

ALMOST ISLAND

Contributors: Winter 2020

Arvind Krishna Mehrotra's *The Book of Indian Essays: Two Hundred Years of English Prose* is forthcoming from Black Kite-Hachette later this year. Among his recent books are a translation (with Sara Rai) of Vinod Kumar Shukla's stories *Blue Is Like Blue* (HarperCollins); *Selected Poems and Translations* (NYRB), shortlisted for the Derek Walcott Prize in poetry; and a volume of essays, *Translating the Past and Other Literary Histories* (Permanent Black). He lives in Dehra Dun.

D. Venkat Rao teaches at the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad. In addition to books in English and Telugu he has published several articles in national and international journals. His recent work is *Critical Humanities from India: Contexts, Issues, Futures* (Routledge, 2018), and his other publications include *Cultures of Memory in South Asia* (Springer, 2014), *In Citations: Readings in Area Studies of Culture* (1999), a translation of Ashis Nandy's *The Intimate Enemy* into Telugu (2005). Earlier he translated into English a Telugu intellectual autobiography called *The Last Brahmin* (2007, 2012, 2017). He has a full-length work on literary-cultural criticism in Telugu entitled, *Saamskritika Chaanakyaalu*. His areas of interest include literary and cultural studies, image studies, epic traditions, visual cultures, comparative thought, translation, and mnemocultures. He has designed several courses interfacing areas of culture, technology and literary and cultural studies. He is the editor of the Routledge Series on Critical Humanities Across Cultures (forthcoming).

Haider Shahbaz is doing a PhD in Comparative Literature at UCLA. He is the translator of Mirza Athar Baig's Hassan's *State of Affairs* (HarperCollins India, 2019). He was the 2016-17 Charles Pick Fellow at the University of East Anglia. He lives in Lahore.

Irwin Allan Sealy is the author of *Zelaldinus*, a collection of poems from Almost island, and most recently *Asoca: a sutra*. Penguin published the 30th anniversary edition of his novel *The Trotter-nama* last year.

Jeffrey Yang is the author of *Hey, Marfa; Vanishing-Line*; and *An Aquarium*. The poems in this issue from "Langkasuka" will be published in his forthcoming book *Line and Light*.

Karthika Nair is the author of several books, including the invented fable *The Honey Hunter*, illustrated by Joëlle Jolivet, and the principal scriptwriter of several dance productions, including the multiple-award-winning *DESH* (2011), choreographer Akram Khan's dance solo. *Until the Lions: Echoes from the Mahabharata*, her reimagining of the Mahabharata in multiple voices, won the 2015 Tata Literature Live! Award for fiction, was shortlisted for the 2016 Atta Galatta Prize for Fiction and highly commended in the 2016 Forward Prizes. Akram Khan adapted one chapter of the book into a dance show, also called *Until the Lions*, winner of the 2016 Tanz Award for Outstanding Production. Another adaptation of the book, this time for opera, has been commissioned by Opéra national du Rhin in France. The dance shows she has scripted and co-scripted have been staged at venues across the world, such as the Palais des Papes (Avignon), Esplanade (Singapore), Sadler's Wells (London), Théâtre de la Ville and La Villette (Paris) and L.G. Arts Center (Seoul). Nair's poetry has been widely published in anthologies and journals including *Granta*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Poetry Magazine*, *Poetry International*, *Indian Literature*, *The Wolf*, *The Bloodaxe Book of Contemporary Indian Poets* and the *Forward Book of Poetry 2017*. She is a 2012 Sangam House Fellow, a 2013 Toji Foundation Fellow and was awarded a Villa Marguerite Yourcenar Fellowship in 2015. Her latest book is *Over and Under Ground in Mumbai & Paris* (2018), a travelogue in verse, written with Mumbai-based poet Sampurna Chattarji, and illustrated by Joëlle Jolivet and Roshni Vyam. Also a dance enabler, Nair's closest associations have been with Sidi Larbi Cherkaoui and Damien Jalet as executive producer of works like *Babel(words)*, *Puz/zle* and Jalet's *Les Médusées*, a site-responsive series of performative evenings at the Louvre Museum, and as co-founder of Cherkaoui's company Eastman.

Khalida Hussain (1937-2019) was a renowned Urdu fiction writer. She was the author of multiple story collections and a recipient of the Pride of Performance award, one of the highest civilian honours given by the Pakistan government.

Luisa Futoranksy (Buenos Aires, 1939) is a poet, novelist, essayist, journalist and music scholar. She is particularly known as being one of Argentina's most renowned contemporary poets and is the author of some 20 collections of poems, 5 novels, as well as a number of non-fiction works, much of which has been translated. Author of some twenty collections of poetry, four novels and two works of non-fiction, Futoransky's literature traces its path

across six decades and five continents. Recent books include the forthcoming *Bajo los nísperos* (Leviatán), *Los años argentinos* (Leviatán, 2019), *El poema, dos lugares* (Ars 2018), *Marchar de día* (Leviatán, 2017) and *23.53 Noveleta* (Leviatán, 2013). Her collection, *Ortigas* (2011), was translated into English and published by Shearsman Books in 2016. Her poetry has received awards in France, Spain and Argentina. Most notably, Luisa was honoured by the French government as a Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres. In 1991, she received a Guggenheim Fellowship, and in 1993 and in 2010, fellowships from the Centre National des Lettres in Paris. In 1997, she was invited as Regent's Lecturer to the University of California, Berkeley. She is regularly invited to lecture at prestigious universities in France, Spain, Argentina and United States. Likewise, she is regularly invited as a guest author to international literary festivals. Futoransky's work is often cited in studies of contemporary Argentine women's writing as well as those dealing with issues of exile, transnational identity, language, contemporary Latin American poetry or Argentine writers in Paris. Fluent in Spanish, French, English, Hebrew and Italian, her oeuvre brings together an incredibly rich array of cultural references inspired by her experiences living and travelling across Latin America, Europe and East Asia, which she blends together with distinctive echoes of home.

Mani Rao is a poet, translator and independent scholar. Mani has ten poetry collections including *Sing to Me* (Recent Work Press Australia, 2019), *New & Selected Poems* (Poetrywala India 2014), *Echolocation* (Math Paper Press Singapore, 2014; Chameleon Press Hong Kong, 2003) and *Ghostmasters* (Chameleon Press Hong Kong, 2010). Her books in translation from Sanskrit are *Bhagavad Gita* (Fingerprint India 2015; Autumn Hill Books USA 2010), and *Kalidasa for the 21st Century Reader* (Aleph Books India, 2014). Her latest book *Living Mantra— Mantra, Deity and Visionary Experience Today* (Palgrave Macmillan 2019) is an anthropology of mantra-experience among tantric practitioners in south India.

Journals and anthologies with Mani's poems and essays include *Almost Island*, *Poetry Magazine*, *Wasafiri*, *Meanjin*, *Washington Square*, *Fulcrum*, *West Coast Line*, *Interim*, *Colorado Review*, *The Penguin Book of the Prose Poem*, *Zoland Poetry*, W.W.Norton's *Language for a New Century*, Penguin's *Sixty Indian Poets*, and the *Bloodaxe Book of Contemporary Indian Poet*. She has participated in literary gatherings

including Almost Island Dialogues, The Age Melbourne Writers' Festival, Chicago Humanities Festival, New York PEN World Voices, and The Man Hong Kong International Literary Festival. Translations of her poems have been published in Latin, Italian, Korean, Chinese, Arabic, French and German. She has held writing residencies at the Iowa International Writing Program (2005 and 2009), the University of Iowa International Programs (2006), Omi Ledig House USA (2018) and International Poetry Studies Institute Canberra (2019). Mani was born in India in 1965, and worked for nearly two decades as a creative professional in the advertising and television industries in Chennai, Mumbai and Hong Kong. Turning to writing and study full-time in 2004, she did an MFA in Creative Writing from UNLV (2010), and a PhD in Religious Studies from Duke University (2016).

