

The goal of this section is to bring a feel for the many poetic voices that occur in and around Buffalo, New York. It is also a wonderful way for me present the work of dear friends. I have met with Christina over poetry for years now. She entrusted me with her poems in my first publishing venture at Daemen College. I have learned a great many things from her, especially the many ways in which one can approach an idea in poetry.

Combining narratives, images, movement, and sounds is both impacting and captivating in an unusual reconstructed tale of family relationships, culture, memory and history in her long poem inspired by the teller of the Arabian Nights.

Come! Dance with me forever
in dreams of each other

It is my honor to present the work of Buffalo poet, Christina Woś Donnelly.



Christina Woś Donnelly
Buffalo//FOCUS

Poems:

The Largely Unexpurgated History of Scheherazade

Draft: haiku with thesaurus

Why I Stayed With Adam/Eve

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A spam poem

All-American

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Remains

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Untitled

The Largely Unexpurgated History of Scheherazade

In a long-ago time,
in a faraway land,
there lived a rich and powerful king,
a magnificent king,
who discovered
in the twentieth year of his peaceable reign,
his favorite wife
in the act of adultery.
This he witnessed with his own eyes, saw her
give herself most lewdly
to a monstrous slave,
and, likewise, ten of his concubines
betraying him with their mamelukes,
And his brother, too,
the Shah Zaman,
king of barbarous Samarcand,
found his own wife asleep
in the greasy arms of his fat cook.
So, in rage and disgust,
he cleaved the two into four
with one blow of his scimitar.

Now King Sharyar
was sovereign of all the kings
of the Banu Sasan,
and he and his brother, the Shah,
had both reigned
with such justice and such equity
that all of their subjects
were devoted and happy.
Even their own women
they treated with liberality,
thus it was with shock and dismay
they learned of their wives' perfidy
and their own cuckoldry.
And so, dishonored and downcast,
the two disguised themselves
and set out to search the world
for another such unfortunate
as themselves.

One day on their travels,
the two brothers happened upon
a jinee, a huge, barrel-chested brute
sleeping soundly 'neath a tree
with his head in the lap
of a lovely woman. This fine-boned,
well-born lady, they learned,
he had kidnapped on her wedding night,
a virgin bride, and forced her to wife.
Thereafter, he had kept her
imprisoned in an ivory casket

sealed with seven padlocks
and stored in a crystal chest,
which he carried with him
always and everywhere.
Now spying the two,
this lady gently lifted
the giant's head from her lap
and, approaching them, boasted
that she avenged these wrongs
by having carnal relations
with every man she encountered.
Then, to prove the truth of her assertion,
she showed them a knotted string
with one thousand men's signet rings.
So, having done with her preamble,
the woman demanded
both men mount her on the spot,
saying coyly,
"Show me how prettily
you can ride on my saddle."
and threatening that,
if they did not,
she would wake her snoring husband
with cries and accusations
that they had made move
to ravish her. And so, the King
and his brother the Shah,
fearing the jinee, complied,
and when each had left his issue
in her womb and his token
in her palm, the two brothers turned
their faces homeward
and, shaking their heads, marveled:
"How stunning is the malice
and cunning of women!
This lady does not fear
the anger of an *ifrit*,
beside whose might
our own is as nothing.
How then can we assure
the virtue of our own women
and the purity of our lines?"
And together they concluded
that there breathed no woman
incapable of treachery
and that neither ought stay married
long enough to be betrayed.

"And yet," King Sharyar
bethought himself, "it is not mete
that I should live as a eunuch,
and have I not power
over life and death
in my own kingdom?"
So, returning, he decreed
that his faithless wife should be
executed for her adultery
in accordance with the law.
Then, taking up a sword

with his own hand, he flew
to the seraglio and there slew
all his wives
and all his concubines,
and all their servants
and all their paramours,
and then he swore a mighty oath,
a sacred vow,
that no woman should live
and be his wife.
Henceforward,
he would take a virgin bride
each day and break her
maidenhead that selfsame night
and, in the morning, he would have her
beheaded pre-emptively.
Only thus could he ever be
sure of his honor and her chastity.
And so it was.
For three years, the Grand Vizier
procured daily for his lord
a fresh, new bride
beginning with the most beautiful girls
from the most prominent families,
and, in the morning,
dragged each one from her bridal couch
to the executioner's block.
And thus were the King's honor
and his lust both satisfied.

But, alas, his people were not.
They decried this wanton slaughter.
Maidens trembled
against the honor of their king's favor.
Parents cringed and dissembled,
spirited away daughters at peril
of their own lives. And in time,
the King's capitol emptied
and not a single virgin
could 'ere be found.
On that day, the Vizier turned sadly
home from his fruitless search
knowing that, by his failure,
his own life was forfeit.
Now this minister was
a kind and goodly man at heart,
a devoted father,
who had raised tenderly
two daughters, by name
Scheherazade and Dunazade.
These King Sharyar had exempted
in consideration
of his servant's steadfast fealty.
Now, both girls were praiseworthy,
but Scheherazade, the elder,
was courteous and affable,
droll and sagacious,
both well-read and well-bred.
She had studied

the arts and the sciences,
was learned in philosophy
and accomplished at poetry.
She had read all the annals and legends
of bygone kings,
the adventures and misadventures
of famous persons.
Indeed, it was reputed
she had collected a thousand books,
all histories of ancient peoples.
And she was a fond and dutiful daughter besides,
most sensible this day of her parent's distress.
"My father," she ventured,
"you seem oppressed.
What troubles you thus gravely?"
Hearing the kind words of his beloved child,
the man told his daughter all
that had come to pass –
the king's vow, his own complicity,
and, finally, his now impending destiny.
On learning this for the first time
(for, sheltered in the women's quarters,
the two girls had been kept
innocent of all), she cried out,
"By Allah!
How much longer must this
carnage of women abide?
My father,
if will you grant me leave to speak,
I have a notion how to stop
this senseless slaughter.
I would have you give me
in wedlock to the King.
If I live, I shall be ransom
for the blameless daughters of Islam."
Her father was aghast.
He reasoned and raved,
scolded and fumed,
cajoled and attempted to instruct
his obdurate daughter,
but Scheherazade remained unmoved.
"Have you abandoned your wits, girl,
or think you have I
that I would permit you
to place yourself in such peril?"
"But, father, come what may, I must.
Someone need rescue them
from his hand, and yours.
Enough speech now!
I am resolved.
If you will not offer me to King Sharyar,
I shall present myself alone to him
and say, 'I begged my father's consent
to be your wife, but he refused
begrudging you a maiden such as I.'
So, vanquished and chastened,
the Vizier heaved a weighty sigh
and asked, "My child,
must it truly be thus?"

“Indeed, father. It must.
I see no other way.”
“Then, as you will,” he replied.

And so, flushed with anticipation
and victory, Scheherazade
hastened to adorn herself
with unguents, and perfumes,
and all manner of finery
in preparation for her nuptial night.
Meanwhile, her sister she drew close
to her side and instructed the girl
in a plan she had contrived.
When all was in readiness,
the bride left her father’s house
and was presented to the King.
Now King Sharyar was full astonished.
“How so, my faithful servant?”
he enquired. “I have given my word
that your daughters are exempt
from this decree, but surely
you realize if I take your girl tonight,
there can be no clemency
on the morrow?”
The Vizier nodded and sadly agreed,
“It is her own will, Majesty.”
At which the King rejoiced
with fullness of flattered pride
and delight to have, for once,
so willing a sacrifice.

So, when her father had withdrawn,
the king took Scheherazade,
without further ceremony
or ritual, to his bed
and there began gently
to speak to her,
and caress her,
and toy with her, but,
just as he was about to penetrate her,
the maiden commenced
a soft and piteous weeping.
Now King Sharyar was accustomed to tears
and pleas for mercy in the mornings
and even in the night
when the passions were spent,
yet never had he heard
of a woman weeping
while aroused.
So, again astonished, he cried,
“Why whatever
is the matter with you, girl?
Have I abused you?
Is anyone hurting you yet?”
“No, sire, oh no!”
she hastened to reply.
“You are all kindness
to this unworthy slave.
It is only that I have a younger sister

whom I love as I love the light.
This night of joy, my only night,
is marred with pining thoughts
that never shall I look again upon her face,
Sire, I beg you,
let me take my leave of her tonight.”
Harkening to this, the King
sent straightaway for Dunazade
who expeditiously arrived,
and when she had made obeisance
before him, was permitted to take a seat
near the foot of their bed.
Then finally the king arose
and abated manfully
his bride’s maidenhead, and,
when it was done, all three
slept soundlessly.

