

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Laura M. Sager Eidt, *Writing and Filming the Painting: Ekphrasis in Literature and Film*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2008, pp. 243.**

Study of *ekphrasis* gains popularity as a powerful wing of intertextuality. If the whole range of artworks is counted under one term, i.e., *text*, then *ekphrasis* widens its semantic scope beyond its original Greek reference “to speak or describe fully”. Today it is used in multidisciplinary cross-referential terms – literature or verbal texts representing non-verbal art forms, particularly painting, sculpture, graphics and architecture in their verbal transformation. The most popular example of *ekphrasis* that a student of literature encounters is John Keats’s “Ode on a Grecian Urn” where the poet describes a painting on a Greek urn preserved in the British museum. This painting is narrated by Keats so vividly that the piece of painting appears talking of itself.

The author of the present book treats *ekphrasis* or narration of painting in literature and film, i.e., intertextuality of painting and literature, on the one hand, and that in film, on the other. She writes seven chapters: the first chapter defines *ekphrasis* in literature and film while offering a history of aesthetics of *ekphrasis* in its relation with ideology as also expanding its definition. There has been a powerful debate regarding the primacy of the verbal and pictorial signs. When poetry is assessed in terms of narrative representations primacy of the pictorial sign has been granted (Plato through Simondes, Horace and Plutarch). When the word is considered as a sacred phenomenon and painting and sculpture as works manual labour, poetry is considered superior to visual arts (Augustine and Leon Battista Alberti). During the Renaissance the works of Leonardo Da Vinci reverts the Simonidian axiom into “if painting is mute poetry, then poetry is blind painting”. The debate somehow appears solved by Lessing: literature represents moving time whereas painting and sculpture represent static space. But Keats perceives temporality in painting while reacting to the moving events of the classical Greece.

This kind of intertextuality is also named intermediality/ transmediality in current scholarship although some other terms such as transposition transformation, intersemiotic transposition and translation have been suggested by some critics. But the present author does not consider them suitable for explaining the ekphrastic process that she analyzes. In studying the ekphrastic process she has been benefited by Siglind Bruhn’s analysis of musical ekphrasis, Claus Cluver’s various expansions of literary ekphrasis and Dona Poulton’s filmic ekphrasis of painting, although she is of the opinion that none of them has touched upon the ability of film to transmedialize a work of art by adapting the pictorial into the cinematographic language, none has investigated the immense possibility of filmic ekphrasis that has at its disposal verbal, visual and auditory means of transmedializing painting. The semiotic system of film is even much wider than that of the theatrical performances because of its kinetic range. Thus filmic ekphrasis is obviously much wider in scope than literary ekphrasis. So also in case of filming painting. The rivalry between words (literature) and images (painting) might lose or intensify its relevance in film.

The author discerns four categories of ekphrasis in literature and film: attributive ekphrasis, depictive ekphrasis, interpretive ekphrasis and dramatic ekphrasis, and examines how do these categories affect the interpretation of the work of art: “In so far as ekphrasis can be said to be a self-reflective genre, to what degree are the four categories self-referential, and what role does the paragone play in visual, filmic ekphrasis?” (p. 26) But these categories are not confined to only interpretation of filmic ekphrasis, they can also be applied to poetry, novel and drama, although being more qualitative than quantitative, they account more for degrees and kinds of involvement. Attributive ekphrasis include verbal allusion to pictures in a description or dialogue of a text or film – scenes in which artworks are shown. In depictive ekphrasis images are described, discussed or reflected more extensively than in the text or scene. This kind of ekphrasis is often followed by interpretive reflections exemplifying interpretive ekphrasis which is of two different forms – either as a verbal reflection on the image, or a visual verbal dramatization of it. Thus interpretive ekphrasis often involves a higher degree of textual or filmic self-reflexivity that the author calls dramatic ekphrasis. Here the images are dramatized and theatricalized to the extent that they assume a life of their own. Therefore this category is more visual than the other three. In the following chapters (3-6) she analyzes her arguments in her case studies of filming three particular paintings of the three major European painters of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries – Francisco Goya (Spanish 1746-1828), Van Bijn Rembrandt (Dutch 1606-69) and Jan Vermeer (Dutch 1632-75).

