

1985

Poems

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Abstract

The Poet who was silent and Hope

THE PAKISTAN ACADEMY OF LETTERS AWARD, 1981-1982

The Pakistan Academy of Letters (Islamabad) selected Alamgir Hashmi's *My Second in Kentucky* (Vision, 1981) for its 1981-1982 (1402 A.H.) prestigious national literature prize, the Patras Bokhari Award. The award is named after the famed writer and scholar, the late A.S. (alias Patras) Bokhari, who made a lasting contribution to both English and Urdu letters. This is the first time that the award has been given for English poetry. The award was announced on 16 May 1985. *Kunapipi* wishes to congratulate Alamgir Hashmi.

Ezenwa-Ohaeto

THE POET WHO WAS SILENT

(For Odia)

On the stage
His voice rang clear
Prompting lusty cheers from the sheep-audience:
The Chief Celebrant
At the unscheduled ceremony,
But he broke the magic circle,
As he stepped beyond.
Did he know
Truth need fists
When he unclasped his clenched fingers
Choosing the company of lions?

HOPE

The Ikoro* booms
The Ekwe* echo
And flutes weave intricate rhythms.
Tense, expectant eyes
glue on market paths.

It's time, for
Leopard Killers
Proceed to market

They come
In artificial splendour
Draped with leopard skins
Matchets flashing
Raffia skirts dancing in the breeze.

But are the Leopards dead?
Leopards who devour in the slums
Leopards who hustle in the towns
Leopard pen-butchers.
While our leopard killers celebrate unheeding.

Perhaps the leopards are now bold
Perhaps the killers are tired
Perhaps the ovations are deafening.

Our eyes searched
beyond the market place
And in the distance
We glimpse approaching
Luminous shape of Nemesis.

*Ikoro and Ekwe are hollowed-out wooden instruments. The Ekwe is used for sending messages and as a musical instrument while the Ikoro is used for the most important messages or as alarm.