

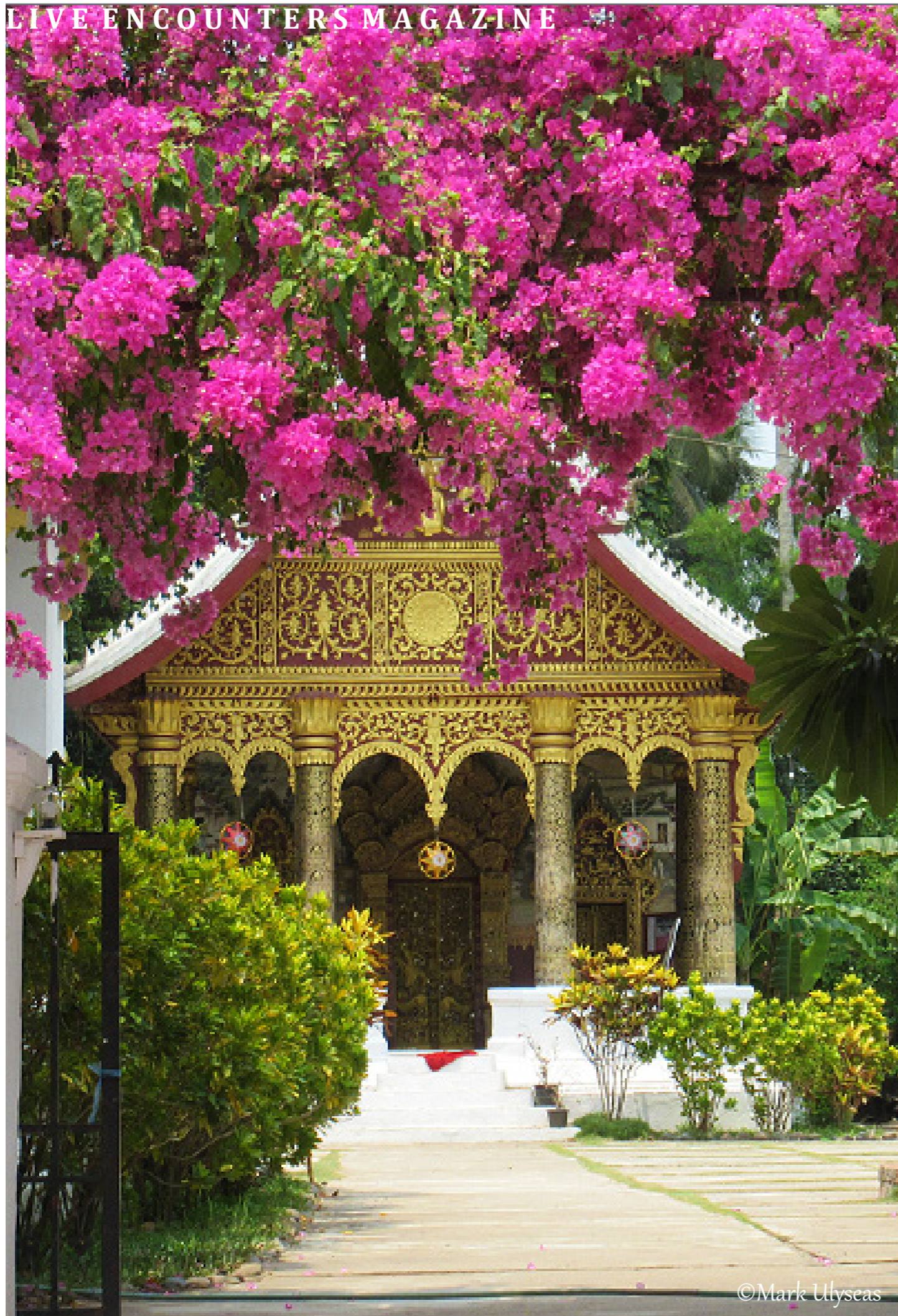
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FREE ONLINE MAGAZINE FROM VILLAGE EARTH
JULY 2019

Every age has its own Fascism

DR GRETA SYKES



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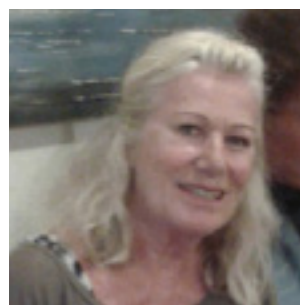
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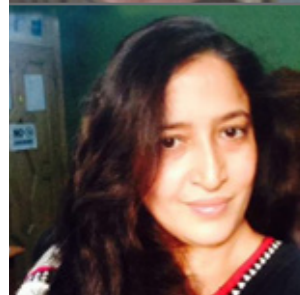
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Every age has its own Fascism – some thoughts about the artist and writer Carlo Levi Dr Greta Sykes

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Changing India and Iran Relations in the age of US Sanctions Dr Shanthie Mariet D'Souza

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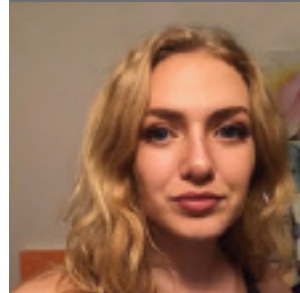
Emerging Human Trafficking Networks of Rohingya Dr Bibhu Prasad Routray

Dr. Bibhu Prasad Routray held the position of Visiting Professor and Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) chair, India Studies at Murdoch University, Perth between July-December 2017. He served as a Deputy Director in the National Security Council Secretariat, Government of India and Director of the Institute for Conflict Management (ICM)'s Database & Documentation Centre, Guwahati, Assam. Routray specialises in decision-making, governance, counter-terrorism, force modernisation, intelligence reforms, foreign policy and dissent articulation issues in South and South East Asia.



Nymphs Wolfgang Widmoser

Born in Munich 1954. 1973 studied with Ernst Fuchs and Salvador Dali. 1970 he painted still-lives in Switzerland introducing curved mirrors which reflect objects in most surprising ways and led to a proposal for the –elegant Universe. Moving to Tuscany in 1980 landscape and atmospheric effects crystallized to intense, portraits of nature. Since 1984 living in Bali. In his search for the- abstract. Papua New Guinea – Warriors combine the archaic with the futuristic. Wolfgang's motto – aesthetic = ethic – points to places where humans experience the Good, the True and the Beautiful.



Untitled 2017-19 Jas Sykes

Jas Sykes is a 22-year-old artist from Worthing, West Sussex, based in Manchester where she has just completed a degree in Fine Art & Art History.



Kuta Scares Mark Ulyseas

Ulyseas has served time in advertising as copywriter and creative director selling people things they didn't need, a ghost writer for some years, columnist of a newspaper, a freelance journalist and photographer. In 2009 he created *Live Encounters Magazine*, in Bali, Indonesia. March 2016 saw the launch of its sister publication *Live Encounters Poetry & Writing*. He is the author of three books: *RAINY – My friend & Philosopher*, *Seductive Avatars of Maya – Anthology of Dystopian Lives* and *In Gethsemane: Transcripts of a Journey*.



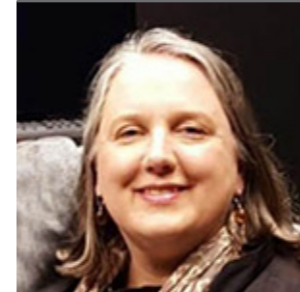
Homage to Lord Buddha in South Korea Vũ Tuấn Hưng

Vũ Tuấn Hưng is a professional photographer and tour guide based in Hồ Chí Minh city. He is a tour guide for mainly German speaking tourists. His photographs feature in numerous publications across the world. If you are visiting Vietnam and need his assistance please email - vietnaminfos@gmail.com



Zhouzhuang Mikyoung Cha

Mikyoung Cha is a graduate in Oriental Painting from Hyosung Women's University, Daegu, South Korea. She has participated in a number of group art exhibitions in South Korea and Japan. In 2016 she took up photography – the camera becoming her paint brush. This globe trotting photographer is a regular contributor to *Live Encounters Magazine*.



Painting to Restore the Watershed Theresa Griffin Kennedy

Theresa Griffin Kennedy is an author, poet and writer of creative nonfiction, and fiction. She is the author of three books, *Murder and Scandal in Prohibition Portland*, 2016, *Blue Reverie in Smoke: Poetry 2001-2016*, and a book of fiction *Burnside Field Lizard and Selected Stories*, 2018. She works as chief editor of the Indie Publishing Company, Oregon Greystone Press, and publishes other Portland authors including her husband writer and author, Don DuPay. Her next book, her first novel, *Talionic Night in Portland* will be published in 2019, and her fifth book *The Lost Restaurants of Portland* will be published by The History Press in 2020.



Baked beetroot with walnuts and pomegranate molasses Ozlem Warren

International cooking teacher and Turkish culinary expert Ozlem Warren is a native of Turkey, lived there and extensively travelled for 30 years. She has been teaching wholesome, delicious Turkish cookery in the US, Jordan, Istanbul and England. Her recipes have been published in the local media in England, *Hurriyet* and *Sabah* national daily newspapers in Turkey. Ozlem also took part at the *"Turkish Chefs of the World"*, *"Dünyanın Türk Seftleri"* TV program aired at TRT, National Turkish TV channel and in 37 countries.



Carlo Levi in 1955. Photo by [Paolo Monti](#). The image comes from the [Fondo Paolo Monti](#), owned by BEIC and located in the [Civico Archivio Fotografico of Milan](#).



Poet, writer and artist Greta Sykes has published her work in many anthologies. She is a member of London Voices Poetry Group and also produces art work for them. Her new volume of poetry called 'The Shipping News and Other Poems' came out in August 2016. The German translation of her book 'Under charred skies' has now been published in Germany under the title 'Unter verbranntem Himmel' by Eulenspiegel Verlag. She is the chair of the Socialist History Society and has organised joint poetry events for them at the Poetry Café. She is a trained child psychologist and has taught at the Institute of Education, London University, where she is now an associate researcher. Her particular focus is now on women's emancipation and antiquity.