At midnight,
Scheherazade awoke and,
by design,
roused Dunazade, who
as she’d been instructed, cried
“Oh, sweet sister!
How I shall miss you
and all your marvelous stories.
Won’t you recount
for one last time
some wondrous tale
to amuse and delight us
and divert our minds
from what must too quickly come?”
Scheherazade looked to the King,
who had awakened at the cry,
and nodded now his consent.
“Aye, proceed,” he added,
“if you wish
for it may help me back to sleep.
I rest but fitfully of late.”
And so his bride began
a convoluted yarn, a tale
within a tale
within a tale,
each one filled with fierce jinn
and innocent, unresisting victims,
a yarn so enthralling, so Byzantine
that the king could not relapse into sleep
but followed each thread,
hung on every well-selected word
that issued from the girl’s sweet mouth
until, at last, at dawn, she remarked,
“Why, sire, ‘tis very nearly light!
What a pity there won’t be time
to finish what I’ve begun.”
“Nay, nay.” indulgently
the King replied.
“Tomorrow!
Tomorrow is time ‘enow.
I am well-pleased with you, child,

and, surely, one more day
can do no lasting harm.
You may have
my gracious stay
until you've done."
And, so, all three
fell back to sleep again
and reposed a few hours more
quite peacefully.
Then the King arose to his usual duties:
judged, appointed and deposed,
forbidding this, permitting that.
Meanwhile Dunazade returned,
relieved and rejoicing,
to their father's house.

Who can say
how Scheherazade
passed her day, a woman alone
in a sultan's spacious *barim*?
(On this point, the chronicle is mute.)
One may suppose the pious girl
devoted herself to thanks and praise
to Allah the Compassionate,
who bestows his mercy on us all,
as well as to further reading and study,
as was her daily wont.
Nevertheless,
at the approach of night,
the King returned to his bridal bed
and all went as it had
the previous night:
the groom's preliminaries,
the bride's tears,
the sister's arrival,
the man's enjoyment of his conjugal rights
and, when he'd had his will of her,
Scheherazade's resumption
of her story, another tale
swallowing its own tail,
a fascination suspended
by the coming dawn,
and then another stay
and a third day.
And so each night and day thereafter,
night following day,
day upon night
stay after stay,
yarn twisted into yarn,
until the new bride was with child
and could not be executed,
or even put aside,
as proscribed by law.
And so accustomed had the King grown
to drinking of this new wife's words
and sleeping so soundly
in the crook of her arm each night,
that very soon the fertile, young woman
was again with child

and yet again.

And, so, Scheherazade contrived
to extend her life
for a thousand days and a thousand nights
feeding her husband
the milk of her abounding mind:
suspended stories,
fabulous tales
of magicians and paupers,
flying carpets and magic lamps,
of seamonsters and sailors,
caliphs and criminals,
merchants and bandits,
Christians, Copts,
Hindus, Jews and Moors,
as well as the most common of men:
fisherfolk and hunchbacks,
wicked women and wise ones,
and simple husbands and wives:
tales of every manner of person
from every walk and station of life
in the King's vast territories.
Among these she included
morality tales,
each entertaining and instructive
of justice and mercy
and all the virtues of manhood
and kingship,
each one gradually recalling
the King to himself,
to the man and monarch
he'd been before his misfortunes.
This change was first remarked
by the shrewd eye
and sensitive flesh of the woman,
then by his servants
and soon his subjects,
who returned, in time,
to their homes and their former lives
until, once again,
the entire kingdom
was peaceable and happy.

On the thousand-and-first night,
Scheherazade rose as usual
from her bath,
dressed most beguilingly
and proceeded to the King's bedchamber,
where all went as it had always done,
except this night
she contrived to end her story
well before daylight.
Then, prostrating herself before her master,
the lady made bold
to ask the favor of a boon.
When she had been granted
leave to speak, Scheherazade
called first for her children,

and he his steward,
then drawing her pretty babes about her,
began thus:
“My lord and husband,
consider well:
Have I not given you pleasure
these thousand nights
in my words
and in your bed?
Have I not given you children
of the mind
and the body?
Have I not restored you
to the peaceful slumber
of one who has this day
shed no innocent blood?
Would you be the murderer
of your sons’ mother
and your own happiness?...”

Before she could conclude
her argument,
the Sultan silenced her
with a gesture and,
drawing himself up
to a most imposing height,
answered thus:
“Woman, you have cut me
to the spleen, stung me
to the point of tears!
How could you not know
that, long ago,
I issued your pardon
in my heart,
for I found you to be
pure and chaste,
pious and ingenuous?
Allah bless you
and both your parents!
And all their root
and all their branch
for, in all the world,
there is no other marvel like you.
Beloved above all, you are
the vision in my reveries, my cloud
of unknowing, a phantom
scent like violets in winter, a reed flute
trembling in the night. You
are my mirth, and all
the silken mysteries
unveiling, my garden
of constant delight.
Come! Dance with me forever
in dreams of each other
and be my lawful wife.”

Then taking her hands
in both of his, the King ordered
all that was right and proper

for a royal wedding:
the drawing of a marriage contract,
the presentation of lavish gifts,
and a splendid wedding feast
fit to welcome and honor
his new queen
and his people's savior.
And to this feast, he commanded,
that all his kingdom must be invited,
the high and the low,
the great and the small,
as a token of reconciliation
between himself and his subjects.

Upon hearing all that he had ordered,
Scheherazade's heart soared
and, giving thanks and praise
to Allah, his prophet and her husband,
she arose to him, and so it was
they both survived.

Grateful acknowledgements to Sir Richard F. Burton and Jack Zipes for their prose translations of the source material, A Thousand and One Nights

Draft: haiku with thesaurus

concealed
obscured by
gone in fog and mist
hidden
occult

locate
avian mating place
(only) bird cries mark the Niagara

rest
the trees I take on faith

From: Eve@paradiso_perduto.com
Subject: Why I stayed with Adam

Well, you see, I loved him.
And he said he loved me
and was so sorry
he *cried* –
cried and cried like a baby
(although neither one of us knew
what a baby was back then) –
and begged me not to leave him,
and admitted everything:
how he put that rotten, shitbag snake
up to it, just so he could *watch*.

And he solemnly vowed
never, ever to do *anything*
like that *ever* again and
'fessed up to every sleazy,
no-good, underhanded,
son-of-a-bitch-bastard
thing he'd ever pulled
behind my back,
and held me like a baby,
while I cried and cried,
and promised,
as The Marriage Counselor advised,
to "avoid even the appearance
of untrustworthiness
for at least the next 2 years."

And, besides, I loved him.

That and
who else was there?

From: Adam@paradiso_perduto.com
Subject: Why I stayed with Eve

I couldn't train the chimp
not to use her teeth.

Hotmail®: You Have 69 New Messages in Your Inbox
A spam poem

Attract the Opposite Sex!
Find your Mate!
True love
Online dating service
If you like sex – check out this site!
Mature content – No Minors
Very Mature – NO minors
Order adult DVDs from home
You've never been to movies like this!
Shower Cams & Chat Rooms
Adult live action – with choices
Cum See These Guys Get Sex Every Way Possible
XXX HARDCORE SMUT
The opportunity you've been waiting for
Did you see this?
Incest porn!
Let's Look at This Family!
Sisters!
Watch My Sisters Sleep Over Live
WATCH YOUNG TEEN DO HER SISTER
Mothers and Sons
FURRY NAKED BARNYARD FRIENDS!!!!!!
Animal Love
FUN ON THE FARM!!!!
My mom caught me having sex!!!
MY DAD JUST BOUGHT ME A WEBCAM
THE YOUNGEST TEEN SITE ALLOWED ONLINE
I'M HOME ALONE MASTURBATING!!
WATCH ME MASTURBATE!!!
WATCH ME PLAY WITH MY GIRLFRIENDS LIVE!!
MY DILDO AND MY WEB CAM LIVE!!!
Super Sluts!
Sexy coeds!
Brazen Teenage Hussies
Real teens from your hometown
Cum See Hot teens with big Natural Boobs!
Get'm While They're Hot!!
HOT, YOUNG & NASTY!
I AM A SLUT
TREAT ME LIKE A SLUT
FUCK ME LIKE A SLUT
HOW YOUNG DO YOU LIKE YOUR SLUTS?
YOUNG SLUTS WHO SUCK COCK
Young girls swallow
I LOVE TO EAT CUM
I LIKE TO EAT LOTS OF GOOEY CUM
Get it ALL OVER her FACE!
HE SHOT IT IN MY FACE
Is she satisfied?
She can't get enough of it
Pamela Anderson's new video!!!
Pam's ORGY!! PICS INSIDE!
BRITNEY SPEARS HARDCORE
Britney Spears ULTRA HARDCORE

Britney Spears gang bang
Britney Spears FUCKED HARD!!
Viagra Online
GET A HUGE FAT COCK
Super Size!
MAKE HER MOAN ALL NIGHT!
Pill to increase your ejaculation by 581%
The Blue Pecker
adamsinpain@msn.com
Psst.....Hey Baby
Online girls waiting for You
We'll Keep You Smilin' :)
I'm waiting for you
I'm waiting
I found your wallet

All-American

Give me liberty
or give me chicken
pot pie, apple
a la mode
and the boys of summer,
big-bellied as a woman
eight months gone,
covering all the bases
with their spit.

