S. Burrows** is currently professor of theology and literature at the University of Applied Sciences, Bochum (Germany). He previously taught, for twenty-five years, history and aesthetics in several graduate theological schools in the US. He has lectured widely in the United States, Australia, Asia, and Europe. He currently serves as Poetry Editor of the journal *Spiritus: A Journal of Christian Spirituality*, and has published his own poems and translation, most recently, in *Poetry*, *91st Meridian*, *Presence*, and *Eremos*. He recently published a new translation of Rainer Maria Rilke's poems, *Prayers of a Young*

*Poet* (Paraclete Press, 2013), and the poems that appear here are to be published in their entirety as *99 Psalms* by the Iranian-German poet SAID (Paraclete Press, forthcoming in September, 2013). He is currently a writer-in-residence at the Santa Fe Art Institute, where he is the recipient of the Witter Bynner Fellowship for Translation.

American poet **Peter Cole's** most recent volume of poems is *Things on Which I've Stumbled*; a new collection, *The Invention of Influence*, is forthcoming (both from New Directions). His translations include *The Poetry of Kabbalah: Mystical Verse from the Jewish Tradition* (Yale). Cole, who divides his time between Jerusalem and New Haven, was named a MacArthur Fellow in 2007.

**Susan Gevirtz's** books of poetry include *AERODROME ORION & Starry Messenger*, Kelsey St., 2010; *BROADCAST*, Trafficker, 2009; *Thrall*, Post Apollo, 2007; *Hourglass Transcripts*, Burning Deck, 2001. Her critical books are *Narrative's Journey: The Fiction and Film Writing of Dorothy Richardson*, Peter Lang, 1996; and *Coming Events (Collected Writings)*, from Nightboat Press, 2013. She teaches at California College of the Arts. Gevirtz has co-organized the annual translation and conversation meeting of The Paros Symposium with Greek poet Siarita Kouka, and guest organizers Eleni Stecopoulos, Liana Sakelliou and Socrates Kabouropoulos for eight years.

**László Krasznahorkai** was born in 1954, in the town of Gyula in the east of Hungary, close to the Romanian border. Having studied law first then literature in Budapest, he went on to publish a series of novels and other writings. His works include *Satantango*, *The Melancholy of Resistance*, *War and War*, *Animalinside*, and *Seiobo there Below*. His books have been translated into several languages and have received international prizes. The first two of his novels have been made into films by Hungarian filmmaker Béla Tarr and they have co-operated on a number of films.

**Naiyer Masud** is a scholar of Urdu and Persian, a translator (notably of Kafka), and a short story writer. Born in 1936 in Lucknow, Masud started publishing stories only in the 1970s. He retired from Lucknow University as Professor of Persian and lives in the house his father built, appropriately named 'Adabistan' (Abode of Literature). He has been translated into English, French, Spanish and Finnish, and was the recipient of the Saraswati Samman in 2007.

**Muhammad Umar Memon** is Professor Emeritus of Urdu Literature and Islamic Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He is a critic, short story writer, translator and editor of *The Annual of Urdu Studies*. He has translated half a dozen anthologies of Urdu fictional writing, the latest being *Do You Suppose It's the East Wind?*

**Subimal Misra** is a Bengali writer and lives in Kolkata. A retired teacher, he taught for many years in a school in Sonagachi, Kolkata's infamous red-light district. He has written exclusively for little magazines since 1967. Departing from conventional narrative form, as a self-professed disciple of filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard, Misra sought to introduce film language into Bengali literature. His stories and novels are often referred to as 'anti-stories' and 'anti-novels'. He is known to write 'with venom instead of ink', for his scathing social critique and the 'planned violence' on the reader. Misra is considered the only anti-establishment writer in Bengali literature, and the father of the experimental novel in Bengali. About thirty volumes of his stories, novels and essays have been published.

**Ottolie Mulzet** translates from Hungarian and Mongolian. Her translation of Szilárd Borbély's *Berlin-Hamlet* has been excerpted in *The American Reader*, and was published by FRA in 2008. Other translations include *Lazarus* by Gábor Schein (Triton, 2010). Translations from the work of László Krasznahorkai include *Animalinside* (Sylph Editions/American University in Paris, and New Directions, 2010; 2nd edition, Sylph Editions/AUP, 2012), *Seiobo there Below* (New Directions, 2013), and *Destruction and Sorrow beneath the Heavens* (forthcoming, Seagull Books). She is also working on an anthology of Mongolian folk-tales and completing a dissertation on the linguistic analysis of Mongolian riddles and proverbs.

**Javaid Qazi** holds a Ph.D. in Renaissance Drama and has been writing fiction for over four decades. His collection, *Unlikely Stories*, was published by Oxford University Press in 1998. His stories have appeared in *Massachusetts Review*, *Chelsea*, *Toronto South Asian Review*, *Kansas Quarterly* and *Sequoia*. He has also translated and published the stories of well-known Urdu authors such as Intizar Husain, Naiyer Masud and Ahmad Hamesh. He was born near Lahore in 1947. Over the last forty years, he has taught English literature in various universities in the U.S., at Manas University in Bishkek, Kyrgyz Republic, and at Girne American University in the Turkish Republic of North Cyprus. He has also worked as a

technical writer in the computer industry. He is also a painter. He lives in San Jose, California with his wife.

**V. Ramaswamy** is a Kolkata-based business executive, grassroots organizer, social planner, teacher and writer. He is working on a multi-volume project of translating the short fiction of the Bengali writer, Subimal Misra. *The Golden Gandhi Statue from America: Early Stories*, by Subimal Misra, was published in 2010. He was a recipient of the Sangam House writers' residency in 2011, and the Sarai Fellowship for urban non-fiction writing and the Ledig House writers' residency in 2013.

**SAID**, a native of Iran, has lived in Germany since 1965. He has published eight volumes of poetry, several collections of essays, children's books, and radio-plays; several of his books have appeared in English including *Landscapes of a Distant Mother* (University of Chicago Press, 2004). Widely acknowledged as one of the leading poets writing in Germany, he is the recipient of numerous distinguished awards, including most recently the Hermann Kesten Medal of PEN-Germany, the Adelbert von Chamisso Prize, the Goethe Medal, and the Literature Prize of the Society of Free German Authors. This volume first appeared as *Psalmen*, published by C. H. Beck Publishers (Munich, 2001).

**Rahul Soni** is a writer, editor and translator. He is Editorial Head at Writer's Side, a literary agency, Editor-at-Large (India) with *Asymptote*, an international journal of literature in translation, and Season Coordinator at the Sangam House international writers' residency program. He founded and, from 2008 to 2012, edited *Pratilipi*, a literary journal, and Pratilipi Books, an independent publishing imprint. His work has appeared in a number of journals in India and abroad. He has edited the anthology of Hindi Poetry in English translation, *Home From A Distance* (Pratilipi Books, 2011), and translated Shrikant Verma's collection of poetry, *Magadh* (Almost Island, 2013) and Geetanjali Shree's novel *The Roof Beneath Their Feet* (HarperCollins, 2013). He was a Charles Wallace Visiting Fellow in Literary Translation at the University of East Anglia in 2010, and received the Sangam House Fellowship in 2012.