It seems Keats’s ekphrasis of the “Grecian Urn” applies all the four categories Sager Eidt discerns in her present work. Attribution, depiction, interpretation and dramatization all are adopted by Keats in glorifying the painting on the urn. Attribution of eternity to a tangible artifact is manifest through depiction and interpretation whereas Keats experiences the spatial stasis of the painting in its kinetic tempo: “What mad pursuit? What struggle to escape?” The romantic imagination of the poet relishes love not in its final attainment, but in the eternal pursuit of the Platonic unreachable. Similarly, the musical ekphrasis, writing music of both nature and art, of the nightingale and the Grecian urn adopts all the four categories:

Adieu! Adieu!

Thy plaintive anthem fades

Past the near meadows, over the still stream,

Up the hill-side; and now ‘tis buried deep

In the next valley glades;

Was it a vision, or a waking dream?

This viscosity of music is contrasted with the audibility of painting: “Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard

Are sweeter: therefore, ye soft pipes play on,

Not to the sensual ear, but, more endeared,

Pipe to the spirit deities of no tone:

One can easily pick up the high pitch of ekphrastic imagination of Keats that has immortalized him in the history of world literature not confined to only the romantic

realm. In fact creative imagination is always ekphrastic. Consider filming the literary texts by Satyajit Ray. Ray was originally a painter. The scenarios of his films were always painted/ drawn prior to the scripts. He understood film as preeminently a visual art. Thus filming a literary text must visualize the events and characters as vividly as painting does transmedializing the tangible in its kinetic form. Ray knew the secret of filming a verbal text, what he learnt from his mentor Jean Renoir: the more he exercises his ekphrastic imagination, the better is the filmic merit. A movie picture differs from a theatrical performance insofar as its pictorial elements exceeds the theatrical presentation. A literary text is transformed into an intertext, an intermedialization of pictorial, verbal, auditory and gestural signs. In Ray's films pictorial signs determine the gestural and auditory elements. But Ray has not filmed any painting.

Sager Eidt, the author of the present work, takes up Goya's paintings *Capricho 43* filmed by Carlos Saure and *Sleep of Reason* as adapted by Konrad Wolf Rembrandt's *Self Portrait at the Age of 34* filmed by Alexander Korda on the screenplay written by Carl Zuckmayer and *Virmeer's Girl with a Pearl Earring* filmed by Tracy Chevalier and Peter Webber. Although, screenplays are ideally pictorial (not picturesque), it is all the same a literary text, and cinematography in presenting an ekphrasis of this screenplay transforms its total form and structure. Similarly when a painting is presented in its ekphrastic screenplay it is also changed formally and structurally according to the screenplay writers understanding and interpretation. Therefore, filming a painting via its screenplay is a double shift or twice removed from the truth of the painting itself. But in this intermedial removal truth is neither destroyed nor distorted; it is re(de)constructed. The author writes:

My aim in this study has been to expand the scope of ekphrasis and to demonstrate the usefulness of reading film in the light of the aesthetic systems provided by both literary ekphrasis and art history. Thus I have argued that the ancient literary device of ekphrasis is applicable to film as well and can serve to better understand film's understanding of itself as hybrid medium, situated between narrative and dramatic texts and the visual arts, but also incorporating musical elements. My analysis thus demonstrates that the disciplinary boundaries between literary studies, film studies and art history are steadily eroding. (p. 213)

She claims that a comparison of literary and cinematic ekphrasis will highlight not only the similarities between the two categories, but also the uniqueness of cinematic ekphrasis that enables it for occupying its own specific status among the artistic genres developed till date. It explodes the binary relationship between visual and verbal discourses: "Instead of simpler setting one against the other and overturning the verbal through the visual, cinematic ekphrasis makes the relationship a triadic one between verbal, visual and filmic elements. In so doing film uses ekphrasis to define itself, to foreground and distinguish the 'cinematic' nature of its discourse from both the literary and the purely visual discourses." (p. 213-14)

For substantiating her claim the author cites several examples. Goya's *Sleep of Reason* for example has been transmedialized in poetry, drama and film. Gunter Kunert's poem "When Reason sleeps, the Monsters come forth" reads (in translation by the author):

There man sits, his/ upper body bent over the table, his head/ Resting in/ the bed of his arms, / And sleeps. // From the dark background invade the / Lemurs, battalions of shadowy/ bats, owls, hoary and malicious/ Their faces, fluttering about the sleeper/ Evil eyes, sharp talons, hard beaks/ Woe should reason sleep!

As in the Keats's "Ode", a reader notes all the four categories of ekphrasis discerned by the author in this literary ekphrasis of Goya's painting. Antonio Buero Vallejo, the famous dramatist who invited controversy in his dramatization of *Las Meninas* (1960) a painting by the Spanish artist Velazquez (18<sup>th</sup> c.), (The painting being posed by Michel Foucault as the representation of the 18<sup>th</sup> century episteme) has also dramatized this painting as representing Goya's mind. While presenting Goya's reaction to the political situations of his time (that Goya represents in his said painting) the dramatist uses "immersion effect" to draw the spectator into an actual physical experience analogous to that of a character on the stage. Goya's terror is represented in the drama by heart beats, sounds and voices. Several instances of absolute silence are presented in which the audience is plunged into Goya's mind. On the other hand, Carlos Saura's film on Goya is based on his paintings that reflect his mental conditions – thus presenting an ekphrasis of Goya's pictorial imagination.

Sager Eidt's meticulous investigations into the inter-genric mediation of the verbal, visual and cinematic arts are certainly admirable. Her power of correlation and interpretation contributes substantially to the area of intermedialization in world literatures. But her comments that "Filmic ekphrasis thus rewrites the Horatian phrase *ut pictura poesis* as both *ut pictura cinema* and *ut novella cinema*" sound uncritical. When Horace's paragone has been rejected long since, and the very idea of forming any paragone in aesthetic judgements has been outdated, rewriting Horace's dictum is simply irrelevant. Ekphrasis does never imply any paragone. Verbal ekphrasis of pictorial art does never imply any paragonal status of painting. Ekphrasis is a healthy practice of creative imagination. It never questions the unique status of any genre. Intermediality does never intervene the independence of any medium. Like the classical dictum *ut pictura poesis* the romantic dictum *ut musica poesis* has also been rejected long since.

**Sushil Kumar Saxena, *Aesthetics: Approaches, Concepts and Problems*, Delhi: Sangeet Natak Akademi and D. K. Printworld (P) Ltd. 2010, pp. 446.**

Sushil Saxena's intellectual journey continuing for more than half a century has been exemplary in the history of Indian philosophical exercise. He started with a study of Bradley's metaphysics and turned to philosophy of art specializing particularly in Hindustani music and Kathak dance, two leading performing art forms that emerged in the medieval India as a part of the Mughal courtly culture. His approaches to these art forms have been modernist in general and symbolist in particular with an ardent zeal

for following the principles of two major symbolist philosophers – Ernst Cassirer and Susan Langer. Since his first publication in 1967, he has published ten books including the present one among which more than the half of the number has been dedicated to the studies in Hindustani music and dance, besides a book on Gandhi's religious faith and principle, and another, *Seven Western Philosophers of Art*.

The present book contains six chapters: 1. Aesthetics Today, 2. Some Basic Conceptions and Distinctions, 3. The Aesthetic Attitude, Experience and Points of View, 4. Art and its Linkages, 5. Theories of Art, and 6. The (Indian) Rasa Theory. But, as the bibliography shows, Saxena confines his study to the publications till the eighth decade of the last century implying that he is out of touch with the volumes of researches and movements that have evolved during the next three decades. Philosophical aesthetics has passed through revolutionary challenges and movements which have remained simply untouched by the author. A present reader, therefore, loses interest in evaluating the work, although his attention is drawn to the exceptional clarity with which the author has treated the issues raised during the heydays of modernism. A reviewer must, therefore, highlight this positive aspect of the book without of course sparing the author for his lack of awareness of the contemporary scholarship that has harmed his observations on the issues he has dealt with.

