



**Edward Burtynsky: Oil**

**From Music to Painting:  
The Strange  
Yet Not-So-Strange  
Tales of Pardhaans  
Udayan Vajpeyi**

**Against the Fall  
Isca Greenfield-Sanders**

**Poetry  
Phoebe Wilcox**



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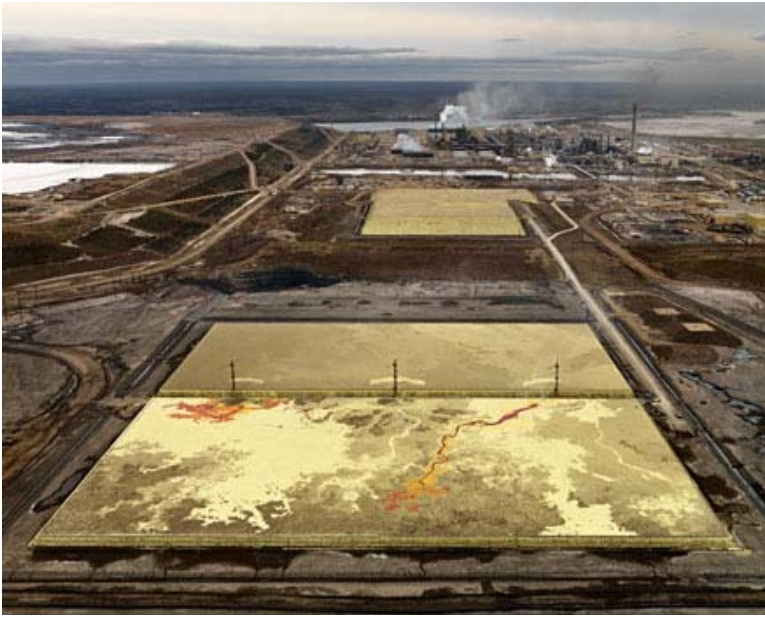
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## Edward Burtynsky: Oil



Edward Burtynsky, *Alberta Oil Sands #6*, Fort McMurray, Alberta, Canada, 2007. Chromogenic color print. Photograph © Edward Burtynsky, courtesy Nicholas Metivier Gallery.



Edward Burtynsky, *AMARC #5*, Davis-Monthan AFB, Tucson, Arizona, USA, 2006. Chromogenic color print. Photograph © Edward Burtynsky, courtesy Hasted Hunt Kraeutler, New York.

*Edward Burtynsky: Oil* features large-scale color landscapes by Canadian photographer Edward Burtynsky. The series surveys a decade of photographic imagery exploring the subject of oil. From 1997 through 2009, Burtynsky traveled internationally to chronicle the production, distribution, and use of oil. In addition to revealing the rarely seen mechanics of its manufacture, he photographs the effects of oil on our lives, depicting landscapes altered by its extraction from the Earth and by the sprawl generated by its use.

Edward Burtynsky is one of the world's most respected photographers. His color photographs of industrially transformed landscapes are in the collections of major museums around the world, including the National Gallery of Canada, the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, and the Museum of Modern Art and Guggenheim Museum in New York. Born in 1955 of Ukrainian heritage in St. Catharines, Ontario, Burtynsky is a graduate of Ryerson University and Niagara College. His father worked on an automobile production line at a General Motors plant in his hometown; Burtynsky credits this experience as his earliest exposure to the subject of industry, and oil in particular. Burtynsky's exhibitions include "Manufactured Landscapes" (2003); "Before the Flood" (2003); "Burtynsky – China" (2005); and "Edward Burtynsky – Quarries" (2006), all of which have traveled extensively to venues in Canada, the United States, Europe, and Asia. Among many other honors, in 2004 Burtynsky was awarded a prestigious TED Prize; in 2007 he was named an Officer of the Order of Canada, that nation's highest civilian honor.



Edward Burtynsky, *AMARC #5, Davis-Monthan AFB, Tucson, Arizona, USA, 2006*. Chromogenic color print. Photograph © Edward Burtynsky, courtesy Hasted Hunt Kraeutler, New York.



Edward Burtynsky, *Oil Fields #22, Cold Lake Production Project, Cold Lake, Alberta, Canada, 2001*. Chromogenic color print. Photograph © Edward Burtynsky, courtesy Adamson Gallery, Washington, DC.



Edward Burtynsky, *Highway #1, Intersection 105 & 110, Los Angeles, California, USA, 2003*. Chromogenic color print. Photograph © Edward Burtynsky, courtesy Hasted Hunt Kraeutler, New York.



Edward Burtynsky, *Highway #5, Los Angeles, California, USA, 2009*. Chromogenic color print. Photograph © Edward Burtynsky, courtesy Nicholas Metivier Gallery, Toronto.



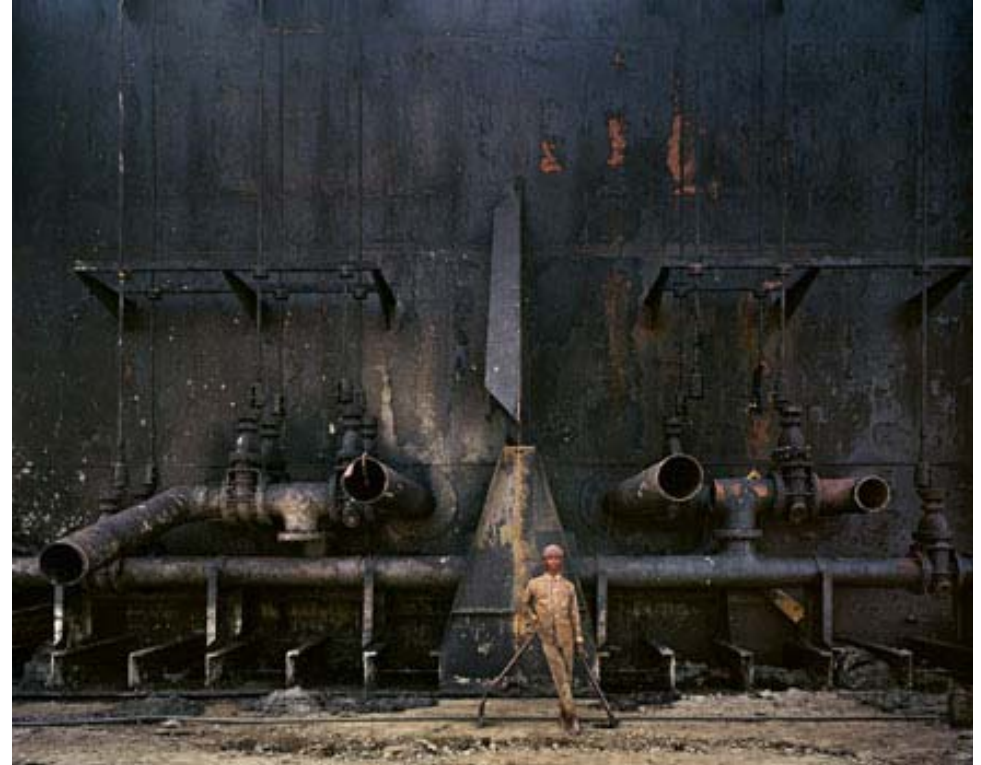
Edward Burtynsky, *Oil Refineries #22, St. John, New Brunswick, Canada, 1999*. Chromogenic color print. Photograph © Edward Burtynsky, courtesy Adamson Gallery, Washington, DC.



Edward Burtynsky, *Oil Tanker and Refineries, Pasadena, Texas, USA, 2004*. Chromogenic color print. Photograph © Edward Burtynsky, courtesy Hasted Hunt Kraeutler, New York.



Edward Burtynsky, *Recycling #2, Chittagong, Bangladesh, 2001*. Chromogenic color print. Photograph © Edward Burtynsky, courtesy Adamson Gallery, Washington, DC.



Edward Burtynsky, *Shipbreaking #23, Chittagong, Bangladesh, 2000*. Chromogenic color print. Photograph © Edward Burtynsky, courtesy Adamson Gallery, Washington, DC.



Edward Burtynsky, *SOCAR Oil Fields #3, Baku, Azerbaijan, 2006*. Chromogenic color print. Photograph © Edward Burtynsky, courtesy Nicholas Metivier Gallery, Toronto.



Edward Burtynsky, *SOCAR Oil Fields #6, Baku, Azerbaijan, 2006*. Chromogenic color print. Photograph © Edward Burtynsky, courtesy Nicholas Metivier Gallery, Toronto.



Edward Burtynsky, *Trucker's Jamboree, Walcott, Iowa, USA, 2003*. Chromogenic color print. Photograph © Edward Burtynsky, courtesy Hasted Hunt Kraeutler, New York.



Edward Burtynsky, *VW Lot #1, Houston, Texas, USA, 2004*. Chromogenic color print. Photograph © Edward Burtynsky, courtesy Hasted Hunt Kraeutler, New York.

## From Music to Painting: The Strange Yet Not-So-Strange Tales of Pardhaans by Udayan Vajpeyi

All transformations give materiality to the otherwise immaterial thing called time. This time lives in tales. Perhaps we may claim that the point of all tales is to underline one or other kind of transformation.

The one I am going to talk about is no different. It is about an extremely strange transformation that took place not long ago. It is about Pardhaans, a sub-community of the Gonds, one of the largest 'tribes' of central India, and one that has ruled portions of that region for centuries, both before and after Mughal rule. I must express my reservations about the use of the word 'tribal' in the Indian context, because I feel those who are called 'tribal' in the modern discourses about India are in fact various castes; their complementarity to each other, like that of castes in various localities, is one of the reasons why this is so. I believe that they were conceptually and practically segregated from other communities living in India, to serve the purposes of colonial rule -- even though their lifestyles were in continuity with those of other communities. But that is a different story, which will have to wait for some more time if it wants to be told in greater detail and with authenticity.

So then, I keep my reservation with me and tell you the story of the Pardhaans. Let me begin by quoting two of their folk tales.<sup>1</sup>

The first tale is about birth of the mahua tree. The wine made from its flowers is used in almost all rituals of almost all tribes of Central India.

### The Wine of Mahua Flowers

One day, Shiva the god thought about us, human beings. He wondered how we would offer wine to the gods and goddesses, after having made sacrifices of goats and chickens to them. Without

*mahua* trees, how would the ceremony of offering wine be performed?

He called over the parrot, the tiger and the boar, and said to them, "Become *mahua* trees." "Very well. We shall become *mahua* trees," the three said. In the month of Chait (around March), flowers blossomed in the *mahua* trees. Flocks of tiny birds came to the three trees. They pecked at the flowers and ate them. After eating no more than two or three flowers, they began calling out loudly, "Cheep chirp cheep, cheep chirp cheep, cheep..." They raised a din. People thought, "There definitely is some intoxicant in these flowers, or else the birds wouldn't make this noise after eating them." The people now began making wine from the same flowers, and they began using the brew in all festivals and ceremonies. If a man drinks a tiny quantity of *mahua* wine, he becomes like a parrot and says the same thing over and over again. If he drinks a little more, he becomes like a lion. He doesn't speak, he roars. And if he drinks still more, he becomes a boar. He lolls on the ground.

The other is a long tale about the dog, the fox and their daughter. I will quote only a segment:

### Dog Father, Fox Mother

When a girl was born to the fox and the dog, the dog thought, "The two of us get by with scraps of food foraged here and there, but this human daughter born to us, how will we feed (her)?" The dog was the girl's father, after all. His worries were understandable. He went into the *basti* (settlement), stole into a house left open by the owners who were away, and grabbed a *roti*. He gave it to the girl. For years together he fed the girl thus, with food grabbed from homes in the *basti*. The girl grew.

The growing girl made the dog worried again. "We are born dogs and foxes, after all, what have we to do with clothes? But

this girl of human form has to have clothes. How can she be without them?" An idea came to him. He said to the fox, "Powder my tail with ash." She did so. Powdered thus, he went to the bazaar and sneaked into a shop selling clothes, and ornaments of gold and silver. The dog wagged his tail furiously. Ash spread all over the shop. Ash went into the shopkeeper's eyes too, blinding him. This was his chance: the dog grabbed a heap of clothes and all the ornaments he could, and ran back into the jungle. He gave the clothes and ornaments to the girl and asked her to wear them. The girl grew still bigger. The dog fell into worry again. "Where am I to give this girl in marriage? Where do we go to settle an alliance for her, we that are born dog and fox?" One day the dog wandered away from the jungle. Fields stretched far and wide. Many people were at work in the fields. He looked carefully at the men farming the fields, studied them and their ways.

And so the tale continues.

It is evident that in both tales the transformations take place and are dramatized with equal ease. It is as if these shifts of imagination are naturally embedded in the awareness of the people who exchange such tales. And perhaps that's why when a major change was demanded from their own lives, they faced it with patience and understanding – they negotiated that literal transformation with the customary attitude they maintained towards the symbolic transformations present in their tales, in their music.

II.

Pardhaans are the musicians, genealogists and storytellers of the Gonds. This story about their origin appears in Sheikh Gulab's *The Gond*:

The Gonds were seven brothers. They sowed jute in the fields. In a few days, the jute began to grow. One day they saw a handsome young man galloping on his horse right through their field. The



hooves were trampling the jute saplings. They pounced on the young man with their *paitharis* (spears). The youngest brother was so scared that his stomach got upset. He went to the nearby *nullah* (ditch) to relieve himself. The other six brothers chased the horseman. The field was quite big. At the edge of it was a *saja* tree. Seeing the Gond brothers chasing him, the horseman rode up to the *saja* tree and disappeared into it along with his horse. The Gonds saw him vanish into the tree. They instantly understood... "This is our Bada Dev (Big Lord) who came riding through our field on his white horse. How unfortunate we are that we could not recognize him... Now he is angry with us. He has disappeared into the *saja* tree. How should we placate him?" Together they began to reflect on this. They erected a platform under the *saja* tree. They offered *rar* lentils. Sacrificed a white rooster. Sprinkled wine made from *mahua*. Folded their hands in prayer. Went on pleading... But Bada Dev was angry. He did not come out of the *saja* tree... At this point the youngest brother turned up from the direction of the *nullah*. He found out what had happened... He said, "I'll find a way. It might please Bada Dev..." He went and felled a bough from a *khirsani* tree. He made a one-stringed instrument from the wood and playing on it, began to sing. The notes began to resound in the woods. In the song he started to sing praises of the glory of Bada Dev. Listening to the song, Bada Dev was pleased. He made an appearance in the trunk of the *saja* tree. He blessed the youngest brother by placing his hand on his head. "Whenever you sing my song playing this instrument, I'll make an appearance. This instrument of yours will be called *bana*." Bada Dev accepted everybody's offerings and once again vanished into the *saja* tree...

Pardhaans used to go to the house of their *yajmaan*<sup>2</sup> every third year and sing stories about their deity Bada Dev, about the valor of great Gond kings, and many other stories. Their songs were and are accompanied by the music played on the *bana*. There is also an extremely interesting story about playing the *bana*. When the Pardhaan made the *bana* from the wood of the *khirsani* tree, he had

no idea about how to play it. He kept thinking, but could not imagine the way to play it. After some time he found himself looking at a *kasanger* bird in the sky. She would rise like an arrow but would descend in the rhythm of waves. This was her style of flying. The Pardhaan immediately understood that this was how he should move his bow on the string of the *bana*.

At the *yajmaan's* house, the Pardhaan would also perform other rituals, particularly those relating to death. The spirit of those Gonds who have died in the *yajmaan's* house after the last visit of the Pardhaan are supposed to wait for his arrival so that he can merge them into the spirit of Bada Dev. Something very similar to the Hindu practice of going to Gaya after the death of their kin, an act they believe unites the departed spirits with Brahman, the absolute reality. Each Pardhaan singer normally had 50-60 *yajmaans*. He would go there every third year in the brighter half of the month of Vaisakha (April-May). He received his grain, oil, clothes, utensils, etc., from his *yajmaan*. Pardhaans were not supposed to earn their living through farming. They lived amongst farmers, but were seen as performers and were supposed to sing and narrate, and evoke the collective memory of their people. In fact, if someone died at the *yajmaan's* house half of his or her belongings, including jewelry, etc., were given to the genealogist Pardhaan. And rightly so: after all, he was the one who would enable the dead person's spirit to be subsumed into that of Bada Dev. He was, as stated in the Guru Granth Sahib:

...one who merges each singular light with the Universal Light ...

I am writing about Pardhaan singers who 'were,' i.e., in the past tense. This may cause some confusion. It is a fact that the position that the Pardhaans had a century or two ago is no longer existent, but in a lot of Gond-Pardhaan villages, we can still find Pardhaans evoking Bada Dev or praising the valor of past Gond kings, accompanying themselves on the *bana*. This can still be witnessed in

number of villages of Dindori or Mandala districts of Central India. But the social texture that gave resonance and spiritual authenticity to the Pardhaans' performances has weakened. The centuries have played their different roles in contributing to this decline. The complex mechanism of social patronage is today fragmented. Pardhaans might still be going to their *yajmaan's* houses, but *yajmaans* are no longer able to support their genealogist-musicians. As a result, Pardhaans are forced to do farming or manual labor in their own villages or in small towns or cities nearby. The inherited and nurtured self-image of being valued performers lies buried within, awaiting the chance to materialize. The sad situation that the Pardhaans are in is evidence of the way a social support system had taken care of artistic activities in India, and how its erosion led to the difficulties that the artists now have to suffer.

III.

As is true for many other pagan traditions, the Gond-Pardhaan society also lives with a number of gods and goddesses. They are everywhere. In fact, these gods and goddesses mediate all possible relations between man and nature. Sensed as somewhere between the two, they bequeath a divine aura to nature, and bestow upon man a sense of being a part of divinity. Members of the community experience this connection at almost every moment of their lives, whether they are going to the forest or crossing the border of their village or cooking meals or putting a child into the cradle. Here the deities are not yet distilled into an abstract idea; through them, the sensuous and the spiritual manifest together.

IV.

Jangarh Singh Shyam was a Pardhaan boy from the village of Patangarh of Dindori district of Madhya Pradesh. He, like his ancestors, loved music; but unlike them, had almost no possibility of carrying on the tradition of music and storytelling. He was born when the system of social patronage had become ineffective. From his childhood onwards he was forced to do manual labor to support his

extremely poor family. Only at night, when he was alone, he would play his flute as if to console the Pardhaan musical tradition flowing silently within him, as if to tell himself that he, though he was not in a position to perform for the Gond *yajmaans*, could at least keep the music alive for himself.

It so happened that at that time a major art centre was being built in Bhopal. The person in charge of the subject area of plastic arts was the well-known modern painter and thinker Jagdish Swaminathan. He wanted to create a gallery of contemporary art in which both urban and rural, so-called "modern," folk and tribal arts were to be displayed. He was very clear about the notion of the "contemporary" in the arts; he thought societies that were technologically backward need not be artistically feeble, and did not live in bygone times. For Swaminathan, all forms of social organizations that existed in a particular time, whatever their technological status, were "contemporary." He sent groups of young artists to many villages of central India to collect folk and tribal paintings, sculpture, etc.

In a particular village, one such group found some interesting paintings on the wall of a house. There was not a single painting anywhere else in the village. They asked for the painter, and found that the work was by a boy called Jangarh Singh Shyam. They requested him to come with them to Bhopal. He obliged. Swaminathan provided painting materials to the boy and asked him to create whatever he felt like. The restless musician waiting in the folds of Jangarh's mind saw a new possibility and means to express himself: painting.

V.

The 5th-century Sanskrit text *Vishnudarmottarpuran* narrates a revealing dialogue between King Vajra and the venerable sage Muni Markandeya. The account is known as the *Chitrasutra*:<sup>3</sup>

The king wanted to build a temple and install an icon within it. He asked Markandeya how the icon was to be sculpted. The sage

replied that one who did not know about *chitra* (painting) would not be able to sculpt. The king asked him as to how a painting is rendered. The sage replied that one who did not know about dance couldn't make a painting. The king asked about dance, and the sage replied that one who did not know instrumental music could not possibly understand dance. The king asked about instrumental music. The sage asserted that for understanding instrumental music, it was necessary to understand singing. The king asked about singing. The sage replied that one who did not understand the way a poem is written or read (*geeta shastra*) could not possibly understand singing. The king asked about *geeta shastra*. The sage instructed him with regard to the nature of language and poetry; and then told him about singing, then about instrumental music, dance, painting, and finally how an icon could be sculpted.

## VI.

The opportunity to paint and, to an extent sculpt, led to a strange transformation in Jangarh Singh Shyam: he started painting feverishly. Painting most wonderfully. Painting in a style which was uniquely his own and yet seemed to be rooted in tradition, a tradition not of painting but of his own tradition of music. In a way, his skills catalyzed the metamorphosis of music into painting. Or, transposing Muni Markandey's astute logic from the *Vishnudarmottarpuran*, the painting which was inherent in the Pardhaan's music<sup>4</sup> was given a chance to unfold itself directly on paper and canvas. Something miraculous has happened. And yet the possibility of such a happening was already foretold in the conversation of King Vajra and Muni Markandeya...

Bada Dev, Mahrilin Devi<sup>5</sup> and numerous other gods and goddesses, strange birds, flying snakes, animals, beautiful trees and several other entities who inhabited the songs of the Pardhaans, who had existed as notes of music, started manifesting on the canvas in various colors, and in a unique, distinctive style. It was the first time that the Gond pantheon was being actualized in images. Mostly orally transmitted, Gond iconography was now taking a visual form. These icons were extremely

alluring versions of those gods and goddesses embedded in Pardhaan narratives. Within a few years of Jangarh's endeavor, many Pardhaans began painting in that distinct style which Jangarh discovered. More and more Pardhaans would come to Bhopal to participate in this newly found mode of creative self-actualization. Many of them very happily turned away from their farming to take up painting.

This new genre provided a livelihood to Pardhaan women as well as men. It was as if the flow of creativity which had been obstructed for many historical reasons found a new release. And this aesthetic/symbolic shift came very naturally to most Pardhaans. The moment they were offered and accepted the possibility, they immersed in it with as much ease as their immersion in their music.

## VII.

I will not go into greater details of the Pardhaan painting style, but will only say that it is highly musical in its composition, in the interrelationship of its elements. It is also musical in the way it treats narrative and the various configurations of temporalities. I only wish to emphasize that when such an event took place in the lives of Pardhaans, they accepted it with open hands and hearts. The Jangarh phenomenon happened less than three decades ago, and already more than a few hundred Pardhaans have started painting, in a broad and recognizable style with its own distinct visual vocabulary. They were all painting in the same manner, and yet each painter individuated in a particular way. This style of painting has been called by various names: Jangarh Kalam, Pardhaan painting, Gond painting, etc. I prefer Jangarh Kalam, where 'Kalam' means 'style.'

It is true that Jangarh Kalam is the art of a community, an art practiced by artists still strongly rooted to their community, who are not spiritually alienated from their communal lives. But since this style was first created by that boy who came from the little village

of Patangarh, it is named Jangarh Kalam.<sup>6</sup> A number of Jangarh Kalam painters now live in Bhopal, as well as in Gond-Pardhaan villages. They have yet another common denominator: they are giving visual form to their deities, but at the same time, through this act they are trying to protect them from the very real danger of oblivion. Their new life in cities is also making the Pardhaan painters' task of symbolic retrieval a little more urgent. These are works of great excitement because their creators have found a new genre for self- and community expression; but they are simultaneously works of great longing, as the artists are becoming increasingly alienated in space and time from their home... The Hindi word for 'longing/yearning' is 'utkanthaa'; literally, 'raising one's neck in order to see'. Perhaps this is the situation the Pardhaan painters find themselves in: one of anticipation and expectation, but a constant recollection of the deities and the landscapes of the village.

#### VIII.

This newly found creative genre of the Pardhaans is already under threat. The artists are living in stressful conditions in cities,<sup>7</sup> but do not want to return to their villages because of the almost complete absence of patronage, and an equal lack of work opportunities, even as manual laborers. They also do not wish to leave because the cities have bred hope in them: hope in some distant or not-so-distant future. This is how almost all modern cities function -- as the breeding grounds of hope, because they exist in more or less purely linear time, their trajectory always pointing towards a kind of betterment. Purely at the notional level, the figure of 'a brighter tomorrow' has a much better chance of surviving in cities than in villages. Most Pardhaan painters in cities also experience pressures on their creativity. Earlier, when their ancestors were practicing and performing music in their villages, no *yajmaan* would put any pressure on them to sing any so-called 'new' themes.

The themes were made new, if at all, by the singers themselves, and not under any external coercion. They were primarily evoking the

intimate world of their audience; their form was not representative but evocative.

But in cities, the rootless middle class is pressurizing the Pardhaans to paint themes that have nothing to do with these painters' lives or memories. The populist forces are attempting to displace the folk world from folk<sup>8</sup> paintings. They are attempting to hollow out the style of Jangarh, i.e., Jangarh Kalam. More and more, the once ingrained sense of community<sup>9</sup> is becoming remote for Pardhaans. This is the challenge they now face. Only the future can tell which will prevail – fidelity to collective consciousness, or the stranglehold of economic survival. Or do we already know the result? Perhaps not. Who knows how many transformations are waiting to manifest in the Pardhaan's lives, as in their narratives...

#### Notes

1. I heard these tales, along with many others, from Pardhaan men and women in their native language, Chhattisgarhi -- a dialect, so to speak, of Hindi. I rewrote these tales in Hindi without altering a single detail. For this essay I have used Delhi-based writer Raji Narasimhan's English translation of my Hindi version.
2. The term used by Pardhaans for the person in whose house the singing and storytelling is performed. This word comes from the terminology of Vedic rituals where *yajmaan* refers to the person who regularly does the *yajna* (broadly translated as 'sacrifice'); and also the one who invites the *purohit* (in general translated as 'priest'; here, the one who performs the ritual) for the *yajna*. The reach of this word, *yajmaan*, extends far beyond the Vedic rituals. It has a defined place and similar connotation in the sociological setup of India. For instance, a barber calls his client, whose house he regularly visits as a servitor for the work of cutting hair, his *yajmaan*. In earlier times, and even today, the *yajmaan* would not pay for each visit/service, but support the barber through his entire livelihood. The same relationship exists between the clients of potters, carpenters, etc., and these artisans. This system and its terminology suggest that according to this traditional logic, society is seen as a continuous, *yajna* - performing body. Coincidentally, Pardhaans call themselves the

*purohits* of the Gonds. Another genealogist community, the Charans, also call themselves *purohits* of the Rajput community, of whom they are the genealogists and family-poets.

3. *Chitra* translates as 'painting', and *sutra* as 'aphorism'. Therefore *chitrasutra* would essentially translate as 'axioms on painting'. But here the word *chitra* (painting) is used metonymically for all arts.
4. Pardhaans are genealogists and storytellers. They narrate through singing, which in any case has come into being through recitation. Therefore many genealogists of various castes and locations in India are musicians: the Charans of Rajasthan and Gujarat, Bhaats of Rajasthan, Patiyas of Bundelkhand, etc. The word 'Charan' derives etymologically from the Hindi word *ucchaaran*, lit. 'enunciation'.
5. One of the four goddesses who protect the borders of the Gond village.
6. 'Jangarh Kalam' was coined by my painter friend Akhilesh, in the long obituary of Jangarh he wrote a few years ago. Jangarh died tragically young in Japan, in suspicious circumstances. He was painting for a gallery of traditional Indian arts. It is said that he was under enormous pressure there to paint more. He wanted to come back home but was unable to do so. He found a strange way of escaping that alleged pressure: he committed suicide. 'Kalam' is used traditionally to name a style of painting, such as Bundeli Kalam for a style of painting that originates in Bundelkhand.
7. Those living in villages also have to come to cities to sell their works. There are no *yajmaans* in their present situation.
8. 'Folk' would translate as *lok* in Sanskrit – a term suggesting a terrain/domain/environment that includes plants and animals as well as humans.
9. The loss of a sense of community and the parallel birth of an alienated individual is most useful for the modern nation state (and now for the market). Without fragmenting communities into individuals, the nation state cannot present itself as a repository of collective wisdom and ethics, a function conventionally attributed to the community, its leaders, its legends, etc.

**Udayan Vajpeyi** has translated works by Octavio Paz, Borges, Chekhov, Brodsky, Jaccottet, Tadeus Rozewicz, among others, into Hindi. He has been invited to various festivals in India and overseas, the most recent being a seminar on the folk imagination in Moscow and the International Book Fair in Paris in 2007. He has received various awards for his writing, including a Senior Fellowship from the Government of India (1994 – 96), the Krishna Baldev Award (2001) and the Raja Foundation Award (2003).

## ISCA GREENFIELD-SANDERS Against the Fall



Cloud Parachute (Blue)  
Mixed Media Oil on Canvas  
14 x 14 inches



Parachute Class I  
Mixed Media Oil on Canvas  
63 x 63 inches



Parachute Class II  
Mixed Media Oil on Canvas  
63 x 63 inches



Parachute Class III  
Mixed Media Oil on Canvas  
63 x 63 inches



Orange Parachute (Blue)  
Mixed Media Oil on Canvas  
35 x 35 inches



Orange Parachute (Pink)  
Mixed Media Oil on Canvas  
35 x 35 inches



Red and White Parachute (Pink)  
Mixed Media Watercolor with Color Pencil  
8 x 8 inches



Pink Parachute (Blue)  
Mixed Media Watercolor with Color Pencil  
8 x 8 inches



Black and White Parachute (Black), 2008  
Mixed Media Oil on Canvas  
14 x 14 inches



Yellow & Black Parachute (Gold)  
Mixed Media Oil on Canvas with Gold Leaf  
35 x 35 inches



Yellow & Black Parachute (Gold)  
Mixed Media Oil on Canvas  
35 x 35 inches



Black and White Parachute (Black)  
Mixed Media Oil on Canvas  
35 x 35 inches



Pink and White Parachute (Pink)  
Mixed Media Oil on Canvas  
35 x 35 inches



Yellow Parachute (Gold)  
Mixed Media Oil on Canvas  
35 x 35 inches

*Images pp 17-23 courtesy of the artist.*

**Isca Greenfield-Sanders** lives and works in New York City and on a lake in the Hudson Highlands. Her work is included in many private and public collections including The Guggenheim Museum in New York. In early 2006 her work was the subject of a two-person exhibition at the Museum Mosbroich in Leverkusen, Germany. She received a B.A. in mathematics and a B.A. in visual arts from Brown University in 2000 and was a visiting artist at the American Academy of Rome in 2001.

## PHEOBE WILCOX

### Insomnia on the Night of a Power Outage

Cut the umbilical cord of sound  
from the urgency of its mother.  
Repetition of the siren  
is like the throbbing of an earache.  
How can they sleep like that,  
next to the newborn power outage  
screaming away?  
Hold the flashlight between clamped teeth  
to get these hard lines out.  
My husband sleeps downstairs,  
his shoulder like a mountain  
I once climbed in damp sheets.

My husband sleeps.  
My children sleep.  
I don't sleep  
but stretch like barbed wire across  
the noise of revolutions  
supposedly fought  
for things that were right  
when really all the murder and choosing sides  
was just an unimaginative way  
of killing time, taking a clock apart and eating it,  
as if we, they, I, you  
could live forever  
afloat on the blood  
and screaming sirens  
of anyone else's anguish.

Peace accommodates the patient.  
This little round bead of light  
by which I write  
grows dimmer by the moment.  
Shall I write up one leg  
and down the other  
and keep the chair on the ground  
with words meant to glue  
the furniture to the underside of meaning?

My heart is a little encampment in the wilderness  
of shame.

I think I'll write until my teeth fall out.  
and if no one ever sees it  
then the words will  
rattle in the babies' rattle,  
music for a future that suckles,  
will never read until the fountains  
of mother's milk have dried  
and they are nourished.

Finally, someone turn hungrily to the back of  
a cereal box to read  
and find my soul spelled out there  
without advertisement.  
The welts and bruises  
of my inner life

follow the contours of  
my pain to a place without  
hope of a good night's sleep.

This week  
my bed is like a lover  
who won't see me.  
So I hang from the trapeze of my thoughts  
and gnaw the paint off my pillow.

Kiss me, I'm bored and the siren  
still wails.

Let us shudder away  
from our tolerant acceptance of all  
things horrible and historical.

Men in power.  
Men in power.

Why do you weep,  
crouched behind the podium  
of your scripted lies?  
Is it the siren of your  
wailing conscience  
keeping regrets awake?

How long has it been  
since you suckled milk,  
your hunger advertised  
by kicking feet and waving fists?

What was clutched so tight

in that little pink fist

other than the legacy,  
like God's old teeth  
flying around inside the rattle,  
of your willful inertia?

Now you are grown.  
Go ahead and cry  
behind your podium  
and your tears will turn  
to claws or fangs

what monsters we elect  
to escort this world  
to doom.

Armageddon cries for  
it's mother.

Feed me,  
feed me.  
I hunger for you all.

### The Holy Trinity

#### Contract and Negotiations:

When you agree, begrudgingly, to work somewhere for pay and when you negotiate, as best you can (given your social ineptitude) your way to the highest point on the social ladder within the precise political parameters of your office environs.

#### Labor and Management:

when you work until your hands shake and your hair stands on end and all the chocolate is gone and all the secret, minimized, pornographic poems are written.

#### Grievances:

When you cry in the bathroom at the office and then tell your girlfriend about it over lunch.

#### The Holy Trinity.

Ideally you fly beneath the radar. Everyone's.

Then somehow you and God lose track of each other.

\*

Come now,  
to an alter universe with a man and woman wearing their  
let's pretend alter egos, their super id capes, and bringing superhuman lust  
to the table or bed or floor or couch or synagogue or Catholic church

or Quaker meeting or university or public library or office or coffee shop bathroom or padded cell.  
Things could be different.  
But they're not and you

live not in an alter universe but in the real world....

So when your mind clears of its beloved pink cloud, you realize there aren't any interested parties in the sky, no great master looking for you on Google Earth... that you are alone in the universe wearing badges of status-post delusion and current status nihilism and suddenly it feels good to know that God is disinterested and that there aren't any hidden cameras anywhere.

Oh, The Holy Trinity  
of could have beens  
would have beens  
might have beens, maybe.

Oh, the Holy Trinity  
of Beauty, Mystery and Love.  
Here I am, defined as always by a question  
that was supposed to be the answer,  
with my wistful heart ever struck through by light  
and gleaming.

**Flat World**

How does the warm vertiginous progress toward  
some softly charred spot beyond yourself  
feel?  
It feels like worshipping in a church of blisters.  
Hot. And you go there shaking, and not realizing you're shaking  
until you find yourself

getting up and going again  
and the car is the church of wind  
Where will you go in this flat world that hasn't  
Yet been burnt  
by passion or bureaucracy?

**Phoebe Wilcox** is a lifelong resident of eastern Pennsylvania. The first chapter of her novel, *Angels Carry the Sun*, has been published in *Wild River Review*, and an excerpt from a second novel-in-progress, *The Use of Flower Symbolism in Feminist Art and Literature*, has been published in *Wild Violet*. Her story, "Carp with Water in Their Ears," published in *River Poets Journal* has been nominated for this year's Pushcart Prize and recent poetry may be found in *Blue Collar Review*, and *Word Riot*. Poetry and flash fiction is also forthcoming in a River Poets chapbook, and in an upcoming spring issue of *Fiction at Work*. She has also been the recipient of a James Michener Scholarship award.

