

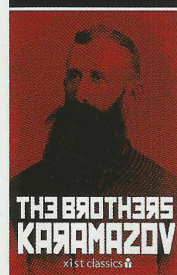
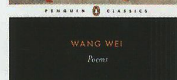
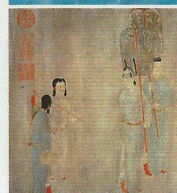
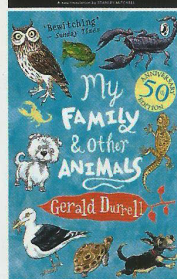
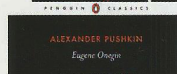
structural form of this one, with such clarity in the cohesiveness of a long narration.

The book that made me a novelist

I owe a lot to Alexander Pushkin, and it's very weird that I happened to pick him up when I did. I was studying economics at Stanford, and I used to frequent the bookshop on campus. On one such day, I was browsing through the poetry section and found two different translations of Pushkin's novel in verse, *Eugene Onegin*. I took them off the shelf, dug out the same stanza and started comparing the two. Soon I got so caught up in reading that I couldn't put it down. I read that book many times. Out went my economics dissertation and in came *The Golden Gate* (Random House, 1986). I spent the next nine months trying to avoid meeting my dissertation advisors, because I was busy writing my first novel.

The poets who made me a poet

My parents left me with my nani when I was about a year-old, and she was a great fan of sentimental poetry of the style of "The boy stood on the burning deck..." and "O say what is that thing call'd light, which I must ne'er enjoy." I remember her reading these poems to me, and as she recited them, her nose would get red and she would weep. Maybe, that's why I became a poet; she made me realise the power of poetry. From *Chandamama* to Collins *Albattross Book Of Verse*, there was a regular diet of poetry at home. And in school there was Rahim



and Kabir in Hindi, who we learned by heart, and Tennyson and Shakespeare.

The one that made me learn a language

Over time I discovered the poetry of Heinrich Heine, Giacomo Leopardi, Li Bai, Du Fu and Mir Taqi Mir. But it was Wang Wei, a Tang dynasty Chinese poet, who moved me most. He was a nature poet but what I found most interesting were his poems on friendship. I knew I had to read them in the original. So I managed to manipulate my way into China by ensuring that my Master's dissertation was on the Chinese economic demography. And I learnt Mandarin. Once I read the poems in the original, I decided to attempt another translation, even though I was drawn to them through someone else's translation—it had a curious circular effect on me.

The book that surprised me the most

I lived in Patna and went to boarding school in Dehradun. On our trips to and fro, we were put on the train at midnight and a day and a half later we would reach our destination. On every second platform there was an AH Wheeler & Co. bookshop and we would rush off and buy comics and, occasionally, a novel. I remember buying a very 'slim' book called *The Brothers Karamazov* by Fyodor Dostoyevsky. I read it to the end and it felt incomplete. I was used to adult books and open endings but this seemed unfinished. And then I realised it was only Volume 1. It was quite the surprise. ■

DEBUT

VOGUE

DREAMING OF NARNIA

Fashion world darling **FARAH OOMERBHOY** shares her fantasies with *Vogue*



Oomerbhoy is working on a fantasy trilogy

While the dearth of fantasy writers from India is a stark reality, Farah Oomerbhoy is part of the rare breed. Her first novel, *The Last Of The Firedrakes: The Avalonia Chronicles*, is a fantasy saga about the coming of age of a teenage girl dragged into a magical world. Oomerbhoy first released her book on Wattpad, a free e-reading site. Today, with over a million reads, it is number one on its fantasy list. As

Oomerbhoy prepares for a paperback release, *Vogue* steps into her world.

When did your journey with fantasy begin?

A long time ago, when I read Enid Blyton's *The Faraway Tree* and *The Wishing Chair* series, and then CS Lewis's *The Chronicles Of Narnia*. Later, I discovered Tolkien, David Eddings, Tamora Pierce and Robin McKinley.

Your character Aurora carries on the new wave of strong female protagonists...

The first book concentrates on her adjusting to her newly discovered powers. In books two and three she will go from a scared but headstrong princess into a

formidable warrior, ready to take her place amongst other female heroes in fantasy literature.

What are your plans for the series?

It's planned as a trilogy. I'm working on book two and hope to have it out by 2016.

The Last Of The Firedrakes: The Avalonia Chronicles (Wise Ink Creative Publishing) releases this month