Nabina Das is the author of five books — poetry collections *Sanskarnama*, *Into the Migrant City*, and *Blue Vessel*; short fiction volume titled *The House of Twining Roses*, and *Footprints in the Bajra*, a novel. She's a Charles Wallace, Sangam House, and Sahapedia-UNESCO fellowship alumna. Published widely, Nabina is a NYS Summer Writers Conference alumna, a Commonwealth Writers correspondent, a journalist by training, and a Creative Writing teacher in university classrooms and workshops. The poems in this issue are from her forthcoming poetry collection *Anima and the Narrative Limits*.

Philippa Page is a Lecturer in Hispanic Literature and Translation at Newcastle University, U.K. She is author of the monograph *Politics and Performance in Post-Dictatorship Argentine Film and Theatre* (Tamesis, 2011) and co-editor of the volumes *The Feeling Child: Politics, Childhood and Affect in Contemporary Latin American Literature and Film* (Lexington, 2018) and *Entre/telones y pantallas. Afectos y saberes en la performance argentina contemporánea* (Libraria, in press). Her translations have been published in the journals *Confluencia*, *Review: Literature and Arts of the Americas*, and *Poetry International*.

Rahul Soni is a writer, editor and translator. He has edited an anthology of Hindi poetry in English translation, *Home from a Distance* (2011), and translated Shrikant Verma's collection of poetry, *Magadh* (2013), Geetanjali Shree's novel *The Roof Beneath Their Feet* (2013), a selection of Ashok Vajpeyi's poetry *A Name for Every Leaf* (2016), and Pankaj Kapur's novella *Dopehri* (2019).

Sharmistha Mohanty is the author of three works of prose, *Book One*, *New Life*, and *Five Movements in Praise*. Her most recent work is a book of poems, *The Gods Came Afterwards*. Her work has been published in several journals all over the world including *Poetry*, *Granta*, *World Literature Today*, and the Chinese journal *Jintian*. A chapbook made from a selection of poems from *The Gods Came Afterwards* appeared early 2020 from Ediciones Pen Presse in Spanish. The poems are translated by the acclaimed Argentinian poet, Mercedes Roffe. Mohanty is the founder-editor of *Almost Island* and the initiator of the Almost Island Dialogues, an annual international writers gathering held in New Delhi. She has taught for several years at the International Creative Writing MFA program at the City University of Hong Kong. She has also taught at the Creative Writing programme at Naropa University, set up by Allen Ginsberg. Mohanty has held fellowships at the Akademie Schloss Solitude in Germany (2002), at Ledig House in New York (2004), had residencies at the La Napoule Foundation for the Arts in France (2004), and Yaddo, USA, 2009. She is a recipient of a Senior Fellowship from the Indian Ministry of Culture.

Shrikant Verma (1931-86) was a central figure in the Nai Kavita movement in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Born in Bilaspur, Madhya Pradesh, he did his Masters in Hindi from Nagpur University in 1956, then moved to New Delhi, where he worked in journalism and politics. Verma served as special correspondent for *Dinman*, a major Hindi periodical, from 1966 to 1977. In 1976, he was elected a member of the Rajya Sabha on a Congress (I) ticket, and served as an official and spokesman of the party through the late 1970s to the early 80s. He published two collections of short fiction, a novel, a travelogue, literary interviews, essays and five collections of poetry, of which the most important are *Jalasaghar* (1973) and *Magadh* (1984). The latter, a ground-breaking work that remains one of the best-known books in contemporary Hindi poetry. Verma was a visitor at the Iowa International Writing Program twice (1970-71 and 1978), and won the Tulsi Puraskar (1976), the Kumaran Asan Award, and the Sahitya Akademi Award (posthumously, for "Magadh", in 1987).