**Centuries of American Women Poets 06.03.2013**

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By [American Corner Stip](https://www.facebook.com/pages/American-Corner-Stip/10150128749195307)

In honor of International Women's Day (March 8th, 2013), today March 6th

American Corner Stip hosted a marvelous event

titled-
“Centuries of American Women Poets”

(Ann Bradstreet, Emily Dickinson, Emma Lazarus, Louise Bogan, Sylvia Plath, Ann Saxton, Diane Wakoski, Alice Walker, Erica Yong, Maya Angelou)

Faculty members and students from the American Literature, Civilization and Culture Section- [School of Philology, Department of English Language and Literature, University “Goce Delcev”in Stip], presented famous quotes from the poets, with biographical notes and comments from a 21st century perspective.

Special Thanks to:

Project organizer: Marija Emilija Kukubajska, PhD

Faculty members: Natalija Pop Zarieva; MA and Marija Krsteva; MA

**AMERICAN CORNER, Project Organizer:**

**Marija Emilija Kukubajska, PhD**

FORWARD:

In [Contemporary American Women Poets: An A-To-Z Guide](http://books.google.mk/books?id=uIhM0n05FJMC&printsec=frontcover&dq=american+female+poets&hl=en&sa=X&ei=5ygyUYGhNNHWsgbT-oDoBw&ved=0CEAQ6AEwBA), prepared by Catherine Cucinella (2002) readers find a mapping of achievements among contemporary American women poets, that encounter an enormous range of variety. Innovative writing styles divergence from established history of literary thoughts. Refashioning poetry follows reshaping of the culture of living and supports liberation tendencies against restrictive conventional views. The American female poetry has been influenced by a range of issues as infinite as the rapid redefining and questioning of the meaning of everything.

These women’s authors from the 17th century to today, carry on a spiritual and intellectual wealth that built the American, and global bank of issues, as relevant to a society in change as it is applicable to international literary and trans-literary, societal and cultural topics of our planet. Out of thousands of female voices, we could only chose 10 for this occasion, those that denote cornerstones in style and substance. This selection offers female poets whose observation became known both for its modern and postmodern women’s liberation movement, as much as for its 17th and 18th c bold voices. It includes poets acclaimed for their 1960’ socialist revolt and sexual revolution, as well as their ethnic minority, multi-cultural quest and unrest for ideological or social recognition, for human rights, or defense of individual liberties.

From the piety and purity of the first American poetess, Ann Bradstreet to the moral rebellion and intellectual deconstructivism of Erica Jong, the American diversity of ideas reflects a global representation of change, of presence and presentations of color and creed that challenge previously established concepts in literature and life.

Both academic researchers and general readership will become shockingly surprised by diversity of lexicon and metaphors when comparing the poetry “map” with, for instance, a selection of 19th century women’s poems. They differ, as a UGD student said, as a telegraph differs from a computer. Such is a publication from 1842, “GEMS from American Female Poets”, edited by Rufus Griswold, which prides in presenting female issues that have become inconceivable to the language and philosophy of the 20th and 21st century. On page X, its introduction quotes a qualification that belongs to a distant intellectual and ethical worldview, yet it deserves its place in the history of American thought that serves as a repository of a long-abandoned *spirit of the time*. Here is a sample of this striking difference in style and substance: “Nearly all American (female) poetry … is of the purest moral character. We do not remember a single poem of sufficient merit, as a work of art, to be quoted that an intelligent father would hesitate to place in the hands of a daughter. The contents of this selection are generally distinguished for propriety and beauty of thought, and harmonious verification…” December 1st 1841.

On the occasion of the International Women’s Day, our selection of poems offers female voices that reflect the variety of the American perception stretching from the sublime love of Anne Bradstreet to the ultimate rejection of life in Sylvia Plath’s life experience. This selection chose to focus on the positive side of reality, on the female nature generated by the “gentler gender” when expressed in verse, that same one that often, in the name of equality, refuses to be named gentler. We also chose to consider that the fight for female rights does not include only fight with violent opposition but rather with prudent, sensible intellectual and emotional tools used by female authors.

**1.**

**ANNE BRADSTREET (1626 – 1672)**

The first American female poet and writer, Anne Bradstreet, was an English governor’s daughter, and wife of the governor of Massachusetts colony, whom she married at age 16, and left England with her beloved husband. We learn from the Preface to the second volume of poems that she was “as much loved for her gentleness, discretion and domestic diligence as she was admired for her genius, wit, and love of learning”, according to Carolyn May’s book from 1854, American Female poets. The stately measures of her refined thought and versification display “solemn majesty” of her genuine love for family, nature and concepts of the universe, the human history and the greatness of America.

POEMS ABOUT HER BELOVED HUSBAND

**ERICA JONG (1942 -)**

Opposite of Bradstreet’s respect for female spiritual dignity, 300 years later, an American woman liberated herself to the extent that love for her became object of sex, and sexual organs are obsessively seen even in fruit and vegetables. Erica Jong is the feminist movement author that mirrors 20th c. anxiety, fear, addictions, madness and manias for freedom of expression.

Her 20 books of poetry, fiction and memoirs, include the most famous, Fear of Flying, published in 1973, sold in 19 million copies worldwide. Her recent essays appear in The New York Times Book Review, and she is a frequent guest on television talk shows. Her award-winning books include Fanny, How to Save Your Own Life, Parachutes and Kisses, Any Woman's Blues, Love Comes First, Sappho's Leap. She is also the author of the memoir Fear of Fifty. Erica and her second husband, a lawyer, live in New York City and Connecticut. Her daughter, Molly Jong-Fast, is also an author.

POEM:

Beast, Book, Body

I was sick of being a woman,
sick of the pain,
the irrelevant detail of sex,
my own concavity
uselessly hungering
and emptier whenever it was filled,
and filled finally
by its own emptiness,
seeking the garden of solitude
instead of men.

The white bed
in the green garden--
I looked forward
to sleeping alone
the way some long
for a lover.

Even when you arrived,
I tried to beat you
away with my sadness,
my cynical seductions,
and my trick of
turning a slave
into a master.

And all because
you made
my fingertips ache
and my eyes cross
in passion
that did not know its own name.

Bear, beast, lover
of the book of my body,
you turned my pages
and discovered
what was there
to be written
on the other side.

And now
I am blank
for you,
a tabula rasa
ready to be printed
with letters
in an undiscovered language
by the great press
of our love.

3.

**EMMA LAZARUS (1849-1887)**

A Jewish American poet, born of Sephardic family settled in America in the 18th century. Privately tutored, she expanded her knowledge in world culture and read German, French and Italian besides English. At age 18 she had her *Poems and Translations* published, sponsored by her father, a wealthy sugar merchant. Besides other poetry collections, she published a history novel, *Alide, An Episode in Goethe’s life* (1874), The Sapngoletto (1876) a verse drama about a Spanish painter, volume of translations, *Poems and Ballads of Heinrich Heine* (1881). Her poems appeared at prominent American newspapers. Lazarus became the most prominent female activist for the Jewish cause in America, organized refugee relief and published articles on Jewish issues. Her two sisters published her poems posthumously, after she died of cancer. Her poem “The New Colossus” was recited at the dedication of the Statue of Liberty” with Emma’s verse engraved in the statue.

**The New Colossus\***

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame

With conquering limbs astride from land to land;

Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand

A mighty woman with a torch whose flame

Is the imprisoned lightening, and her name

Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand

Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command

The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame

*“Keep ancient lands, your storied pomp!”* cries she

With silent lips. “*Give me your tired, your poor,*

*your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,*

*The retched refuse of your teaming shore.*

*Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost, to me,*

*I lift my lamp beside the golden door!”*

\*Written in aid of Bartholdi Pedestal Fund, 1883