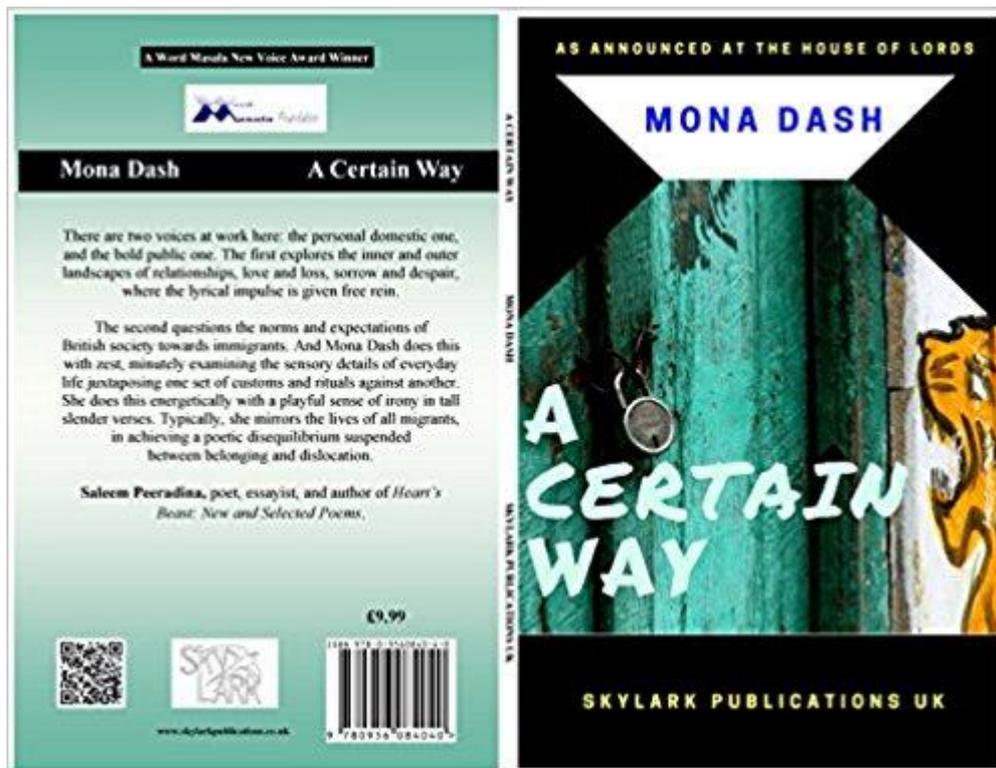


BOOK REVIEW

A CERTAIN WAY (SKYLARK PUBLICATIONS UK, 2017)

BY MONA DASH

Reviewed by Reshma Ruia



Mona Dash's new collection of poems, 'A Certain Way,' displays a heightened sensibility that straddles the East and the West. The poems reflect the narrative of displacement and question tradition and modernity in language that is lyrical and full of strong imagery. In 'Home and Beyond,' she writes about the many who pine for "the country they came from where the frangipani breathes, where the fish glisten...forgetting they were the ones who decided to leave the country of the narrow roads and claustrophobia." A number of poems in the collection hark back nostalgically to a past and a way of life left behind. In 'Konarak Express,' she writes about a child's fears as the father leaves the train to "fill water, get tea in earthen cups, samosas served in bowls of leaves." The imagery conjures up an India where the pace of life is still slow and unhurried. Yet Mona's poems are not entirely steeped in

nostalgia, she also evokes the pain of being an outsider trying to carve a life as an immigrant. The title poem, 'A Certain Way', reflects this paradox of in-betweenness and adjustment that defines the diaspora. "Uproot, grow, take root, parallel truths, a little of this, a little of that. For an immigrant, there is no certain way to be."

Not all poems deal with the trauma of alienation, a few poems such as, 'Advice to my Unborn Daughter,' and 'Motherhood,' examine the bond between mother and children and the weight of expectations and responsibilities that accompany parenthood. In 'Carousel,' for instance, Mona says, "We worry about jobs, pension funds, bills to pay...and when the baby looks up mouth open in an O we rearrange drooping mouths and wear brilliant-smile facades."

In another poem, the poet tackles the inevitable disappointments of ageing. In 'Midlife Crisis,' she laments, "Was this enough? Did I do myself proud? Did I make anyone proud?"

This collection marks the arrival of a poet with an astute and sensitive awareness of what it means to arrive and leave. (A certain way is available online on Amazon UK)

Bio

Reshma is the author of '*Something Black in the Lentil Soup*'. It was described in the Sunday Times as 'a gem of straight-faced comedy.' Her second novel, '*A Mouthful of Silence*,' was shortlisted for the 2014 SI Leeds Literary Prize. Her short stories and poems have appeared in various International anthologies and magazines such as 'Too Asian, Not Asian Enough,' and also commissioned for Radio 4. She has a PhD and Masters with Distinction in Creative Writing and post graduate and undergraduate degrees from the London School of Economics. Born in India, but brought up in Italy, her narrative portrays the inherent tensions and preoccupations of those who possess multiple senses of belonging.