

INTERACTIVE ARTICLE COVER

RUPKATHA JOURNAL

ON INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES IN HUMANITIES



ISSN 0975-2935

About the Journal

Journal DOI	https://dx.doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha
Journal Home	www.rupkatha.com
Indexed by	Scopus Web of Science: Emerging Sources Citation Index (ESCI) DOAJ
Journal Metrics	CiteScore 2020: 0.2 SJR 2020: 0.162 SNIP 2020: 0.193 JCI 2020: 0.50

About the Issue

Issue	Volume 14, Number 2, 2022
Editor	Tirtha Prasad Mukhopadhyay
Issue DOI	https://doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha.v14n2
TOC	https://rupkatha.com/v14n2.php

About the Book Review

Title	<i>Transient</i> by Tapati Gupta
Author/s	Somdatta Mandal
Affiliation	Former Professor of English, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan.
Author ID	None
Funding	NA
Article DOI	https://doi.org/10.21659/rupkatha.v14n2.27 Pages: 1-3
Abstract	https://rupkatha.com/v14n227
Full-text PDF	https://rupkatha.com/V14/n2/v14n227.pdf
Article History	First Published: 30 June 2022
Article Impact	Check Dynamic Impact
Copyright	Aesthetics Media Services
Licensing	Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial 4.0

This Open Access article is published under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. For citation use the DOI. For commercial re-use, please contact editor@rupkatha.com.

Book Review

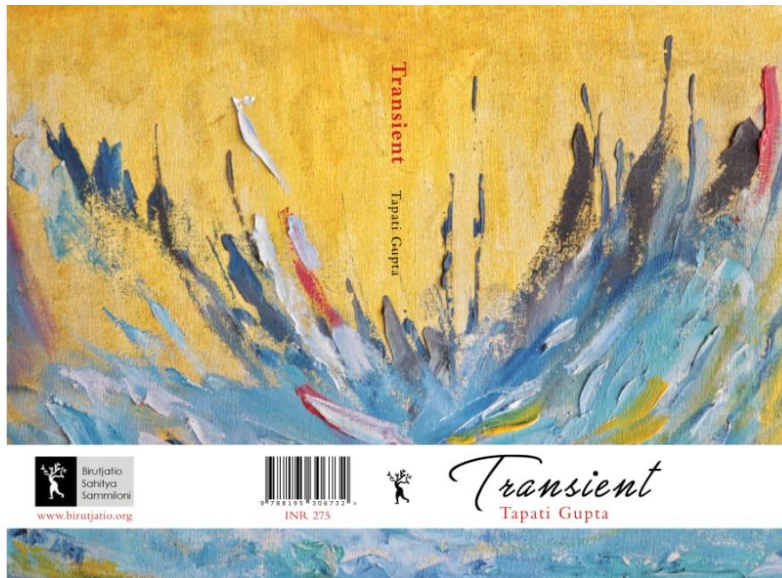
Transient by Tapati Gupta

Bolpur: Birutjatio Sahitya Sammiloni, 2021. 150 pp. Rs. 375. ISBN: 978-81-953067-3-2



Tapati Gupta, drama and theatre scholar, art critic, painter and translator, was Professor in the Department of English, University of Calcutta. *Transient* is her first book of poems though her poems have been appearing in printed and online journals for some time.

Cover painting by
Tapati Gupta
"Inspiration"
Oil on Canvas
16"x12"



'So many things get lost. / There's
no keeping track how many. /
Raindrops falling on heated
tarmacs / have their cold bodies
deserted. / Lost, Lost.'

Tapati Gupta is a poet in whom
everyday life and the curious
guidelines with which myth and
legend provide us are fused by
a fierce intellect. Her poems are
deeply of our own time and yet
primordial in their digging back
into our consciousness of what it
means to be human. She opens her
hand here to Archylos, there to
Tagore, but above all to the reader.
We glimpse Kolkata, Istanbul,
Vienna, the Andes, yet this is no
travogue: each glimpse is the
beginning of a reading of the earth
on which we accompany the poet,
not in spectacle but in thought.

This is a remarkable book. Full
of warmth, and yet also "Muted
light hemmed into dark foliage"
—the light in darkness that we all
face.

—Murdo Macdonald
Emerita Professor of History of
Scottish Art, University of Dundee

Reviewed by
Somdatta Mandal

Former Professor of English, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan. Email: somdattam@gmail.com

For a literary, art critic, as well as a painter who has specialized in drama criticism, Tapati Gupta dons many hats. Her latest contribution is a wonderfully rich collection of poems that she had been writing over time across decades, and after being confined at home for a long period of time, especially during the lock-down months, they have at last seen the light of day. These poems, according to the Foreword written by the renowned poet Bashabi Fraser, "have moved from the private notebook to the public sphere" and have provided her readers with different emotions that according to Gupta's own words played "hide and seek between the inside and the outside that rattled our lives all through the lockdown months." Though including many pre-pandemic poems as well, the poems in this collection overall provides release "from micro-time in micro space" and along with several paintings, "enabled her to remain positive throughout those dark days" (iv).