Give me popcorn,
and peanuts
and polka dots
pasted all over
my Marilyn Monroe butt,
and a flag to wave
as I sashay
in stiletto pumps
down Main Street
to visit Mom.

Give me a big stick
to beat off
all the mashers
(whether foreign or domestic)
and a kittenish voice
to place my order: Cruise
Missile, Stealth
Bomber, Lockheed Martin
Joint Strike Fighter, IC-
BM.

Crime Drama

...and quicker than a hooker
drops her panties,
the Lady Scientist snaps,
“You’ll never work
in this morgue again!”
And, damn!
you know this time
she’s not kidding.

...then He says, “Abby,
knives aren’t for kids.”

...and then The Other He
says to a 3rd He, “Yo!
It’s my car, dude.
Somebody hit my *ride*, man!”

...and Domino’s says, “Now *that’s*
pizza empowerment!”

...then the 2nd He is back
and says to a 4th He, “Looks like
you’re out-manned here, homey.
You gonna take us all out
with that one, little capgun?”

...then The Scientist Lady comes back
and says, “Why the hell
didn’t you call *me*?”

...and the 1st He (who is 50,
at least) gets this standing-in-the-corner
kind of expression and tells her,
“You sent me home.
I didn’t wanna get in trouble.”

...then the 4th He, who is also
the last He, says to The Scientist Lady,
“I don’t want to be
your rebound guy. What is it
you think we’re doing here?”

...and The Lady Scientist, who always
has an answer for everything
(except a personal question)
is mum.

...then The English Guy makes strawberry yogurt.
...and The Father pours out his whiskey.
...and The Daughter agrees to go to rehab.
...and The 2nd Bereaved Mother gives the 1st
a single, red rose,
and this time she doesn't
throw it back in her face.

...and everybody touches,
or smiles,
or hugs.
...and almost everybody cries.

...and nobody pukes,
although almost everybody
threatened to
just an hour before.

The End
[*cut to commercial*]

CA's Lt. Governor Bustamante Weighs In Weekly on Channel 2

aspires to be
"half the man he was"

claims
even his head
is shrinking

Remains

Pack the head in ice
and the charred body
scorched by words
hot enough to freeze the blood.
Compresses ineffectual here,
no balm or ointment
potent enough to soothe
such blistering. Delicate tissue
cannot withstand
intentional application
of open flame.
All warranties and promises
hereby null and void.

Black Death

"...no bells tolled...and nobody wept no matter what his loss...And people said and believed, 'This is the end of the world.' "

— *Barbara W. Tuchman, A Distant Mirror:
The Calamitous 14th Century*

The end of the world will not come
with a whimper or a bang
but the bitter echo of a slamming door,
a whiff of rose attar:
the ghost of bridal petals
crushed underfoot.

Hemorrhaging resentments blacken the blood.
Recriminations foul the breath,
poison the air, spread contagion.
The plague lays waste to both their houses
awaiting the decree, and a poet is silenced
biting off his own tongue, not even a woman
to hear his confession.

No remission of sin is forthcoming,
no soul left to tend the fields or gather the harvest
once so rich with promise.
The bell does not toll.
Not even their children dare to weep.

Ashes, ashes.
They all fall down.

Untitled

laundering new linen
used once, I make space
for unsuspecting bliss,
fold myself and wait
for faith

Christina Woś Donnelly has lived on two rivers, the Niagara and the Potomac. She is a founding co-editor of *Not Just Air* and the author of a chapbook, *Venus Afflicted: Poems 1999-2002*. Her work has appeared seventy times in print and internet publications such as *Lilliput Review*, *Slipstream*, *Stirring* and *The 2River View* and six anthologies, most recently: *Susan B & Me* (Big Kids Publishing, 2006). Christina has been an Artvoice Artist of the Week and a featured reader at poetry venues in Buffalo, Baltimore and Washington, DC including the Library of Congress.