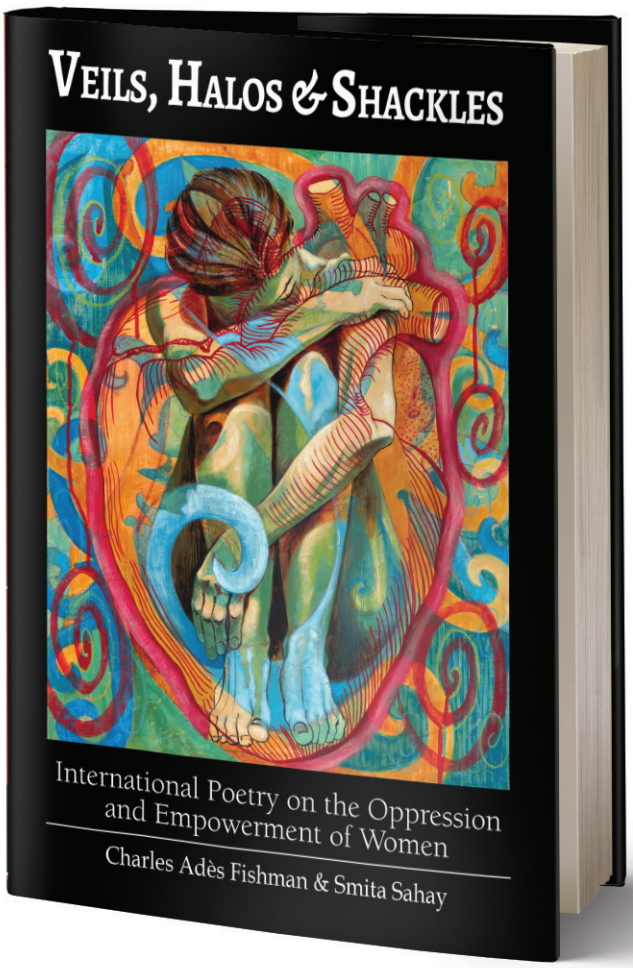
Poems of pain.
Poems of protest.
Poems of healing.

All over the world, girls and women are victims of violence, oppression, and discrimination. No country, no community, no religious or ethnic group is immune. Too often, women's voices are stifled, ignored, or trivialized — and as a result, other victims feel alone and unsupported.

Veils, Halos & Shackles:

International Poetry on the Oppression and Empowerment of Women

is the first-ever anthology of international poetry specifically addressing the oppression and empowerment of women. The book includes more than 250 extraordinary poems from every continent, contributed by some of the world's most accomplished living poets.



Veils, Halos & Shackles is an important and timely contribution to the cause of women's empowerment and freedom; it speaks to a global audience and gives a voice to the millions whose outcries have been silenced.

Veils, Halos & Shackles
International Poetry on the Oppression
and Empowerment of Women
Editors: Charles Adès Fishman & Smita Sahay

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Charles Adès Fishman is an award-winning poet, known for his memorable imagery and sensitivity to the depth of human experience. He completed a Doctor of Arts degree in contemporary American poetry and poetry-writing at SUNY Albany in 1982, and received a Fellowship in Poetry from the New York Foundation for the Arts in 1995.

Fishman co-founded the Long Island Poetry Collective in 1973, and created the Visiting Writers Program at Farmingdale State College in 1979. He was the founder and coordinator of the Paumanok Poetry Award competition, and series editor for the Water Mark Poets of North America Book Award. He is currently poetry editor of *PRISM: An Interdisciplinary Journal for Holocaust Educators*.

His poems, essays, reviews, and translations have appeared in more than 350 journals, and in such major anthologies as *The Sorrow Psalms: A Book of Twentieth Century Elegy* (Iowa University Press, 2006); *Beyond Lament: Poets of the World Bearing Witness to the Holocaust* (Northwestern University Press, 1998); and *Carrying the Darkness: The Poetry of the Vietnam War* (Avon, 1985).

His books include *In the Path of Lightning: Selected Poems* (2012), *Blood to Remember: American Poets on the Holocaust* (2007), and *Chopin's Piano* (2006), all from Time Being Books; *Country of Memory* (Uccelli Press, 2004); and *The Death Mazurka* (Texas Tech University Press, 1989), an ALA/Choice "Outstanding Book of the Year" that was nominated for the 1990 Pulitzer Prize in Poetry. His two most recent collections are *Water under Water* (2009) and *In the Language of Women* (2011), both from Casa de Snapdragon.

Among his awards are the 2014 Aesthetica Creative Writing Award for Poetry; Paterson Awards for Literary Excellence in 2007, 2010 and 2012; the New Millennium Prize for Poetry in 2012; the Ann Stanford Poetry Prize of the Southern California Anthology in 1996; and the 1987 Gertrude B. Claytor Memorial Award of the Poetry Society of America.

Dr. Fishman is widely known for his brilliance as a teacher and editor, and for his powerful readings. He has appeared with Robert Creeley, Carolyn Forché, David Ignatow, Stanley Kunitz, Alicia Ostriker, Marge Piercy, William Stafford, C. K. Williams, and other writers in the vanguard of American poetry. ■

Smita Sahay

is an Indian English-language writer whose works have appeared in *Celebrating India, Muse India, the Pedestal Magazine,* the *Cha Journal*, and *Kitaab*, among others. She has read her poetry at 100-1000 Poets for Change in Pune and Mumbai, the Prakriti Poetry Festival in Chennai, and Pen at Prithvi in Mumbai.

She co-conceptualized and served as associate editor of *Veils, Halos & Shackles: International Poetry on the Oppression and Empowerment of Women*. She is a member of the founding team of Cappuccino Readings, a poetry-reading initiative in Mumbai.

Sahay grew up in the states of Bihar and Jharkhand in India; and customs, traditions and culture from her childhood are recurring themes in her work, as are social prejudices and injustices. Her parents, with two daughters, were often questioned by pitying friends, relatives and neighbors about not having a third child and not "trying for" a son. As a little girl confronted by this belittling of her gender, she felt inadequate in an otherwise happy, healthy, love- and imagination-filled childhood. Standing up to gender inequality, particularly its innocuousness and iniquitousness, became, and remains, an integral part of her consciousness.

She believes in art as a powerful, universal medium that communicates to thinking and feeling humans. English and Hindi fiction and poetry have provided her with escape and bearable realities since her childhood; today they give her words to disagree with, to protest with, and to dream in.

Sahay attended a poetry-writing workshop and a fiction-writing residency, and during this period, she discovered Charles Adès Fishman's luminous, justice-demanding, contemporary American poetry. These experiences led her closer to finding her own voice, both as a writer and as a human being.

She knows the ease with which voices can be silenced and people discredited, the tragic effortlessness with which dignity can be stripped away. Thus, after completing her MBA from the Indian School of Business, she is currently setting up an entrepreneurial venture to improve mental-healthcare delivery through the use of technology.

She lives, writes, and works in Mumbai, India. ■

Veils, Halos & Shackles

Cover Art by Lucy Liew

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Veils, Halos & Shackles

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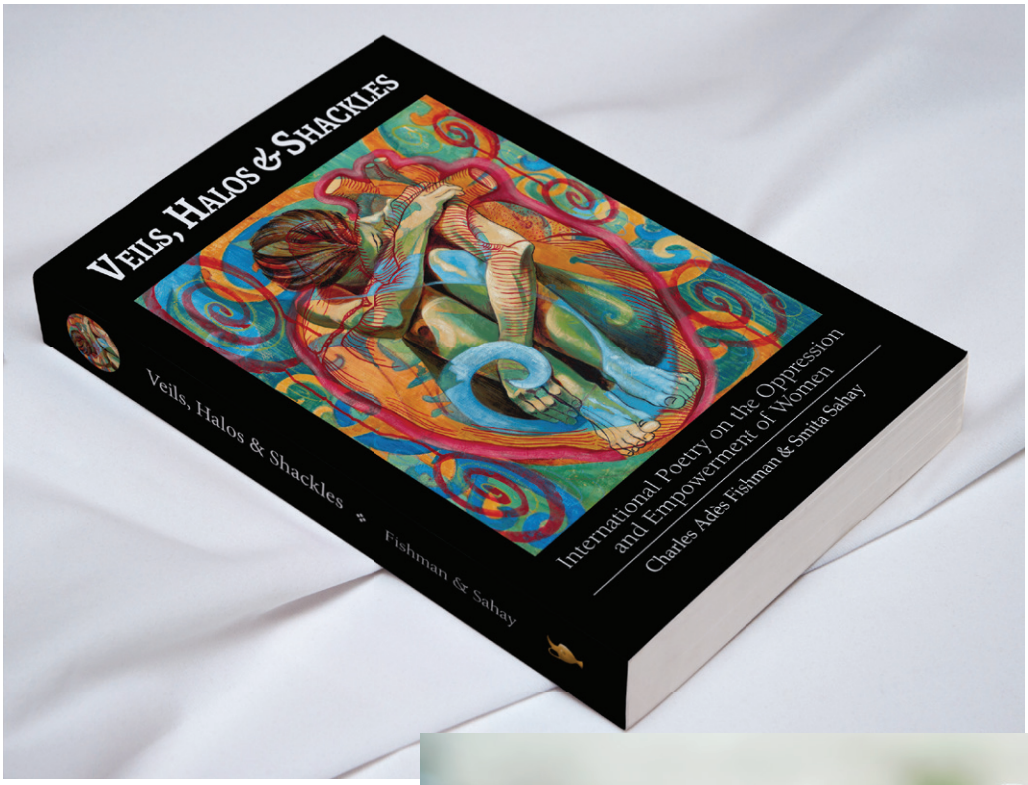

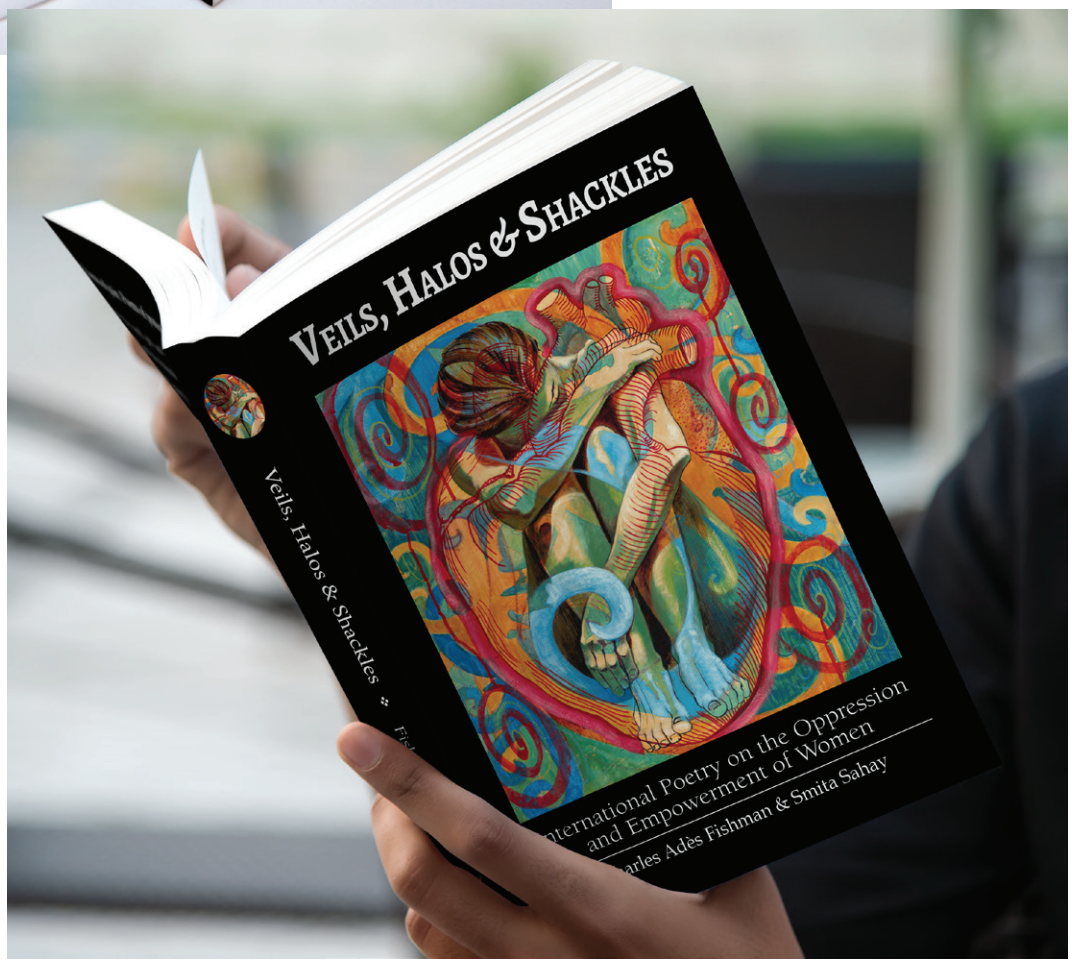

Dane Cervine

Dane Cervine's latest book, *How Therapists Dance* (2013), was published by Plain View Press, which also published his previous collection, *The Jeweled Net of Indra.* His poems were chosen by Adrienne Rich for a National Writers Union award and by Tony Hoagland as a finalist for the Wabash Poetry Prize, and he was the winner of *Atlanta Review's* International Poetry Prize in 2013. Cervine's work has graced the pages of a wide variety of journals, including *The Hudson Review*, *The SUN Magazine*, *Catamaran Literary Review*, and *Red Wheelbarrow*, and has also appeared in numerous anthologies, newspapers, videos, and animated features. His essays can be found in *TriQuarterly*, *CONTRARY*, and *The Turning Wheel*.