In the first chapter Saxena surveys the progress of the area of knowledge called *aesthetics* from the German philosopher Alexander Baumgarten (1735) till the modernist period that covers linguistic analysis and existential phenomenology – through the symbolists like Susan Langer, formalists like Clive Bell with some hints on the Indian (Sanskrit) perspectives in discussing *rasa* theory in understanding various art forms – theatre, poetry, music, sculpture and dance. By the term *aesthetics* Baumgarten refers to *sensuous perception* (as derived from the Greek *aisthesis*) that he defended as of a cognitive value no less important than our exercise of reason in cognizing truth. But in the contemporary (Western) treatment of *aesthetics* “what we find generally dominant is analysis of theories of art – say, as form, expression, or as symbol – and of certain concepts related to or within art: for instance, the concept of the *work of art* and the concepts of representation, illusion, intention and meaning within the arts. This is however only the focus, not the whole ambit of present-day aesthetics which (we have seen) is visualized very widely today. It is regarded as a serious, academic and many-sided concern with *the arts*. The view-point of philosophy is only one of the many approaches here listed. In other words, *philosophical* aesthetics is only a form or part of aesthetics taken generally. But whatever be the kind of aesthetics, its subject of study is held to be *art*; and today the word ‘beauty’ is often left out.” (p. 28) Saxena's observations regarding the topics of modernist aesthetics as philosophy of art is absolutely accurate. But he is not aware of the new areas of aesthetics that have developed during the last decades of the twentieth century continuing till the recent years of the present century. Environmental aesthetics has been a leading area of discussion that includes focus on the beauties of gardens, cities and even ruins. Some even has suggested an area called somaesthetics irrespective of the validity of counting

them inside aesthetics proper. If a sense of civility is to be counted under aesthetics then one might think of nice cities, delicacies and decency in life-style to be counted under aesthetics. But then, again, art will crop up as a metaphor to interpret them as “art of living”. In fact in this sense, Vatsyayana the Indian sexologist (3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD) suggested the sixty-four arts that include even the ways of sexual union. If the meaning and area of aesthetics are extended this way then aesthetics would cease to be an area of theoretical exercise exclusively, referring in that case, to even descriptive manuals such as the *Kamasutra* which ultimately has been suggested by some scholars nowadays. But, by no means erotics can be considered as an area of aesthetics.

In complying Saxena's complaint that the issue of beauty is often left out, if aesthetics would be a quest for or analyzing “beauty” in both art and nature, then the aestheticians would run after the Keatsean mirage of the identification of truth and beauty. The meaning of beauty has been notoriously relative and context-bound. Appreciation of the non-art phenomena, both natural and man-made including even Duchamp's *Fountain* has remained, as we have already pointed out, appreciation of art in its metaphorical extension. Therefore, aesthetics beyond art, is practically appreciation of *non-art* as *art*, the problematic taken up by Saxena in the second chapter where he discusses issues involving aesthetic and non-aesthetic qualities. But the consideration of aesthetic qualities as broader than artistic qualities is not tenable. All the aesthetic qualities and predicates counted by the critics can equally be countered as artistic excepting the intentional aspects in man-made art works such as representation, expression and communication. Kant's distinction between beauty and sublime may even be considered contextual (see David Fenner, *Art in Context*). Kant's sublimity has been already anticipated by Aristotle who has discarded any such quality from his ideal tragedy. Inconceivable vastness of natural landscape is also unrelishable (*anasvadya*), and, therefore neither beautiful, nor aesthetic is non-artistic.

In the third chapter Saxena highlights the issues of aesthetic attitude, experience and point of view. All these issues can be critical only if the modifier “aesthetic” is objectively determined. The present reviewer has demonstrated (*Art and Experience*, 2003) that this modifier is only a circular one. The question of taste/ sensibility is strictly relative and contextual. Excepting a non-practical sensuous awareness that might be denoted by the Sanskrit term *sahridayata* none else can be predicted to the phenomenology of experience. This is the only universal qualification necessary for a man to enjoy both nature and art. Abhinavagupta reasonably detects obstacles (*vighna*) that debar one in doing so. But neither Kant's “disinterestedness” nor Bullough's “psychic distance” explains the necessary qualification for such enjoyment. Appreciation of formal qualities or even a transfiguration is strictly contextual. No universal criteria can be formulated for enjoying such phenomena.

Saxena's treatment of the whole area of issues in the perspectives of their Western origin as well as in their application to appreciate Indian art and philosophy speaks volumes of his maturity of thought, wide-ranging learning and invaluable critical observations. In fact, Saxena's characteristic clarity in explaining the intricate theories

remain unparallel and provides an excellent source book for understanding the philosophical approaches to art and beauty forwarded by the Western tradition during the modernist era.

Saxena concludes the present work with a long chapter on the Sanskrit *rasa* theory, a reprint of an earlier publication in *Sangeet Natak* (XXXVII, No. 2, year wanting) for maintaining a balance, as he notes, in treating the Western and the native aesthetical traditions, although he expresses his limitations in interpreting the Sanskrit treatises (because of his lack of required knowledge in Sanskrit?). But, keeping aside his humility, Saxena offers an original interpretation of the *rasa* theory as also its application to understanding some vital issues in Western aesthetics, and simultaneously appreciating modern Indian music (Hindustani), dance (Kathak) and poetry. In this interpretation Saxena's strength and limitations both are revealed. He rightly understands *rasa* in the light of contemporary Western phenomenological idiom wisely revising some of the interpretations of authorities like Sushil De, although at the same time manifests his limitations in stating that "Bharata's theory is applicable also to some such art-forms as non-dramatic poetry and Kathak dance, to which it has not been convincingly related so far." (p. 373). He ignores that the *rasa* theory has already been applied to non-dramatic (epic and lyric) poetry as early as the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> C. by the *Dhvani* theorists Anandavardhana and Abhinavagupta. As regards its application to music and dance, efforts have also been made, through controversially, by Ananda who formulated the *rasa-dhvani* theory originally on semantic ground. However, even on Bharata's own ground, which Saxena follows, *rasa* is strictly confined to the phenomenology of theatrical performance, the semiotic factors of which are inclusive of music, dance, painting and poetry (*kavya*).

In Bharata's view music, dance and poetry (dialogue) are only components of the theatrical performance. Left to themselves they cannot generate (*nispatti*) *rasa* independently. Ananda's theory of generation of *rasa* by verbal art (epic and lyric poems) is based on a typical semantic property he names *vyanjana* (an additional tertiary property he thought, he explored, along with two properties *abhidha* and *laksana* explored earlier). The meaning due to this potency he named *dhvani* which, he argued, generates *rasa* in verbal art too. Keeping this partial understanding of the *rasa* theory aside, a reader is very much impressed by Saxena's original probe into the subject as a whole. The work is certainly an admirable effort by the most matured aesthetician of our country who has been contributing to this area of knowledge for over four decades with his deep sense of dedication and gifted insight.

**Mary Ellis Gibson, *Anglophone Poetry in Colonial India 1780-1913: A Critical Anthology*, pp. 397; *Indian Angles: English verse in Colonial India from Jones to Tagore*, pp. 334; both published by Ohio University Press, Athens, 2011.**

Edward Said's prejudice against the British Orientalism is once again proved unreasonable by this publication of critical anthology and its companion monograph. Mary Gibson's sincere and meticulous researches have brought to light a rich literary

tradition that emerged in the imperial India reflecting a very happy and congruent cultural exchange between the British and Indian polyglots that influenced the whole of the European literary and intellectual heritage. Studies in literature, language, religion and philosophy took an amazing turn that gave birth to the disciplines of comparative literature, language (philology), philosophy and religion that have flourished today with its fragrant flowers and sweet fruits. The limitations of the Marxist approaches to the colonial culture in India to which much of the post-colonial studies owe have been exposed duly and arguably. Mary Gibson has collected both the Britain-born and India-born British poets as well as India-born Indian poets who wrote poems in English language, a genre that she names "Anglophone" instead of often used epithet Indo-Anglian. She always uses the phrase "English language literature in India". She writes:

Over the course of the nineteenth century, the range of English language poetic production in India widened, drawing poets from varied backgrounds and moving into realms domestic, religious and political.

*Anglophone Poetry in Colonial India 1780-1913* traces these areas of cultural exchange from the beginning of English language literature in India through the nineteenth century. It begins with Jones, along with various members of his circle and concludes with poems written in the early twentieth century, taking as its end point Rabindranath Tagore's Nobel Prize in Literature. The trajectory of these poems moves from Indian and British romanticism to the poetry of the *fin de siecle* and early modernism, although these poems complicate traditional narratives of literary history. The poets whose works are presented here engaged in intricate networks of affiliation and disaffiliation, and their poems challenge simple periodization and nationalist narratives. The anthology collects thirty-nine poets starting from William Jones and ending with Sarojini Naidu through well-known and popular names such as John Horsford, Anna Maria, Kashiprasad Ghosh, Henry Derozio, Michael M. Dutt, Sashi Chunder Dutt, Edwin Arnold, Greece Chunder Dutt, Aru Dutt, Toru Dutt, Rabindranath Tagore, Rudyard Kipling, Manmohan Ghose and Aurobindo Ghose. She has also appended, to this collection, four comic and satiric poets. The anthology, thus, looks attractive and authentic as also comprehensive.

The present anthology of poets, as the editor claims, is an improvement over its predecessors. Elleke Bochmer's *Empire Writing* (1870-1918) is global in scope. T.O.D Dunn's *Poets of John Company* (1921) treated Indian poets separately from the British poets and his *Bengali Book of English Verse* (1918) was entirely biased towards Bengal. On the other hand, since Dunn's works, British and North American scholars focused on prose fiction and non-fiction, rather than on English language poetry in India. Similarly Indian scholars focused only on these poets who can be claimed for an Indian nationalist career. Other scholars have omitted in their collections all British and American-born poets. In India, Indian English language poetry has been understood to begin with Henry Louis Vivian Derozio that continues through the modernist experiments of the Calcutta Writers' Workshop and beyond. Examples of such anthologies may be cited: Vinayak Krishna Gokak, *The Golden Treasury of Indo-Anglian Poetry: 1828-1965*

(1970), A. N. Dwivedi, *Indian Poetry in English: A Literary History and Anthology* (1980), V. N. Bhusan, *The Peacock Lute* (1945) and Eunice De Souza, *Early Indian Poetry in English: 1829-1947* (2005). Apart from this comprehensiveness in collecting the whole range of English poetry written in India during the colonial period, the editor Gibson has prefixed introductory notes to each author focusing their biographical data, and in an introduction of twenty-nine pages has highlighted some critical points that are essential in understanding the historical context, critical outlook of the poets together with notes on the literary audience and printing facilities during the period concerned, apart from offering quite valuable and perceptive appreciating criteria in different sections such as English language in a polyglot culture, Print, Reading and Politics of Poetry, Satire and Devotion, Bards and Exiles: The Trans-peripheral in the Trope of English Language Poetry, Theoretical Premises and Editorial Principles. In these sections the editor has exhibited her skill in understanding not only the historical context of a polyglot literary culture, but also a superb sense of critical appreciation, the very methodology of her analysis being highly sophisticated and updated in its style, dealing with the themes, attitude of the poets in their movement from British sensibility to the Indian nationalist canon, with also developing a strong vernacular tradition in the framework of British literary culture. The transition of Madhusudan Dutt from his English writings towards a vernacular tradition of Bengali poetry with an aim at creating Milton, Byron and Shelley in “Bangla” language, and Aurobindo’s transition from the European classical Hellenic muses to the Indian goddess of Saraswati are two different modes of nationalist canons that were emerging quite spectacularly. The editor is extremely perceptive in coordinating all these factors into a single literary scenario.

In the introductory essay the editor has highlighted certain vital issues relevant for understanding the poems collected. First of all a reader must be aware that these poems are the products of a polyglot culture. Although Jones was a British by birth, he studied Arabic and Persian in Britain, and picked up Sanskrit and even vernacular soon after he arrived in India (Bengal) in 1783. In fact, it is his love for Sanskrit that he could build up new systems of knowledge that are so valuable for international scholars in comparative culture. Besides, Aurobindo Ghose, Madhusudan Dutt and Sarojini Naidu have all been polyglots. Calcutta, in the 1830s was a home for a rich mix of people speaking Bengali, Hindustani (Hindi and Urdu), Chinese, French, Portugese, Arabic, Persian, Burmese, Armenian, Tamil, languages of Jews and Parsis that could be read by those classically trained in Sanskrit, Greek and Latin. Educated elites in colonial India were multilingual before the arrival of the British poets who entered India already rich in literary culture, and chose to write in their mother tongue. The editor divides the nineteenth century into three phases of poetic production: 1780-1835, the mid-century and the period between 1780-1913. During the first phase the British poets like Burns, Moore, Byron and Keats were more influential whereas Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey were less acknowledged. Contemporary British poets were mingled with Persian and Sanskrit poets in translation. Subsequently printing presses were installed with the arrival of the Christian missionaries after the East India Company’s charter in 1813 –

William Carey’s Serampore Press (1800) and later Baptist Mission Press in Calcutta. Particularly Carey’s press was notable for its designing and casting types for translation of the Bible into numerous South Asian languages. By the 1850s printing had spread beyond Bengal. The editor then offers a vast panorama of cultural changes that occurred during the course of history producing a poet like Tagore whom Ezra Pound considered no less than a modern survival of the Anglo-Saxon bard because of Tagore’s mingling of contemporary sensibility with the vernacular literature of the Bauls and Vaishnavas.

In the companion volume the author states that she “came to ask how poets and readers in India created, perpetuated, and challenged a canon of English language poetry... This book aims to answer these questions. My project combines historical and theoretical reflection, adding to the canon of English language poetry written outside of Great Britain and at the same time critiquing that canon.” Scholars in this area, prior to the present author studied the English poems written during the nineteenth century by the poets who were of the Indian birth, excepting only Henry Derozio, considered the father of Indian English poetry “the Indian Keats”. But Derozio, who called himself an “East Indian”, was of mixed breed – mother British and father Portugese. Thus what the author argues strongly is the fact that the category of “Indian English poetry” written in colonial period should not be ascribed to the poets on nationalist foundation, i.e., poets born in India. In her view, there is no difference between Mary Carshore born of Irish Catholic parents in India and Manmohan Ghose, a born Indian but educated in England from the age of ten. The canon of English language poetry should not be shaped to the contours of nationalism, Indian or non-Indian by birth. Poetry written in colonial situations tells us even more than the prose narratives more about figuration, multilingual literacies and histories of nation and nationalism.

The companion is divided into three parts each part containing two chapters. The first part deals with Jones, Horsford, Anna Maria, Derozio and Emma Rolents. The second part with David Richardson, Kashiprasad Ghosh, Madhusudan Dutt and Mary Carshore; the third part with Mary Leslie, Toru Dutt, Manmohan Ghose, Sarojini Naidu and Rabindranath Tagore. The themes of these parts are ordered under: (I) Language, Tropes and Landscapes in the Beginnings of English Poetry, (II) The Institutions of Colonial Mimesis 1830-57 and (III) Nationalism, Religion and Aestheticism (including *fin-de-siecle*) in the Late Nineteenth century. Jones is the “inventor” of the genre called “English Language poetry” in India. He is considered “learnings learning” during who “changed the landscape of European literature giving impetus to a new kind of Orientalism in British poetry.” The author starts her first chapter of the first part titled “Contact Poetics in Eighteenth-Century Calcutta” with exclamations of Sir William Jones:

“To what shall I compare my literary pursuits in India?... Such am I in this country; substituting Sanskrit to Greek and the Brahmans for the priests of Jupiter and Valmiki Vyasa and Calidasa for Homer, Plato and Pindar.” (Aug 23, 1987) and of Anna Maria:

Adieu to INDIA’s fertile plains,  
Where *Brahma*’s holy Doctrine reigns;  
Whose virtuous principles still bind  
The *Hindoo*’s meek untainted Mind;

The author treats the whole range of poets and their poems in a non-nationalist view. Although she does not treat Aurobindo Ghose in her *Companion*, a stanza that she quotes in the *Anthology* speaks volumes in assonance with the poets quoted above:

For in Sicilian olive-groves no more  
Or seldom must my footprints now be seen,  
Nor tread Athenian lanes, nor yet explore  
Parnasus or thy voiceful shores, O Hippocrene  
Me from her lotus heaven Saraswati  
Has called to regions of eternal snow  
And Ganges pacing to the southern sea  
Ganges upon whose shores the flowers of Eden blow  
(Songs, 1923)

Limits of space debar me from presenting a full account of the author's sensitive explorations in the area of studies that she has undertaken so carefully and meticulously that surpass, I must say, all other predecessors. Her point of view, arrangement of the themes in their critical perspectives, lucid style of narration along with accurate information, judicious comments and perceptive analysis promote the works to the level of a marvelous piece of literary architecture, simply wonderful and unforgettable. We are grateful to her, and excepting this gratitude no language can assess her contribution.

**A.C. Sukla**