There is no particular order in which Gupta presents her poems to the readers. They evoke different emotions ranging from anger and anguish to love and peace. But as readers we find

several categories under which they can be broadly classified. The first and foremost group is on familial relationships. In 'Ma', she evokes her mother by remembering the all-encompassing affinity with her as a true friend – "You give me company still wherever I am." Similar feelings come out for her father where she longs for him in his absence, remembering "a long-cherished bondage" ('To My Father'). In another poem she specifically remembers the details of her daughter's birth in Ashar, June 16, 1980 and in 'Pain,' after remembering different kinds of pain, she admits, "one pain that makes me endure is the pain of missing you in my arms, my daughter."

As an English teacher specializing in drama, it is expected that some of her poems will discuss or mention this genre. Referring to the story of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra in a long poem titled, 'Agamemnon,' she begins by addressing him directly, "When last in Greece I met you Agamemnon/ looking at the ruins of your own estate," and then goes on to state "The curse over your dynasty Agamemnon/ has done a good deed." Explaining the reason for it she succinctly adds --

"We prefer drama and art and poetry
and think it is politically and intellectually correct
to think like this.
You made great art to happen,
so better to live and do and die as you did
and still be Agamemnon."

There are several poems which Gupta wrote while touring different places of Europe and the Middle East. The titles of these poems are self-explanatory – 'Istanbul Memories,' 'Ultramarine Istanbul' ("Why did you squeeze that tube of ultramarine/onto that line of land?"), 'Dolphins in the Bosphorous,' 'Rider on the Waves,' 'The Ottoman Hamam,' where "the whiteness struck with its moon-haze." In Europe she is moved by 'Da Vinci by the Loire,' 'Piraeus in the Twilight,' 'Eiffel Tower,' 'Notre Dame,' 'Paris at Night,' she remembers Vienna and the Danube, the 'Night Train to Barcelona,' and in 'Tagore in Mykonos' she narrates the story of an old woman and Greek men who are enamoured by the poet's music though they could not understand the song's meanings. Along with touring different places, she also writes about the birds, animals and nature she witnessed there. Thus, we get a long poem on the seagull obviously inspired by *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* by Richard Bach and says, "You are ready to take off/with your wings coloured by golden dreams" ('The Young Seagull') and another one where she praises the lifestyle of the condor which she saw while driving down from the skiing resort in Valle Nevado in Chile ('Condor in the Andes'). She even invites the reader, "Come I will take you into the desert." Willunga, Adelaide in Australia also finds a place in the anthology. Closer home she even records her experiences after visiting the crematorium at Tarapith.

Personal emotions also play a significant role in many of Gupta's poems. In 'Twenty Years From Now,' she feels "the world may be a little better because/ I was important in the life of a student." In 'The Identity Card,' she states, "Today I lost my identity/and found my many selves" and then she goes to a dream world. Later she gets out of it and says, "When morning dawned I was back again/in the old worn world of cold rationality/ My lost identity lay there beside my first cup of

tea." In another interesting poem called 'Elusive,' she declares –"Elusive poetry, do not elude me" and then states, "Poetry I have no time for you/but do not go away/ wait till I finish watching the grand show." In 'Birthday Thoughts,' she exclaims, "Thank you! My friends for making the day so different." She longs for all the lost things from her life, "When will be the day that will/bring back all the lost times" ('Lost').

Towards the end of her collection comes a series of poems based on experiences of being cloistered at home during the pandemic situation. These poems are very moving and express real-life situations as poetically as possible. A couple of poems had been inspired by the death of the veteran actor Soumitra Chatterjee. In 'The Other Room' she mentions people going in but not coming out at all. The poem on the hundreds of miles that the migrant workers had to walk to reach home after the lock-down was declared, is extremely moving, especially as it is accompanied by a pencil sketch ('The Walk.') In 'Bodies Everywhere,' we read about harsh reality where "instead of melodies and flowers/he finds blood stench everywhere." In the long poem entitled 'Monologue 2020' the poet begins with a question, "Who am I?/Just a unit in time". Her soul searching goes on throughout the poem and she blames mankind for neglecting nature too much and "covidising the world" and ends with these lines – "May you re-achieve the zenith of perfection/ but do not forget me, the dauntless 2020 /build me a memorial with grass flowers and thorns." In the last poem in this collection, the poet watches three birds circling and playing with each other outside and then writes, "From my window I watch/ till they enter and peck me urging me /to make the distant near/ nearer and nearer till I become one /with those who want to remember me" ("Epilogue").

Dedicated to her husband Swapan Gupta, who was always the first listener of her poetic musings, the multifarious nature of subjects and styles of the poems makes this book interesting to read. The world is brought alive through the different kinds of poems which are often stylistically quite different from one another. The aesthetically pleasing cover image titled "Inspiration" done in oil on canvas and along with several other poems that are accompanied by illustrations from her own repertoire of paintings, the book is a must read for everyone as the poems evoke the 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings' as well as the Wordsworthian dictum of 'emotions recollected in tranquility.' Fraser rightly compares Gupta's poems with Wordsworth Lucy poems, content to hide behind a mossy stone undiscovered but brimming with truth, life and colour. After this first book of poems the reader will expectantly wait for the next volume.

Somdatta Mandal, critic and translator, is Former Professor of English, Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan.