

An abstract painting featuring a central, bright yellow and orange shape that resembles a dandelion seed head or a stylized figure. This central form is set against a dark, swirling background of deep greens, blacks, and hints of purple. The overall texture is rich and layered, with visible brushstrokes and a sense of depth.

Dandelions for Bhabha

Clara A. B. Joseph

Interactive Press

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Clara Joseph's poetry has appeared in the *Toronto Review*, *Mother Earth International*, *Prosopis: An International Journal of Poetry & Creative Writing*, *Canadian Women's Studies*, the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, *Transnational Literature*, the *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, and *Literature and Aesthetics*. Her debut book of poetry, *The Face of the Other (A Long Poem)* (2016), was published by Interactive Publications, Brisbane. The book builds on the ethical philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas and invites the reader to meet the other person.

Joseph is the author of several academic articles and book chapters. Her book, *The Agent in the Margin: Nayantara Sahgal's Gandhian Fiction* (Wilfred Laurier UP, 2008), was nominated by the Writers' Guild of Alberta for the Wilfred Eggleston Award for Non-Fiction Prize. It also won a national Aid to Scholarly Publications Program, Canada. Her edited books include, *Global Fissures: Postcolonial Fusions* (Rodopi, 2006), *Theology and Literature: Rethinking Reader Responsibility* (Palgrave Macmillan 2006), and special issues of the journal *World Literature Written in English – The Postcolonial and Globalisation* (2002) and *Rethinking the Postcolonial and Globalisation* (2002).

Dandelions for Bhabha is a collection of poems that variously respond to theories and theorists popular in literary and cultural studies. In poems ranging from the ridiculous to the meditative, Joseph considers poststructuralist and postcolonial positions on determinism, responsibility, and the general state of affairs of our baffled and baffling world.

She has a PhD in English from York University and is an associate professor of English and an adjunct associate professor of Religious Studies at the University of Calgary.



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*Dedicated to Prof. Joy Sebastian Kuttickattu – Joychai –
mentor & teacher. You made me love literature.*

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Descartes' Lover

Nothing Outside

Il n'y a rien hors du texte.
– Jacques Derrida

There is nothing outside,
Absolutely nothing

Noticeable outside;
Nothing standing, there,

Looking back from the outside;
No one coming, none disappearing;

No sun hidden within
A shadow;

No one bending, not
One sitting,

None moving as if to
Lie;

No rancid corpse
Stretched

Out
To be eaten;

No whiff of wolves prowling, no cursing serpent
Lying,

None there to quickly strike
A heel,

Or steal;
None camouflaged out there,

No one to lay
A hand,

Kill,
Nor one who can redeem;

Nothing whatsoever
There:

Descartes' Lover

Cogito ergo sum.
– Rene Descartes

The lover caresses her own rising
womb, and displays the twitching nerve's
rhythmic pulse to her determining will;
and dreams lap in the dark.
She too is caught
in a hushed presence.

She puts one foot forward, releases
the other of the burden
in an unerring balancing act
of a sailor treading on sea. Exhausted
she becomes salt, forever
beckoning her beloved.

The one who looks is never transformed
into stone; the hero's mirror will be smashed
into smithereens by her love. She is a goddess
sweating a river. She is you
and me, turning transparent
into water. The wave that dashes, sprinkles
a thousand drops, scatters,
dazzles; captures the rainbow shuddering
in each tiny tear that she gathers
into a single tsunami. She is black
Saraswati, pretty with a book and a guitar

rolling toward him
with the gentle
swish of thoughts draped
over one shoulder, revealing
the cleavage of her soul;

she is the one who rushes seismic
to him with nerves, with
eyes and hands.

Metaphysics for Derrida

The center is not a fixed locus but a function, a sort of non-locus in which an infinite number of sign-substitutions came into play.

– Jacques Derrida

This space bustling
With men, women, and children
Gathered to hear, they said, a *ghazal*.
A *what?* I asked, then came with them,
Came along to see such performance

(to know what I did not know
knowing not what they knew).

Derrida began with a *salaam*,
Met with deafening applause
From men, women, children,
Continued on a deep note

Sustained to its dire end,
While I twisted and turned,
My poor legs threatening to go
To sleep, and I myself followed.

I startled awake to Wah! Wah!
And heavy thumping on my back.
I challenged him then and there,
To which my neighbor quoted,
in a trance:

“The center is not the center!”

Followed with yet another Wah!
Where did the center go? I asked,
Struggling to wake my legs.
The crow stole it, offered his son,

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