DR GRETA SYKES

EVERY AGE HAS ITS OWN FASCISM – SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT THE ARTIST AND WRITER CARLO LEVI

Carlo Levi was a prolific writer. His best known book 'Christ stopped at Eboli' was turned into a film. He was also a well-known artist and had his paintings displayed at the Venice Biennale. His was politically active on the left throughout his life, yet his work is hardly known. In this article I wish to pay credit to his deeply moving and lyrical achievements.

The 1979 film adaptation of his book was directed by Francesco Rosi. It was shown both in cinemas and on television. Its title derives from the comments by local peasants about the poverty and neglect of their lives which suggested to them that Christ, meaning civilisation, had not reached them. Carlo Levi was a lifelong socialist and activist, a friend of Antonio Gramsci and a member of the Italian Senate. Both his political and his artistic life were turbulent, passionate and full of energy.

Brief story of his life

Carlo Levi was born in 1902 in Turin to Annetta Treves, the sister of the socialist leader Antonio Treves and Ercole Levi, a physician. He studied medicine at the University of Turin and graduated in 1924. He was drawn increasingly into politics due to the volatile political situation after WW1. He met the liberal journalist Pietro Gobetti in 1918 and turned to writing for radical publications. He also took up painting.

In 1923 Carlo Levi exhibited a portrait of his father at the Quadriennale of Turin. From 1926 onwards his work was often featured at the Venice Biennale. In that same year his friend and mentor Pietro Gobetti died of the injuries he had sustained from a beating by Fascist thugs. It was a deeply disturbing experience for him. In 1929 he founded an anti-Fascist movement called Justice and Liberty (Giustizia e liberta) together with his friends Carlo and Nello Rosselli.



Christ Stopped at Eboli is a memoir by Carlo Levi, published in 1945, giving an account of his exile from 1935-1936 to Grassano and Aliano, remote towns in southern Italy, in the region of Lucania, which is known today as Basilicata.



In 1935 he was arrested by Fascist police with charges of subversive activities and imprisoned in Rome. After a short time, he was sent into exile to Lucania, an extremely poor region in southern Italy, now known as Basilicata. To begin with he was interned in the small town of Grassano, but then moved to Aliano, an even smaller village further south and considered less accessible to visitors, and contact with other exiles was prohibited. He was not allowed to leave the village. All his movements were confined to the harsh chalk hills surrounding the village, a ground so poor that it could hardly feed the thin goats owned by the peasants. He survived the hardships of that time by painting and drawing local people and writing about their lives. His sentence was to last for three years, but in 1936 it was commuted as part of a general Fascist amnesty celebrating the Italian victory in Abyssinia.

He was briefly arrested in Florence and jailed in the Murate prison. After the fall of Mussolini, he was released and lived in a Florentine apartment facing the Pitti Palace. A recent stone plague commemorates his residence there. Other Italian intellectuals were also sent into exile. Antonio Gramsci was arrested in 1926 and interred on the island of Ustica, only to be sent later to a mainland prison for ten years where he eventually died in 1937. In 1936 the poet Cesare Pavese was confined in the Italian town of Brancalone where he wrote and published his anthology 'Work is tiring'.

Carlo Levi returned to Italy from France in 1941 and took part in the Resistance. He joined the Partito d'Azione (party of action) and the central committee of the Liberation Movement. He became the editor of 'La Nazione del Popolo' in Tuscany and 'L'Italia Libera' in Rome. By this time, he had written his first book called 'Fear of Freedom' and was writing 'Christ stopped at Eboli'. He participated in exhibitions with his paintings and also wrote for the Turin daily 'La Stampa'. In 1947 he participated in a peace movement conference where he met Pablo Neruda and Madam Curie. In the following year he had his own exhibition space at the twenty-fourth Venice Biennale. In 1950 he worked as an editor of a progressive paper in Rome and witnessed the failure of the Resistance in overturning the old power structure. His book 'L'orologio' (the watch) is based on his Rome experiences. The fictional character of the novel appears like an alter ego to Carlo. In 1955 he had a solo exhibition with the series called 'The lovers' in the 'Il Pincio' gallery in Rome. In the following years he wrote a number of travel books on the places he visited, such as Sicily, Sardinia, both German Republics and the Soviet Union. The title of the latter is 'The future has an ancient heart'. It was in the Soviet Union that he felt a new beginning had been made. It reinvigorated his hopes and ideals of civilisation and the future.



In the sixties he was elected to the Senate as an Independent in the lists of the Communist Party. He served on the Senate for eight years, while continuing to paint and write. In 1969 He held a speech at the Senate on the crisis of the centre left. Carlo Levi suffered a detached retina in 1973, and while semi-blind wrote articles and did many drawings. He died in Rome in 1975 and was buried in Aliano, southern Italy.

The future has an ancient heart

Carlo Levi was a physician, a painter, a writer and a fighter for freedom and humanism. He used his medical skills to cure many people in Gagliano during his exile. His descriptions of the peasants and their lives are full of a heartfelt compassion and a deep sense of respect and poetry for them. Similarly, are his paintings of men, women and children, as well as the landscapes, realist and lively in their execution. But he lived at a time of disasters in Europe. Like many of the intellectuals at the time of the collapse of civilisation in Europe due to Fascism Carlo Levi was imbued with a deep sense of responsibility to find out and comprehend what forces were at work that had marred the lives of so many people. The German exile Ernst Cassirer¹ probed the foundations of European culture in an attempt to locate the philosophical and moral origins of the rottenness the state, while many others, including Carlo Levi turned inwards to ask whether the fault lay in the human psyche itself.

Carlo Levi, although not religious, felt that the sacred arising out of the ancient world was an enduring power that humans had to cling to as part of their nature. Unlike Freud and his 'Civilisation and its discontents' Carlo Levi proposed civilisation and its enemies, civilisation and its propensity to slide back into a primal chaos. Carlo Levi like many at the time felt that the times demanded his attention to focus on politics. When his beloved uncle Claudio Treves died, he wrote:

'We were not brought into politics by nature, but almost reluctantly, out of a duty imposed on us by the times...'

Carlo Levi's work did not lack in critical reviews from fellow socialists and Marxists. When his novel 'Christ stopped at Eboli' was published there was a hostile response from the left. His view of the peasants was considered as romanticised, and it was suggested that he had adopted the peasants' culture as his own.



One of the main differences between him and the Communist Party of Italy was his view of the state. While they saw the state as a cornerstone of power in the development from capitalism to socialism, Carlo Levi viewed it as tainted with a corrosive energy, as he experienced it during the years of fascism. He viewed the Resistance after WW2 as a powerful force for renewal, but when that renewal dissipated, he grew disillusioned. The only country that reignited his great hopes again was the Soviet Union. He wrote about his visit in his book 'The future has an ancient heart.'

His travels in the Soviet Union suggested to him that change was possible. It had been brought about by the working class taking control of the state in a situation of a multitude of forces that mitigated against the new ways of living and working, not least the combined forces of the capitalist world sabotaging progress wherever they could.

The Jungian influence

Carlo Levi was a poet at heart. He believed in the power of human dignity and the soul of individual people and their expressed avowal in humanist ideals that could bring about the change society needed. Self-worth and an individual's living belief in humanism were his deeply felt foundation for 'the capacity of human beings to live together, to share values, to distribute goods, to accord respect, to respect justice.'

He was filled with a deep sense of passion for a better life for the people. The translator Gourevitch³ comments:

'(Carlo Levi) is a genius: Like the child in Anderson's tale, he can tell a king by his nakedness, and draw a masterpiece out of it.'

His people were the poor peasants of Gagliano. Divided into the contadini and the luigini, the contadini to him were productive workers of all kinds who enriched society with their labour, the peasants as well as the urban working classes. He had total contempt for the bourgeoisie who he calls luigini, drones, exploiters, tax collectors, lawyers, and teachers. The name luigini was taken from Don Luigini, the petty-minded Fascist mayor of Gagliano. Similar to Marx he viewed society as divided between these two classes.



His year long exile in Gagliano led to his fervent belief in the honesty and solidarity of the peasants who had no choice in an oppressive context of severe poverty. He believed that in their desperation and purity of spirit they were the only force that could destroy Fascism. In 'Christ stopped at Eboli' he has the peasants grovelling at a speech made by the school teacher about the grandeur of Rome and how the war was done for the benefit of the peasants, saying 'if they have enough money for war, why don't they repair the bridge over the Agri which has been down for four years?'

'(For the peasants) the myth of the brigands is close to the heart and a part of their existence, the only poetry in their dark desperate epic. Even their appearance... recalls that of the brigands, they are silent, gloomy and frowning in their black suits and hats...'⁴

Writing in memory of Pierro Gobetti who died of wounds inflicted by Fascists and a man he revered, Levi comments that the quest for civilisation was inseparable from the dedication to the individual and autonomy. Nevertheless, he was aware that the North with its anti-fascist bourgeois Resistance movement had been more effective than the peasants who were locked into poverty. They had no part in society. Political leaders and movements meant nothing to them. They were trapped and without freedom. Closer to Jung than Freud he describes the poverty struck inhabitants of Gagliano as similar to animals, but in affinity with nature. Freedom and autonomy of the individual constitute Levi's key demands in response to the collapse of civilisation. A German psychotherapist, a communist called Wilhelm Reich sought the source of evil they were witnessing in another version of individual responsibility, namely the libido. A fellow psychoanalyst and associate of Freud Reich wrote extensively about sexual repression as being characteristic of people who became fanatic supporters of Fascism.

Fear of freedom

'Fear of freedom' is the title of Carlo Levi's philosophical treaty which he wrote in France in 1939 but only published in 1964. He meant it to be the introduction to a larger piece of work, which, however, was not written. His foreword spells out the type of thought processes were occupying him:

'The past was dead, the present uncertain and terrible, the future mysterious, there was a felt need to take stock, to stop and consider the reasons for that savage revolution that was underway.'



At its inner core he sees Western culture as having a fear of freedom. This fear is a result of modernity and human's loss of a natural intimacy with nature and with each other. Having gone through a process of individuation they had lost the soul of the peasants, the closeness with nature. The loneliness of modernity results in fear of freedom. Both Erich Fromm and Umberto Eco described their perceptions in similar ways. Fromm found that escape from freedom takes the form of compulsive conformity and consumption, unless one can 'unite oneself with the world in the spontaneity of love and work' (Fromm). Umberto Eco sketched what he called 'Ur-Fascism'. It features 'a cult of tradition' where no further learning takes place. The truth has been spelt out and is repeated ever onwards. Primo Levi, who also came from Turin wrote:

'Every age has its own Fascism, and we see the warning signs wherever the concentration of power denies citizens the possibility and the means of expressing and acting on their free will. There are many ways of reaching this point, not just through the terror of police intimidation, but by denying and distorting information, by undermining systems of justice, by paralysing the education system, and by spreading in a myriad subtle ways nostalgia for a world where order reigned, and where the security of the privileged few depends on the forced labour and the forced silence of the many.'

Conclusion

Carlo Levi's and his fellow writers urge us to gain insight and awareness of their visceral experience of the catastrophic time when Fascism reigned in Europe – a time that is now merely highlighted when a military success is celebrated with pomp. They show us the darkness that we have entered with the class struggle deeper than ever with one percent of the people owning ninety-nine percent of the world's riches. A world where wars are threatened upon us on a daily basis in our media and the weapons industry is flourishing as never before. A world where nature and the spiritual are being destroyed. The Fascism of our time is visible to those who are closely looking. Freedom of speech has been removed. Journalists are being prosecuted for doing the task of informing the public of government actions, a duty they have in to the people. Carlo Levi speaks to us with the language of a poet to remind us of our sense of freedom and compassion as creatures of nature.

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DR. SHANTHIE MARIET D'SOUZA

CHANGING INDIA AND IRAN RELATIONS IN THE AGE OF US SANCTIONS



Abstract

The recent Trump administration's refusal to extend the waiver it had granted to eight countries including India and China from stopping the import of crude oil from Iran, has yet again put New Delhi's Tehran policy in a serious quandary. India and Iran have shared long historical relations which are now being tested. Given India's heavy reliance on fossil fuels, import of oil from Iran has remained the cornerstone of Indo-Iranian relations for past several decades. Moreover, both countries have a lot in common in their outlook towards a range of issues including Afghanistan. In the face of the U.S. sanctions, will New Delhi be able to maintain its long standing relations with Tehran? Or will it look for alternate partners in a delicate regional balancing act?

Introduction

On 22 April, President Donald Trump's administration refused to extend the waiver it had granted to eight countries including India and China from stopping the import of crude oil from Iran.[1] In November 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew from the 2015 Iran nuclear deal and re-imposed broad economic sanctions. New Delhi, along with seven other nations had been given a six-month waiver to import 300,000 bpd or nine million barrels of oil a month from Iran until early May. New Delhi has made statements indicating that it will fall in line and has plans in place to diversify its oil imports.[2] Irrespective of whether it succeeds in its endeavor and the impact it can have on its economy, New Delhi's relations with Iran is all set to encounter some serious challenges.



Oil Dependency

According to OPEC's World Oil Outlook 2040, India's oil demand is projected to reach 9.9 thousand barrel of oil equivalent per day (mboe/d) in 2040, from 3.9 mboe/d in 2015. The report estimates oil to continue to remain the second largest source of fuel for the country, with its share increasing from 23.2 per cent in 2016 to 25.2 per cent in 2040. Similarly, the BP Energy Outlook 2018, published in March 2018, estimates global oil demand to reach around 109 mb/d by 2040 with India replacing China as the primary source of growth for oil demand. The report estimates India's crude oil demand to reach 485 million tonne of oil equivalent (mtoe) by 2040 from 212 mtoe in 2016.

Because of India's heavy reliance on fossil fuels, import of oil from Iran has remained the cornerstone of Indo-Iranian relations for past several decades. India is Iran's second top oil client after China. Prior to the US sanctions, New Delhi imported over 600,000 bpd of oil from Iran. Since November only state-run Indian Oil Corp, Bharat Petroleum Corp, Hindustan Petroleum and Mangalore Refinery and Petrochemicals have been buying Iranian oil. In April 2019, Indian state refiners lifted 8 million barrels of Iranian oil, a decline of about 12 percent from the previous month.[3] However, Indian refiners held back from ordering Iranian oil for loading in May pending clarity on whether Washington would extend a waiver. New Delhi has been preparing for the worst.

(i) Indian-Iranian agreement of November 2018: It has attempted to bypass the sanctions by entering into a rupee trade agreement with Iran in November 2018.[4] According to the agreement, New Delhi can pay for fifty percent of the import of Iranian oil using a rupee-based payment mechanism. The other fifty percent of those payments will be used for exporting items to Tehran. Two Indian banks- UCO Bank and IDBI Bank- were identified to route the payment as the two have no exposure to the US financial system. However, rupee trade by itself can only be ad hoc and is not a sustainable arrangement. India has a trade deficit with Iran. Bilateral trade between India and Iran increased to US\$13.8 billion in 2017-18 from US\$12.9 billion in the previous fiscal year even as India's exports were only worth US\$2.5 billion to that country.[5] This means that since Tehran is not buying that much from India, it can hardly use the rupees it is now getting for its crude for anything else than for paying for the products and services of Indian companies.



(ii) Oil Refinery in Tamil Nadu: The US sanctions exposes India's other vulnerabilities, as well. Naftiran Intertrade, the Swiss subsidiary of National Iranian Oil Company, holds 15.4 percent stake in the Chennai Petroleum Corp. Limited (CPCL), which is one of clients for Iranian crude in India. The CPCL had plans to invest up to US\$5.1 billion to replace the 20,000 bpd Nagapattinam refinery in Southern Tamil Nadu state with an 180,000 bpd plant.[6] The refinery is expected to be operational by 2023-24. It is not clear if the investment can go ahead or will have to be put in the cold storage for the time being.

India's second strategy has been to diversify its sources of crude. In its reactions to the end of the waiver, India's External Affairs Ministry indicated that it has a 'robust plan' in place to ensure continued supply of crude from different parts of the world. Experts, however, have termed this 'plain sophistry'[7]. Its optimistic tone notwithstanding, no country would provide India oil at the highly concessional terms supplied by Iran. Buying oil from the spot market has always been an option, but this would significantly increase India's import bill. New Delhi has indeed increased its energy investments in the Arab world. India's state-owned oil company ONGC Videsh has acquired a 10 percent stake in an offshore oil concession in Abu Dhabi for \$600 million. However, such measures would not be adequate to lessen burden on the common man, when the increase in oil prices would eventually be passed on to the customers in India.

Tightrope Walking

One possible reason why New Delhi has decided to abide by the sanctions without a murmur of protest is the US assurance that the Chabahar port project in Iran, which is of importance to India and Afghanistan would not be impacted by the sanctions.[8] India values its relations with the United States and has been assisted in its counter-terrorism goals by Washington. However, in return for the American gestures of acting against the Pakistan-based terrorist leader Masood Azhar at the United Nations despite Chinese objections, New Delhi is expected to comply with the sanctions.[9] Amid such diplomatic tightrope walking, New Delhi can only hope that it can find a way to maintain its political relations with Iran. Both India and Iran have a lot in common in their outlook towards a range of issues such as Afghanistan. Both are opposed to the return of the Taliban to the seat of power in Kabul. In September 2018, India, Iran, and Afghanistan held the first-ever trilateral meeting in Kabul during which implementation of the Chabahar port project and an array of other issues were discussed, including ways to deepen counter-terror cooperation.



In February 2019, Afghanistan sent its first export shipment to India through the Chabahar Port.[10] In the same month, Iran joined India in criticizing Pakistan for sheltering terrorists being used to carry out attacks on their territories.

Alternate Partners

India's growing relations with Middle Eastern countries such as Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Israel have posed challenges to maintaining a steady relation with Iran. Over the past five years, New Delhi has aggressively pushed for investments from and counter-terrorism cooperation with Riyadh and Tel Aviv. India's relations with UAE too have improved. During his maiden trip to New Delhi in February 2019, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman announced, without revealing details, the possibility of investment opportunities worth US\$100 billion in India over the next two years.[11] Security ranks high in New Delhi's strategy in the Middle East region. In Israel, India has found a willing partner to supply sophisticated military technology. Between 2012 and 2016, India received over 40 percent of Israeli military exports. While India may not have ignored Tehran completely, its efforts to solidify political relations with that country have almost been negligible compared to the efforts it has put up into the Arab world. For long, India pursued a balancing approach with Iran and countries like Saudi Arabia and Israel. This policy has undergone significant changes in recent times. This is curious as Iran remains critical not only for India's policy in Afghanistan, but also for its counter-terrorism efforts. With this backdrop, reducing oil imports from Iran to zero takes away much of the substance from the already withering bilateral relations between the two countries. To expect the Chabahar port project alone to sustain the relations between the two is at best impractical.

An India-China Axis?

While China protested against the end of waiver and vowed to continue importing crude from Iran, India's silent capitulation to the US sanctions has surprised many analysts. Nevertheless, the possibilities of a Beijing-New Delhi common outlook and possible joint action to resist the American pressure has been talked about. However, that is easier said than done. New Delhi's economy is yet to reach the kind of inter-dependency that the US and Chinese economy have. At best, New Delhi can hope that the sanctions will be temporary.

Lessons from history point to the fact that the hope for a collapse of the Iranian regime or its capitulation as a result of the sanctions are strategically delusional. Previous sanctions have failed to achieve the desired outcome simply, because the US had neither the capacity nor the requisite backing from the international community. This time, President Trump is trying all means to compel the international community to comply. Till the time he discovers the limits of this move, New Delhi's ability to maintain its historical ties with Iran will be tested.

End Notes

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DR BIBHU PRASAD ROUTRAY

EMERGING HUMAN TRAFFICKING NETWORKS OF ROHINGYA: A SYMBIOTIC NEXUS



Aerial view of one of the Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh, Courtesy: Food Security Cluster.

Abstract

Over a million Rohingya refugees live in camps located over 6000 acres in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazaar area. Most of these refugees face a bleak future and have given up hope of ever returning to their homes in Myanmar. Organised trafficking syndicates, worth millions of dollars, have sprung up with networks in Myanmar, Thailand, India, and Malaysia. With the promise of jobs and a better future, these refugees are being trafficked to Malaysia for a hefty amount. Only a section of these refugees, however, reach their final destination. Many others drown to death at sea, are killed, tortured and raped by the traffickers, who have an intimate profit-sharing nexus with the authorities in many of these countries.

A Humanitarian Crisis

Over a million Rohingya refugees from Myanmar have been living in the camps in Cox's bazaar of Bangladesh for close to two years. With no access to jobs, education and health care, these vulnerable refugees are becoming victims of a new wave of human trafficking to Malaysia. In 2015, Malaysian authorities discovered elaborate syndicates specializing in moving refugees from Myanmar and Bangladesh through Thailand to Malaysia. A clamp down by Malaysia and Thai authorities followed forcing the syndicates to lie low. Incidents beginning the latter part of 2018, however, suggest that the syndicates are active again. This time, their operation, worth millions of dollars, is much more complex and spans across at least five countries. It will take nothing short of a regional cooperation mechanism to address the issue, and a strong international commitment for early resettlement of the Rohingya.

A new wave of trafficking appears to have begun in late 2018 and peaked by early 2019. In April 2019, 47 Rohingya men ranging from 14 to 30 years landed at Sungai Belati beach in northern Malaysian state of Perlis and were detained by the authorities. Previously in April, 35 migrants had landed in the same location. Malaysian authorities said that boats carrying another 200 are believed to be at sea.[2] Reports of this nature, of these perilous journeys by desperate Rohingya, continue to appear in the media. Many of these reports have quoted men and women who undertook such journeys and survived to reach Malaysia. Monitoring of such reports provides an understanding into working of these syndicates comprising agencies spanning across Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, and Malaysia.

Clampdown of 2015

In 2015, Thailand found bodies of Rohingya from Myanmar and Bangladeshis at makeshift camps along the border with Malaysia. The Malaysian authorities too discovered over 150 graves and dozens of camps. In one particular camp in the northern state of Perlis, they discovered wooden cages and lookout posts, as well as graves and a stretcher to carry dead bodies.[1] These discoveries brought to light the fact that Rohingya and Bangladeshis were arriving in those camps by sea and were being held in appalling conditions before being released. The discovery prompted the Thai authorities to crack down on traditional sea routes for illegal migrants coming to the country. This triggered a crisis as smugglers dumped hundreds of refugees off the coasts of other countries and fled. Estimates suggest that 25,000 people who attempted to cross the Andaman Sea for Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia on unsafe and overloaded boats had drowned. Nevertheless, the scale of trafficking nosedived. A public inquiry by Malaysia into the findings began only in April 2019.

Pattern-trend Analysis of the Trafficking Syndicates

A new wave of trafficking appears to have begun in late 2018 and peaked by early 2019. In April 2019, 47 Rohingya men ranging from 14 to 30 years landed at Sungai Belati beach in northern Malaysian state of Perlis and were detained by the authorities. Previously in April, 35 migrants had landed in the same location. Malaysian authorities said that boats carrying another 200 are believed to be at sea.[2] Reports of this nature, of these perilous journeys by desperate Rohingya, continue to appear in the media. Many of these reports have quoted men and women who undertook such journeys and survived to reach Malaysia. Monitoring of such reports provides an understanding into working of these syndicates comprising agencies spanning across Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, and Malaysia.

Traffickers, who promise to take a refugee to Malaysia, are typically paid upfront 4,000 Malaysian ringgit (approximately US\$976.80) or equivalent sum per person. There are evidences to suggest that the syndicates that roped in Rohingya men as their ground-level contacts to shortlist vulnerable persons from the camps. Refugees often use all their savings to make such payments. However, for those who cannot pay the total amount and have some contacts or relatives in Malaysia also become a part of the journey by making a part payment.



Trafficking routes of Rohingya refugees. Source: Thomson Reuters

The fact that these traffickers are no petty criminals, but a part of the organized crime syndicate with access to weapons was revealed from an incident that took place on 15 May. Acting on a tip-off, Bangladesh police clashed with a group of traffickers who opened fire on them near the refugee camps. While some traffickers fled, two traffickers who themselves were Rohingya, were injured and subsequently succumbed to their injuries.[5]

These journeys typically start in larger boats with hundreds of Rohingya either from Myanmar or Bangladesh and once in Thai waters, they are transferred to smaller and crowded vessels. Those who have made the entire amount are dropped off a kilometre off shore, from where they walk into Malaysia. Those who haven't made the payment or have paid only a part, are held back in the makeshift camps and lodged in wooden cages to prevent their escape. Telephone calls are made to their relatives in Malaysia to arrange for the payment. Those who have been paid for are allowed to go. Many of those who can't arrange money are tortured without food. Women are raped. Not many survive such atrocities and end up in the graves dug around the camps. However, given the unwelcome publicity such camps and graves have generated, the traffickers are now focusing on refugees who can pay upfront.

Additionally, traffickers roaming free in the refugee camps in Bangladesh are now trafficking young girls and women, and sending them to Malaysia. Promises are made to find them work in that country. This is an attractive offer for many and opportunity to escape from the wretched conditions in the camps. In mid-May, Bangladeshi authorities prevented 69 people most of whom were women from being sent to Malaysia in boats.[3] In the same month, another group of 23 Rohingya girls, aged between 15 to 19, were rescued from a residence in capital Dhaka. They had been brought from the camps in Cox's Bazar and were to be flown into Malaysia, possibly for prostitution or child marriage.[4] Four traffickers were arrested and the girls were sent back to their camps. Bangladeshi authorities say that they have stopped 300 Rohingya from leaving the camps, in 2019 (till early May) alone. Many others have attempted to procure Bangladeshi passports to fly out to middle-eastern countries.

The fact that these traffickers are no petty criminals, but a part of the organized crime syndicate with access to weapons was revealed from an incident that took place on 15 May. Acting on a tip-off, Bangladesh police clashed with a group of traffickers who opened fire on them near the refugee camps. While some traffickers fled, two traffickers who themselves were Rohingya, were injured and subsequently succumbed to their injuries.[5] The fire and money power of these groups would invariably increase over time, so is the prospect of their nexus with the local authorities, posing an increasing challenge on the capacities of the local law enforcement agencies. The prospect of making money have also brought in a local group of con-traffickers in Bangladesh into play. They are not part of the trafficking syndicates and are essentially local players.

Another group of a 12 Rohingya, including eight women aged between 16 and 22 and four boys were detained in Mizoram state in May.[8] They had entered from Bangladesh without any valid travel documents and were probably being trafficked to Malaysia or Taiwan, according to the Mizoram police. Modus operandi of the traffickers was to keep them with a local host- in this case a Mizo woman- before moving them elsewhere.

They enter into agreement with the refugees for transporting them to Malaysia for a much cheaper rate, ranging from US\$500 to US\$600. However, instead of taking them to Malaysia, they use small boats to drop the refugees at Narikel Jinjira or Coconut Island, a remote coral islet of Bangladesh. For these refugees, who have been robbed off all their money, it takes another boat ride, costing US\$6, to return to their camps in Cox's bazar. In May, 54 refugees- 32 men and 22 women- were victims of such con-traffickers.[6]

Trafficking route through India

Malaysia is not just becoming the destination choice for Rohingya from Myanmar and Bangladesh, but also, albeit in a trickle, from India. The route through India, which involves air travel, is comparatively expensive and hence, is unattractive for a lot of refugees. In February 2019, seven Rohingya including two women were arrested at Hyderabad airport while attempting to fly out to Malaysia on fake Indian passport. They had reportedly entered India in 2013. A sister of one of the women who is already settled in Malaysia urged her to come over to seek a good life.[7] The group then approached a gang which specializes in making fake voter IDs and other documents. While this group was unfortunate to have come under the scanner, police in Hyderabad did not deny the possibility of Rohingya refugees managing to escape adopting similar modus operandi on previous occasions. Another group of a 12 Rohingya, including eight women aged between 16 and 22 and four boys were detained in Mizoram state in May.[8] They had entered from Bangladesh without any valid travel documents and were probably being trafficked to Malaysia or Taiwan, according to the Mizoram police. Modus operandi of the traffickers was to keep them with a local host- in this case a Mizo woman- before moving them elsewhere.

Life in Malaysia

A working paper[9] by the Humanitarian Policy Group in 2016 said, in Malaysia a Rohingya earned half of what an average Malaysian would earn, had to set aside a significant sum of the salary to pay bribes to police, and constantly faced arrests and deportation. Still, compared to the life in the refugee camps, the quality of life was far better in Malaysia. Jobs in factories, construction sites, restaurants are available. Some set up small stalls and some became garbage collectors. Those who can't find a job, beg on the streets.

The root of the problem invariably lies in Myanmar and its steadfast refusal to ensure repatriation of the Rohingya. Time and again, Myanmar has come up with flimsy excuses to halt any such move. It is important that the international community addresses the problem and devises a framework which ensures that the refugees return home. Anything short of that would amount to treating the symptoms, rather than the source of the problem.

In May 2019, arrest of two Rohingya in Malaysia on terrorism charges is one of the first such incidents to have been reported. Part of a four-member terror cell, a 20-year-old Rohingya man admitted to be a supporter of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) terror group. According to Malaysia police, he had planned to attack the Myanmar Embassy in Kuala Lumpur. No information was provided by the police about the second arrested Rohingya. Both were detained Kuala Lumpur. Other Rohingya community leaders have raised doubts about the authenticity of the report and have even questioned whether the arrested men were Rohingya at all. Even the ARSA has refuted the report. It tweeted that it “only legitimately and objectively” operates as an ethno-nationalist movement within Myanmar and that its activities would not transcend beyond the country.[10] It is difficult to verify whether the arrested were indeed Rohingya and had connections with terrorists. It is also not possible to conclude if it is a strategy by Malaysian authorities to put a halt to the mass migration of the Rohingya.

Conclusion

Reports suggest that the conditions of the camps in Bangladesh have considerably improved. International donors and aid agencies have been generous in providing financial assistance to improve the living standards in the camps. However, it is also true that these camps, bereft of access to livelihood, will never become permanent homes for the refugees, who will continue to make desperate attempts to leave. This chronic desperation will invariably be exploited by the human trafficking syndicates, extremists, and other elements. A regional crackdown involving Bangladesh, Thailand, and Malaysia may halt the trafficking temporarily. But as long as the push factors remain unaddressed, vulnerability of the refugees would continue. The root of the problem invariably lies in Myanmar and its steadfast refusal to ensure repatriation of the Rohingya. Time and again, Myanmar has come up with flimsy excuses to halt any such move. It is important that the international community addresses the problem and devises a framework which ensures that the refugees return home. Anything short of that would amount to treating the symptoms, rather than the source of the problem.

End Notes

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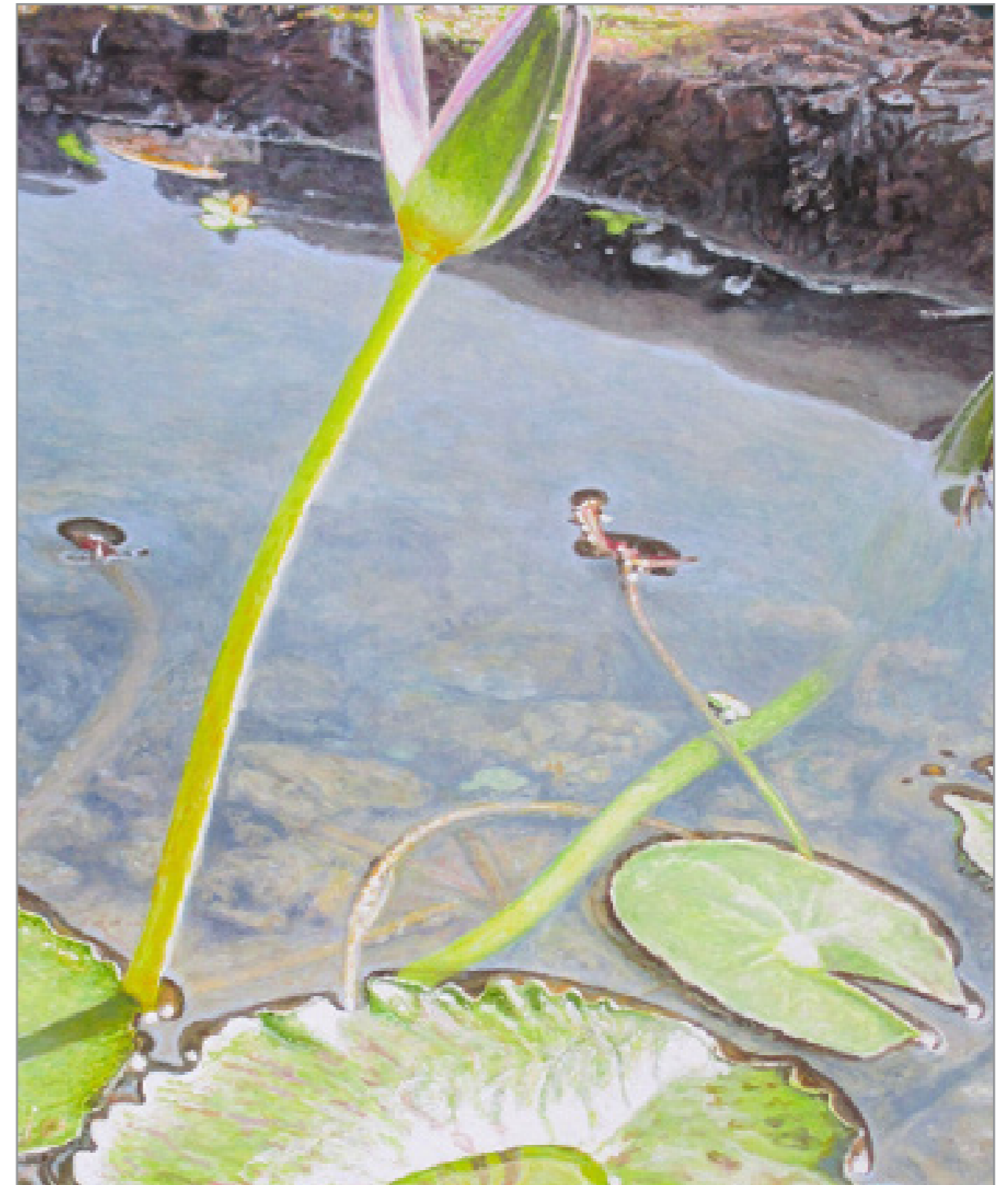
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NYMPHEAS

ARTWORK BY
WOLFGANG WIDMOSER

Sun, moon and clouds,
 shadow and light, blossoms,
 leaves and little insects,
 dewdrops which collect
 the dust like a magnet -
 once again I discover
 the Universe
 through a kind of mirror
 which contains
 the whole cosmos.
 Micro- and macrocosm
 reveal themselves
 as an expression of a
 supreme totality
 and we observe
 the miracle of awareness.
 "Everything flows"
 Heraklit suggests and
 I agree looking at my
 bowl of waterlillies.
 There,s no beginning
 and no end, only
 -INTENSITY-















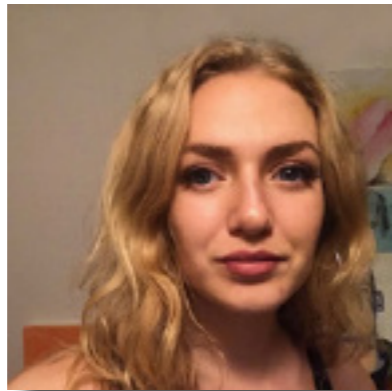








Jas Sykes is a 22-year-old artist from Worthing, West Sussex, based in Manchester where she has just completed a degree in Fine Art & Art History.



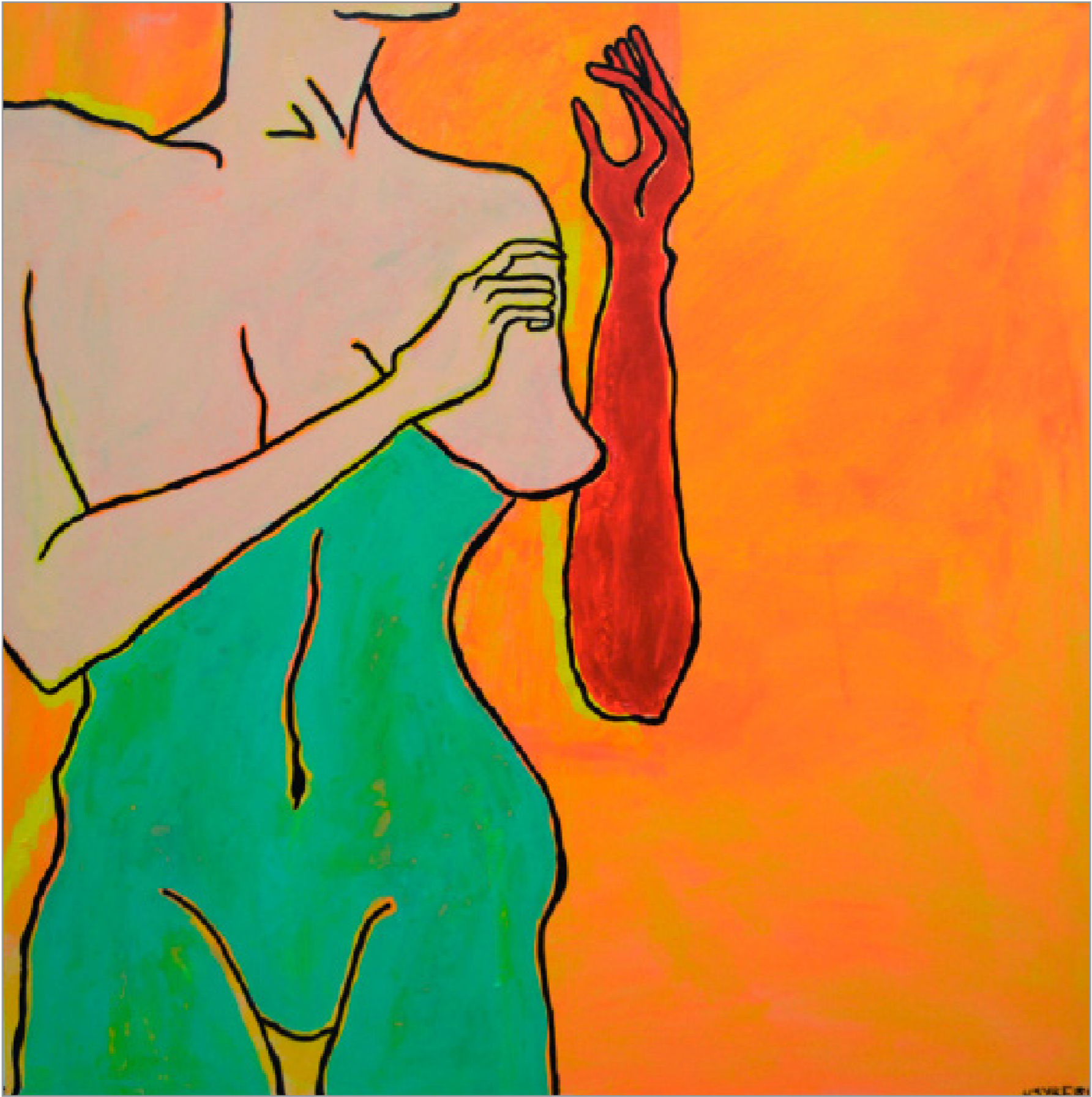
UNTITLED 2017-19

ARTWORK BY
JAS SYKES

My work plays upon a series of juxtapositions to create feelings of both tension and intimacy. Such feelings come primarily from the discordant and harmonising colours, presented on, in and around the nude figures. I see the post-postmodern condition as creating an embodied and juxtaposing mood because, with technology as the new cultural landscape, we are brought closer, yet concurrently a space has been created amongst individuals where isolation lurks. One can feel at peace with such isolation yet simultaneously feel discomfort at being isolated as social media makes it feel like you're the only one who's alone.

Above all, colour is my main protagonist and it, too, exists within a duality. It is dangerous and allusive yet cosmetic and superficial. It is both on and under the surface. 19th century theorists write about the 'fall' into colour as the fall of Western colour by labelling colour as 'primitive', 'vulgar', 'feminine' and 'queer' whereby it must be contained. Recent pushes for equality can be seen as metaphorically releasing colour into society, expressed through the optimistic feelings within my work.

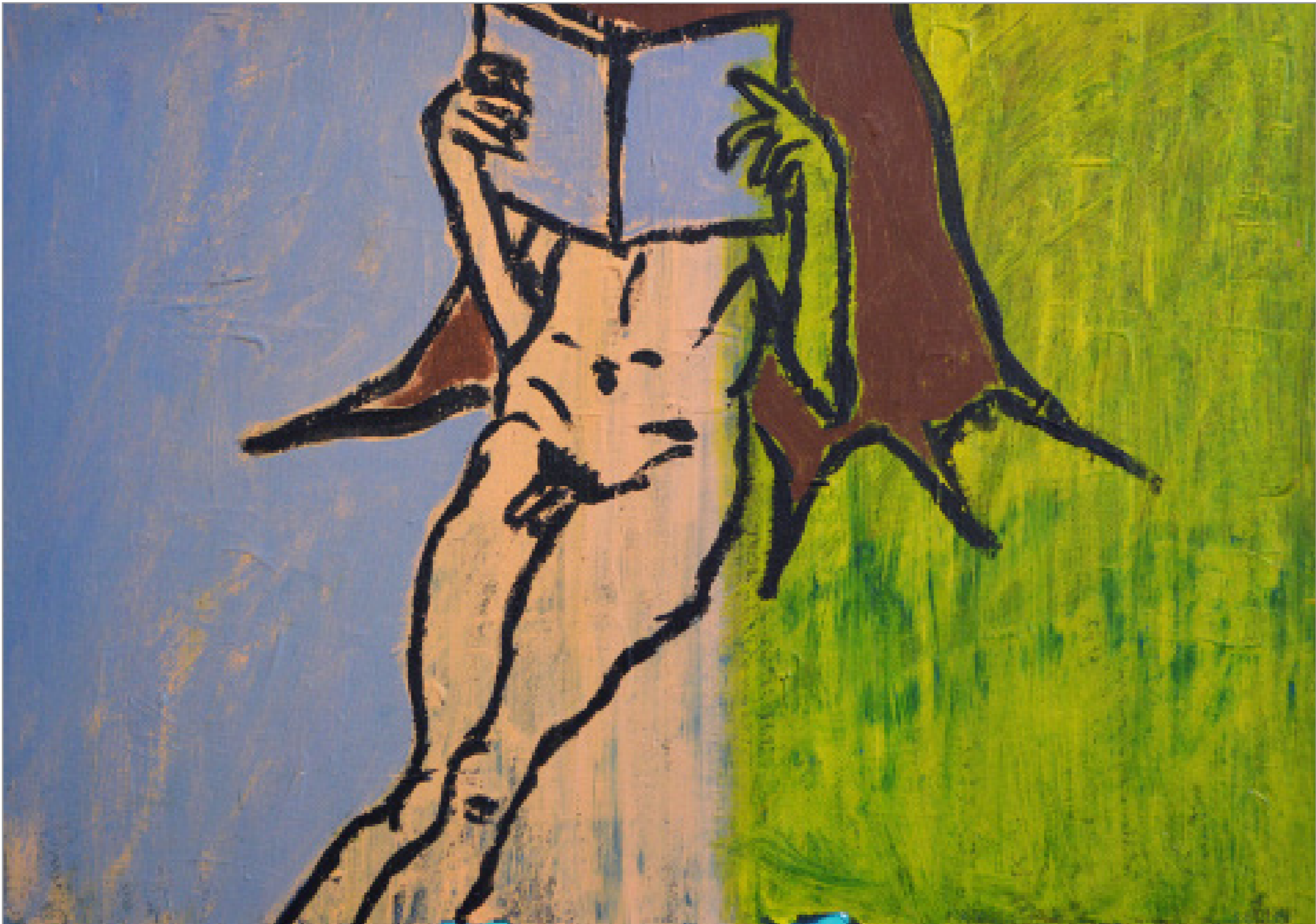












Ulyseas has served time in advertising as copywriter and creative director selling people things they didn't need, a ghost writer for some years, columnist of a newspaper, a freelance journalist and photographer. In 2009 he created *Live Encounters Magazine*, in Bali, Indonesia. It is a not for profit (adfree) free online magazine featuring leading academics, writers, poets, activists of all hues etc. from around the world. March 2016 saw the launch of its sister publication *Live Encounters Poetry*, which was relaunched as *Live Encounters Poetry & Writing* in March 2017. He has edited, designed and produced all of Live Encounters' 160 publications till date (July 2019). Mark's philosophy is that knowledge must be free and shared freely to empower all towards enlightenment. He is the author of three books: *RAINY – My friend & Philosopher*, *Seductive Avatars of Maya – Anthology of Dystopian Lives* and *In Gethsemane: Transcripts of a Journey*.
www.amazon.com/markulyseas

KUTA SCAPES

TEXT & PHOTOGRAPHS BY
MARK ULYSEAS

The colour blue is all pervasive. It embraces both sea and sky. Plumes of spray and white clouds dance in harmony.

Perhaps in this imagery there is a message for the viewer, a message of symbioticity.

What do we have?

Just each other.

The following photographs were taken over a period of one week with a small cheap (under US\$150) fixed lens camera.



©Mark Ulyseas

01 After sunrise.



©Mark Ulyseas

02 Sea clouds.



©Mark Ulyseas

03 Riding the waves.



©Mark Ulyseas

04 Waiting.



05 Time out.



©Mark Ulyseas

06 Sun behind clouds.



©Mark Ulyseas

07 Tide out.



©Mark Ulyseas

08 Before the storm.



09 Inverted sunset.

Vũ Tuấn Hưng is a professional photographer and tour guide based in Hồ Chí Minh city. He is a tour guide for mainly German speaking tourists. His photographs feature in numerous publications across the world. If you are visiting Vietnam and need his assistance please email - vietnaminfos@gmail.com



HOMAGE TO LORD BUDDHA IN SOUTH KOREA

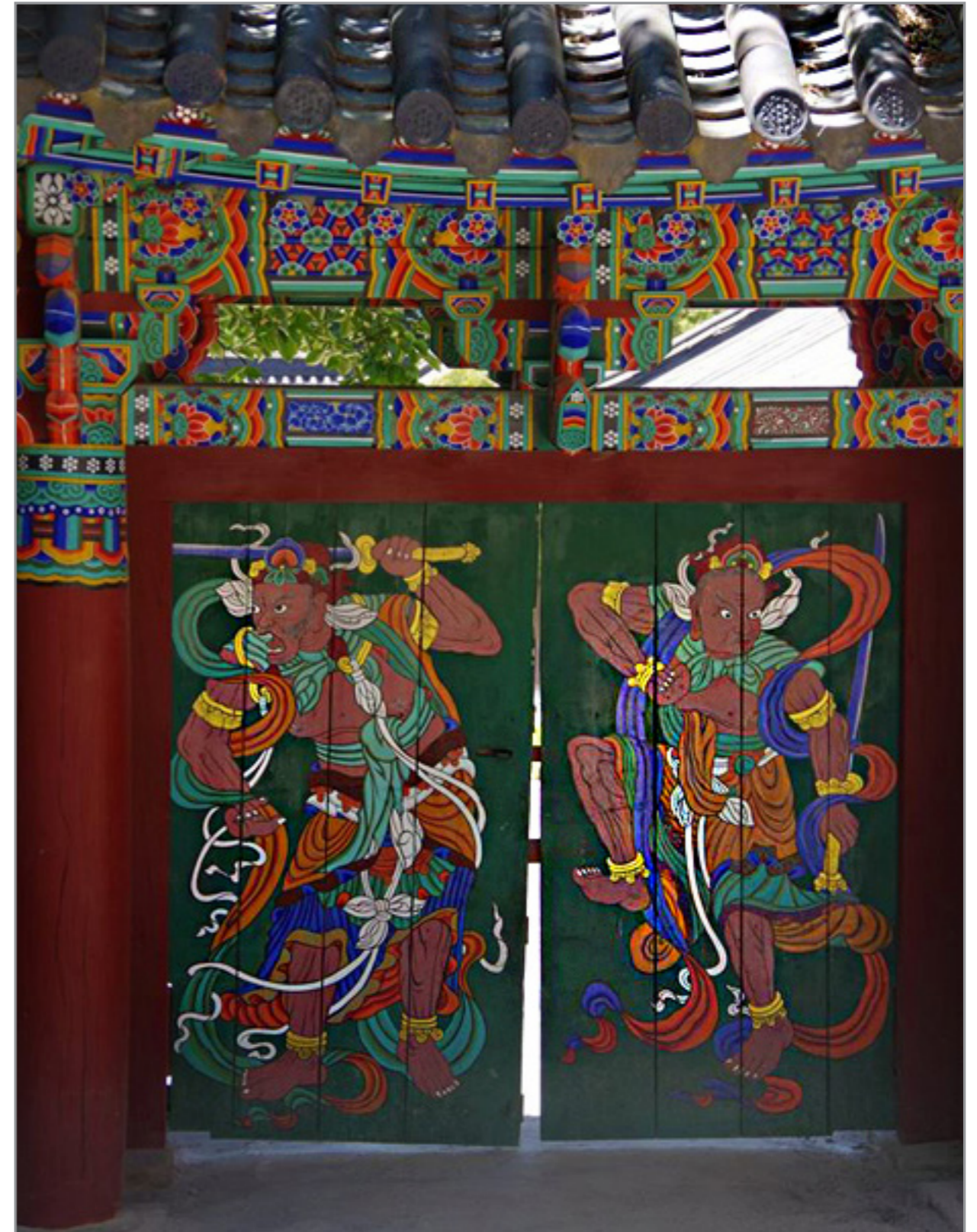
TEXT & PHOTOGRAPHS BY
VŨ TUẤN HƯNG

Buddhism first arrived in Korea in 372 BCE in Goguryeo. In 374 BCE the influential Han Chinese monk Ado arrived in the kingdom and inspired King Sosurim of Goguryeo the following year.

Korean Buddhism is distinguished from other forms of Buddhism by its attempt to resolve what it sees as inconsistencies in Mahayana Buddhism. Early Korean monks believed that the traditions they received from foreign countries were internally inconsistent. To address this, they developed a new holistic approach to Buddhism. This approach is characteristic of virtually all major Korean thinkers, and has resulted in a distinct variation of Buddhism, which is called Tongbulgyo ("interpenetrated Buddhism"), a form that sought to harmonize all disputes by Korean scholars. Korean Buddhist thinkers refined their predecessors' ideas into a distinct form.

Korean Buddhism has contributed much to East Asian Buddhism, especially to early Chinese, Japanese, and Tibetan schools of Buddhist thought.*

*wikipedia



01 The door in Bulguksa. The temple is classified as Historic and Scenic Site No. 1 by the South Korean government. In 1995, Bulguksa was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List.



02 A monk in praying at the Haedong Yonggung Buddhist Temple in Gijang-gun, Busan, South Korea . It was built in 1376 by the teacher known as *Naong* during the Goryeo Dynasty, and was originally known as the Bomun Temple.



03 The Seokguram Grotto is a hermitage and part of the Bulguksa temple complex. In 1962, it was designated the 24th national treasure of Korea. In 1995, Seokguram was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List together with the Bulguksa Temple. It exemplifies some of the best Buddhist sculptures in the world.



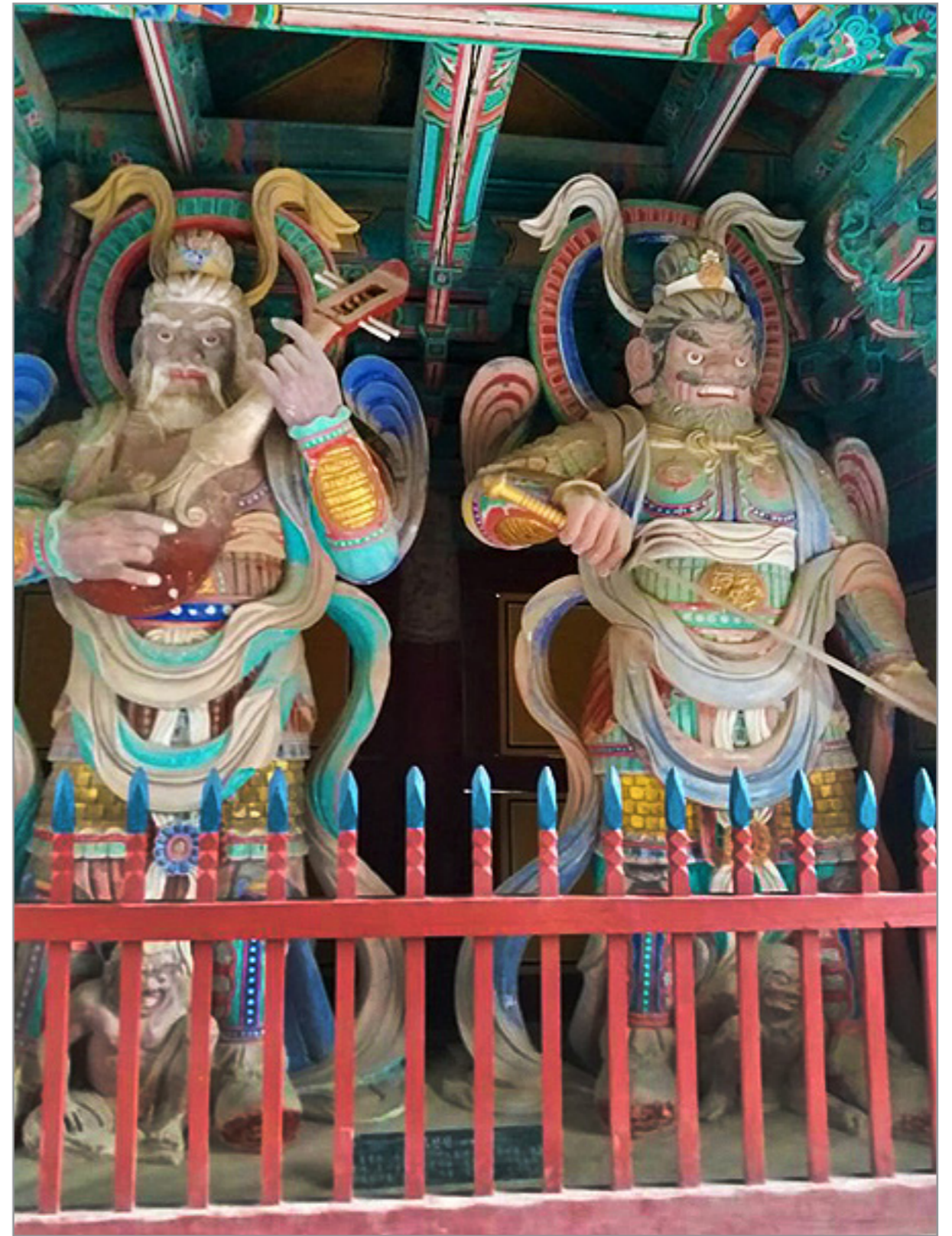
04 Haedong Yonggungsa Temple, Gijang-gun, Busan.



05 Prayer lanterns in Bulguksa.



06 Dancheong is Korean traditional decorative coloring on wooden buildings and artifacts for the purpose of style. It is based on five basic colors; blue (east), white (west), red (south), black (north), and yellow (center).



07 The statues of Dhṛtarāṣṭra at the gate of Bulguksa temple.



08 Reclining Buddha at Haedong Yonggungsa Temple, Gijang-gun, Busan.



09 Headong Yonggungsa



10 The temple and the door to the Seokguram Grotto.



11 Daeungjeon, the Hall of Great Enlightenment, is the main hall. Dabotap and Seokgatap stand before this hall. The hall enshrines the Sakyamuni Buddha and was first built in 681, Bulguksa Temple, Gyeongju.

Mikyoung Cha is a graduate in Oriental Painting from Hyosung Women's University, Daegu, South Korea. She has participated in a number of group art exhibitions in South Korea and Japan. In 2016 she took up photography – the camera becoming her paint brush. This globe trotting photographer is a regular contributor to *Live Encounters Magazine*.



ZHOUZHUANG

TEXT & PHOTOGRAPHS BY
MIKYOUNG CHA

Zhouzhuang was known as Zhenfangli in ancient times. The town still retains the styles and patterns of its ancient past. It's most famous attractions are Fu'an Bridge, Double Bridge, Shen's Residence and Zhang's Residence. Zhouzhuang is surrounded and crisscrossed by lakes and rivers, and no less than 14 stone bridges cross the rivers, giving the town its distinctive appearance. "Small bridges, flowing water, and people" are the words Chinese people typically use to summarize Zhouzhuang's characteristic features. It is known as the 'Venice of the East'.*

*wikipedia







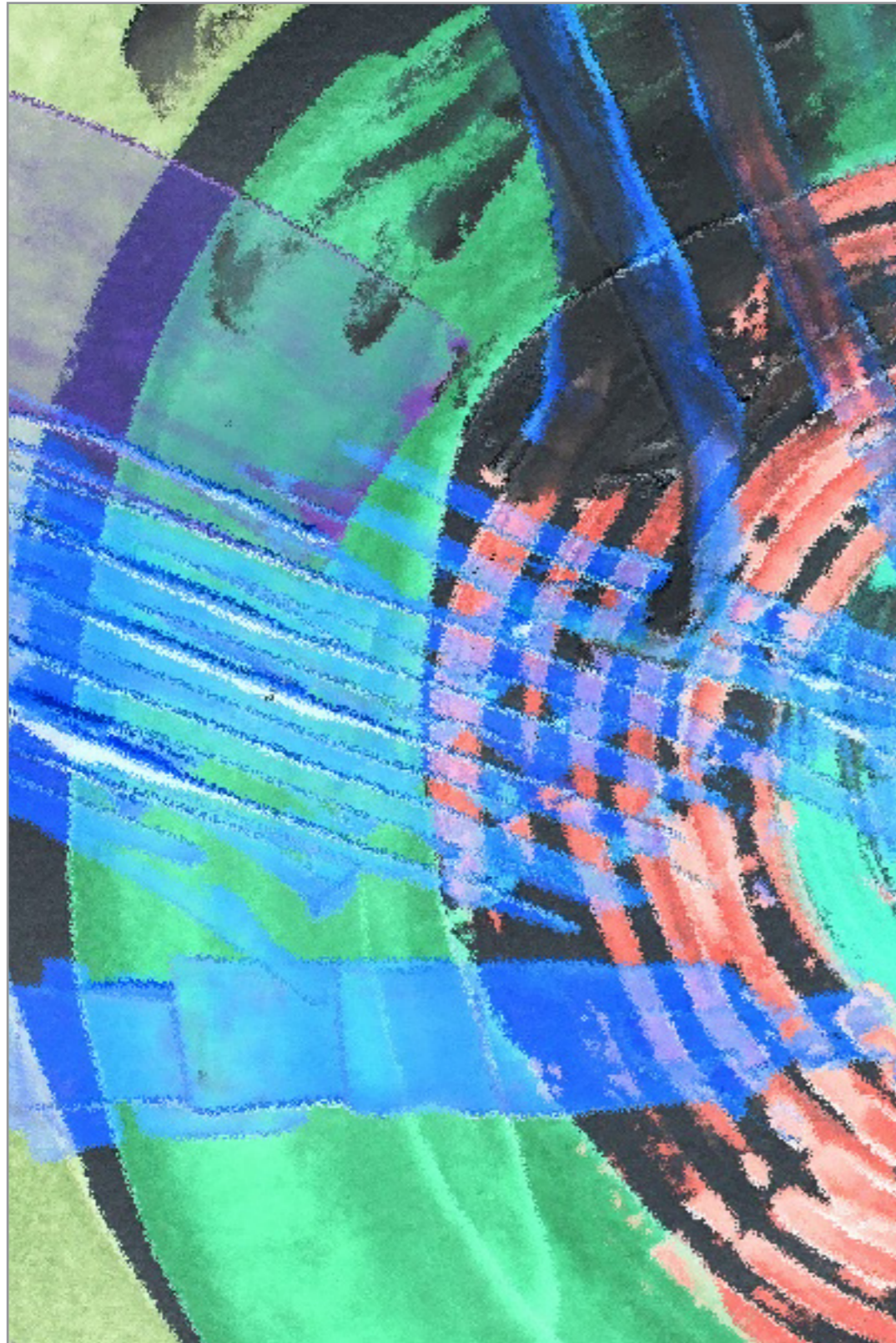








Theresa Griffin Kennedy is an author, poet and writer of creative nonfiction, and fiction. She is the author of three books, *Murder and Scandal in Prohibition Portland, 2016*, *Blue Reverie in Smoke: Poetry 2001-2016*, and a book of fiction *Burnside Field Lizard and Selected Stories, 2018*. She works as chief editor of the Indie Publishing Company, Oregon Greystone Press, and publishes other Portland authors including her husband writer and author, Don DuPay. Her next book, her first novel, *Talionic Night in Portland* will be published in 2019, and her fifth book *The Lost Restaurants of Portland* will be published by The History Press in 2020.



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THERESA GRIFFIN KENNEDY

PAINTING TO RESTORE THE WATERSHED

The year I stopped feeling is the year I began to paint.

Resonant empathy according to some psychologists and other mental health experts familiar with compassion fatigue can be described as finite. It is said that a person can actually become depleted of empathy if they are not actively involved in some form of restorative self-care. That process can involve connecting with nature, with people, and even experimenting with or creating art. For empathetic people, the process of absorbing the pain of another person and “suffering together” can be an exhausting and dangerous proposition if not dealt with realistically and with a sense of attention to some form of replenishment of the self. The danger for those with a strong sense of empathy comes into play when we feel powerless to protect someone, or when we’re dealing with truly defenseless populations, like abused and neglected children, tortured and abandoned animals, or battered and depressed women. Sometimes complex suffering like this seems to exist in a landscape of totality, it seems irresolvable and beyond our ability to control or alter for the better.

For over three decades I could not separate the pain of those I loved as something apart from my own emotional state, something apart from my own pain. I internalized the pain of others, allowed it to become a form of identification, of intimacy, even. As a wife, being verbally and physically abused by my first husband, I connected only to his pain and not my own. And he was definitely in pain, even as he abused me. I thought *If Only I Do More*. When that didn’t work, I finally walked away. As a mother, living with my second husband, our child’s pain became my pain, and was indistinguishable to me if she was in distress or troubled for any reason. I always knew that for most of my life I was perceived as the kind of person people called “a soft touch.” That meant I was a softie. I was soft like ice cream—malleable, sweet, easily consumed, and I always made people feel better. I spent years *giving* to accomplish this, particularly during my teen years and when I was in my early twenties. I gave my time, I gave my money. To men I gave my body, often not asking or even expecting anything in return.



Later, in my thirties, I began volunteering because I thought I could make the world a better place. I volunteered for Cat Adoption Team, and Feral Cat Coalition. Part of my volunteer work entailed holding and “waking up” recently spayed and neutered cats. In my off time, I found hundreds of cats and several dogs’ homes, often rescuing them myself. I paid for their medical needs, and supplied pet food for low income people I came into contact with, despite the fact that I was poor myself.

My daughter and I had a philosophy that we lived by: “Whoever crosses our path” and needs help with a cat or a dog we would help, no matter what. And we did, year after year.

In time, I volunteered at a charity to assist low income Hispanic folks with food, clothing, and to help domestic violence victims. For eight years. The charity even helped with legal representation when workers were not paid as numerous undocumented workers are often exploited, and thusly not paid in the state of Oregon. During most of this time, I was raising a child, my growing daughter and I was the proverbial college student living on loans.

Then, strangely, after so many years of giving, and after so many years of the simple struggle of the day to day of life, I stopped feeling. It was gradual but it happened. I’m still not sure why, or how, but things didn’t seem to matter anymore. I became depressed. I walked away. I quit. My second divorce was probably part of it, and the nine years of single motherhood, too, I suppose. But I quit. I gave up. It seemed that nothing I had ever done had ever made a difference or ever would.

I knew I was in trouble though when I sat on a Trimet bus in downtown Portland and watched two homeless men engage in a vicious fist fight. Their torn clothing hung on them like the rags they were, and I remember only blurred shades of dark blue, black and burgundy. The fragrant apple-like scent of fallen leaves drifted in the bus as I watched them, and their fists flew so fast they lost definition. What was distinct and what I do remember was the distorted anger mixed with the desperate unhappiness that was plastered across their fluid contorting faces.

Another woman sat on the bus and I could tell she was frightened. She felt something. Her eyes were wide and she appeared shocked as the men fell into the side of the bus with a loud thud, and continued to grapple. She looked over at me, as if for comfort, and seemed genuinely scared. But I felt... nothing. And it bothered me. Feeling nothing bothered me.

I sat on the bus and looked out the window as impassively as if I were looking at a mediocre sunset. When the bus drove north, I didn’t continue watching the men fight. I allowed my head to drift and there I was looking east in front of me. I felt like there would always be a fight somewhere, and that nothing I might do would ever stop that fight. It would just go on ceaselessly into an uncertain future forever and ever. Nothing I might do would change any of it.

That night I thought long and hard about the past few years and what I had been doing. It was then I realized in a moment of clarity that can only be described as an epiphany, or an awakening of sorts that I was like a well that had run dry. I was like a desert in need of water, to replenish itself. I had to realize something I hadn’t yet: that I could not continue this relentless giving until I had nothing left to connect me to the woman I needed to be, to the woman I was destined to be, to the woman I wanted to be.

I knew on some level that I had to adapt to this new condition of feeling nothing and caring for nothing, by doing something. I decided to lie in bed for a week and think about things. So, I did. I lay in bed and thought about it. I ate buttered Top Ramen and endless slices of cucumber and drank Lipton tea. I thought about all the things I’d wanted to do—had secretly thought about doing, but hadn’t, for whatever reason. The memories of my life played back like an old black and white reel of film, one memory after the other turning over in the secrecy and silence of my mind.

After several days of rest and quiet, and seemingly out of the blue, I felt compelled to begin painting-again. The thought was the remaining shard of a dream I’d had since I was a teen, since I was sixteen to be precise. But I had been too fearful to pursue painting in my adulthood, and had repressed the desire for decades for the simple reason that my father had told me I wasn’t talented enough. The year I turned sixteen, in 1982, I tried to paint the face of a woman. A portrait of a woman with black hair and green eyes, (probably my mother) and when he saw it some weeks later, my father told me it looked “schizoid.” I thought it was fairly good, but I could instantly feel and hear the disappointment, and the disapproval in his voice, which was something my father often communicated to me. Something shut down in me when he told me the woman looked “schizoid” and I never picked up another brush again.

But the year I stopped feeling is the year I began to paint.

My father was long since gone by then, and so too, I hoped were my unresolved feelings about him. He loved me, like he loved all of his children, and I know he did the best he could. I didn't want to blame him for anything anymore, but I did want to undo something he created in me, which I found to be a reticence about taking chances. Ultimately, overcoming that reticence expressed itself in my desire to begin painting, again. But to begin painting, I had to crush the idea that I could never do it, because I wasn't talented enough. I had to crush the memory of what my father had said to me. And so on my own, and without telling anyone, I began to paint. After many years of thinking about painting, I just decided I'd do it. I began buying books on painting and supplies, and I slowly discovered that the act of painting was like restoring an empty watershed to its original state of beautiful fullness and plentitude.

In time, just as I had lost the ability to feel anything or connect with people, the act of painting altered that. By teaching myself to paint, I learned to reconfigure myself and somehow the watershed inside me was no longer barren, somehow it became replenished.

As a poet and a writer, the world of letters can be exacting and unforgiving. There is little joy in writing, though a day cannot go by that I don't write. But writing has left me draped across my desk, my face awash in tears, or so engrossed in rage, my fingers become numb as they furiously work the keyboard. It can at times make me feel vindicated, but writing rarely brings me joy.

Writing exhausts a known part of my mind that I am intimately familiar with. But when I pick up a tube of rich cream paint, or hold a brush in my hands, dripping with color, I am transformed and transfixed, and the process feels very nearly unconscious. It's never something I'm aware of at the time. Only later do I see how fluid and mysterious the process is—the process of creating with paint and how it restores, empowers, and gives you your water back.

The rich heady smell of the creamy oil paint, heavy with linseed, poppy seed, and walnut oil, slowing expanding from the Liquitex tube, the sharp almost floral scent of the liquid acrylic paint as I pour it into the metal tray, the sting of the Isopropyl alcohol on my cracked hands as I fling it on the large canvas, the sense of burgeoning expectation as I watch the organic shapes expand on the canvas, distorting the paint in ways the brush cannot—it brings something back to me, it changes me, it restores the watershed within me. It makes me *feel*.



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BAKED BEETROOT WITH WALNUTS AND POMEGRANATE MOLASSES VEGETARIAN, VEGAN, GLUTEN-FREE MEZE

We love beetroot, pancar, as we call in Turkish and I have been making this delicious baked beetroots with garlic, walnuts, pomegranate molasses dish a lot recently. It makes a wonderful meze, also accompanies pasta, rice and grills beautifully. It is also vegan and gluten free, and so easy to make. Here's my recipe, if you'd like to give it a go.

Afiyet Olsun,

Ozlem

Signed copies of
Ozlem's Turkish Table; Recipes from My Homeland
by Ozlem Warren is available at
www.gbpublishing.co.uk/product-page/ozlem-s-turkish-table



Baked beetroot with garlic, walnuts, pomegranate molasses.

© Ozlem Warren

Serves: 4 to 6

Ingredients:

- 500gr/1.2oz beetroot, peeled and cut into bitesize chunks
- 30ml/2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 cloves of garlic, finely chopped
- 85gr/3oz walnuts, chopped
- 15ml/1 tbsp pomegranate molasses
- 30ml/2 tbsp pomegranate seeds to decorate
- Sprigs of flat leaf parsley to decorate
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Instructions

Preheat the oven to 200 C/ 400 F

Pour in the olive oil on a baking tray and stir in the beetroot, cut into bitesize chunks and chopped garlic to the tray. Coat them with the olive oil, season with salt and ground black pepper. Then roast in the preheated oven for about 40 minutes.

Once cooked, let the beetroot & garlic cool in the tray, then transfer into a serving plate.

Stir in the chopped walnuts and the pomegranate molasses, combine well.

Decorate with pomegranate seeds and sprigs of parsley and serve.

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