I Stare at the Headlines

Fanny in Medellin pulls the journalist off
the bullet-swept street into her kitchen.
They crouch on the floor with her children,
wait for hours till the firing moves away
and they can run for it. *And you?* she says,
Where you come from, isn't it the same?

~

The Tiananmen Mothers in China secretly
tally the dead, keep alive the memory
of their murdered children. They whisper
to the journalist, *No one asks questions.*
We live in a coma, blinded by fear
and new iPods!

~

Mariam in the Afghan refugee camp, widowed, beaten,
teaches the women around her to make clothes,
shakes the journalist by the shoulders, says
You have language, you can write, tell them!

~

Last night in my dream I was speaking and writing
and speaking and writing till my fingers failed
and my tongue hung from the world's hook
like a dead fish.

Cervine: In matters of gender and race, and all differences, it is important that those who are oppressed have strong allies who will stand side by side with them and, when they cannot speak, who will speak for them. To be the one speaking, as the oppressed, is necessary but insufficient for change to occur in the world. Allies of those oppressed must speak, too, and bear witness. My book *The Jeweled Net of Indra* attempts to address some of these important interconnections between us all.

Rita Malhotra

Rita Malhotra is a National Science Talent scholar, National Scholarship awardee, and post-doctoral fellow in mathematics (University of Paris). She is also vice principal, Kamala Nehru College, University of Delhi; president of Poetry Across Cultures and World Poetry (Canada) ambassador to India. Her research papers have been published in seven countries, and her literary writings have been translated into Chinese, Serbian, Telegu and six other languages. Malhotra's recognitions include the Michael Madhusudan Millennium Award; the Visionary Poet Award from WIN, Canada; and the Honour, from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Romania. She has authored two books in mathematics and eight collections of verse, among them *I Remain the Ignited Woman* (World Poetry Almanac, Mongolia, 2013).

Chrysanthemums

we were brought up
by the rule book
that spelt love for us daughters
as immoral, infidel,
masked, contagious
dreams were cached
within constrained confines
the self remained dwarfed —
bonsai like —
unable to reach beyond its grasp
but a moment of wild defiance
unleashed a tempestuous will
to self-expression
i followed love's trail
scanning the horizon of darkness
to arrive at the moonlit patch
of a perplexed night —
a night that witnessed
love's intimate dance
in the sensual celebration of
intimacy between
soul, mind and body
with the first footfall of dawn
i tore all pages
of the book of norms
made paper-flowers out of them
this morning they have metamorphosed
into golden-orange chrysanthemums

Malhotra: Women have been marginalized for too long. Their bitterness at being exploited, day in and day out, naturally arouses the woman in me. Poetry is my medium, and I use it to reach out to others and awaken them to a woman's sensibility. So one aspect of my writing is an emotional response to my social thought.

Allene Rasmussen Nichols

Allene Rasmussen Nichols is a doctoral student in Humanities at the University of Texas at Dallas. Her research focuses on poetry, playwriting and the representation of gender and sexuality in contemporary art and literature. Her poems have appeared in a variety of journals and anthologies, including *Naugatuck River Review, New Plains Review, Conclave*, *Lunch Ticket*, *Ginger Piglet*, *protestpoems.org* and *Dance the Guns to Silence: One Hundred Poems for Ken Saro-Wiwa*. Her plays have been produced in California, Texas, Wisconsin, and New York.

Chorus

They will say the sky is not for you,
that the blue in your eyes is a reflection
of the shattered china on the floor
or that the scarlet stains on the counter
are your shackles or that if you die
often enough, your children will be free.

You must come to know the lie, to name
your bruises and broken bones, to call
these walls a prison, to make your voice
like steel, not to break when struck,
but to reverberate until this house
falls down.

You must teach yourself that you were born
to risk it all, not the next time you fall,
but today, while your breath reeks of poetry
and the sky beckons, and the sun itself
proclaims the promise that your body
can be strong and that your words
can bear the holy seal of joy.

Nichols: I address the subject of violence against women in my poems because physical and sexual abuse as a child left me vulnerable to abuse as an adult woman. I have, after many years of counseling, broken free of the cycle and free of my abusers, and I have discovered how wonderful life can be. I would like other women to know that they are not alone and that there is a way out. I also want people to be aware of the toll that such abuse takes, not just on women, but on society.