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VerbalART

A Global Journal Devoted to
POETS AND POETRY

A Peer-Reviewed Print Journal

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Chief Editor:

Dr VIVEKANAND JHA

Associate Editor:

Dr RAJNISH MISHRA

Review Editor:

Dr CHANDRA SHEKHAR DUBEY

Assistant Editor:

Prof. SHASHANK NADKARNI



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POETRY

AJU MUKHOPADHYAY

Deafness Saves

Hard of hearing saves a man from sounds
Gores a normal man when
Uncivilised unruly societies abound
Hearing aid pulls one up
Fixing his back against the wall
Safely to be gored
By any of the brutes
Roaming in front or behind;
Going back to his deaf state
He realises that whatever he had heard
Throughout his life before being deaf
Were mostly the absurd
Waste matters of life, pollutants
He was burdened with;
Better to remain deaf
Than live
Cheated by hypocrites
The Elites.

AJU MUKHOPADHYAY**It Rains in Time**

blazing Sun even in early morning
pierces the earth
bumble bees around me buzz
in resonance
as I pick and collect flowers;
how much hot, even too hot
skin endures, body dares for more
mid-May!
no sign of Kalbaisakhi
time going out of hand
all endure, expectant
record keepers tell us
that it's rare among many past years!
Nature tries to keep its lore;
At last it rains
drizzles without sound
under the blazing Sun
those out on some errands are drenched
bees take a rest, awhile
though not our thirst is quenched;
it's reminiscent of the mild gnashing of clouds
and air getting cool
in recent few days without clamouring loud
spark of hope lingered
rains resumed real work in time, silently.

AMARENDRA KHATUA

Transition

Best is inside your womb,
Mother.

Eternity is only nine months
In deciphering.
Then the existential spiral of
Hell that
Nobody can define
Yet voices pretend to describe
In pleasure unwaits me.

Future of this poetry
Is not in your hands, mother,

Nor with the fate of this
Nameless passage.
But dignity of these living silent
Words will salvage your
Patience, sanctify your wait.

Till bundles of all emotions
Enacted inside as acceptance
Becomes you
And in waiting peace begins its journey

AMARENDRA KHATUA

Refugee's Song

Words are not kind
Anymore, they
Bleed silence on their own.

Each journey must seek
A fixed address, to
Unpack wayward tunes, and whisper
Away the unwanted yet sweet lyrics.

The place with my
Stolen identity
Will have a possessed room
Littered with memory strips
And an open door empty
Of invitations.

The talons of lost words,
The cruel beaks of
Singles waiting – now
The counting begins in
Tracing the dearest lines,
Being eaten away by an
Unfamiliar cruelty

ANDREW SCOTT

Abigail

Abigail stares out the window,
focusing on the night, crescent moon
while talking in her own mind.

So many emotions running through her.
Quiet tears are filling Abigail's eyes,
thinking of the unknown next turn.

Abigail feels like she is starting over again.
The losses have been constantly coming.
Inside, she does not want to fully break.

She knows rebuilding will take strength.
Abigail has been here before
and knows the steps to be taken.

Abigail feels she is different, stronger
than even the day before today.
Reminds herself that old ways or methods
can be spiritually damaging.

Tonight, Abigail wants a break from it all.
A mix of wine and thoughts.
Staring at the bright, crescent moon.
Tomorrow the build begins.

ANDREW SCOTT

Flaming Fire

The embers inside have been asleep.
Complacent, cold for so long.
Enjoying rest and tranquility.

My world has been peaceful.
Have not been tested by the universe
in what seems to be forever
so the armour has been down.

Could be why I never felt
the lightening bolt coming or landing.
Hit my spirit with an unexpected jolt.
A new burned path.

A punch of pain was a shock
that may have knocked a soul down
however I have been hit
multiple times through my life.

The pain ignited an internal passion
that has been laying dormant,
living within comfortably.

A flame was sparked to overcome,
The body began vibrating
with tingly anticipation
of the new challenges ahead.

Brings out the smile
inside a flaming fire.

AVDHESH JHA

Father – I Loved Him the Most

With situations, he depicted the path to follow
And with harsh face, he protected me the most;
Often, he scolded me and sometimes he hit me,
But it was his way to express his love the most.

In all odds and evens, and in all goods and bad
Standing beside me, he cared for me the most,
Silently watching and grieving, he warned me,
For, it was his way to express his love the most.

For all my misdeeds, he was strong and strict
But as a fact, he was softest for me the most;
How if I could have shared and said to him that
He was the only one, whom I loved the most.

DAVE LEWIS

Morning Sue

Oh listen rain to the sound of her breathing,
Don't tap so loud you might wake her.
In the haze of this morning
She's a shape like heaven.

Don't shine so bright you might blind her,
Oh look at what you've done!
She stirs and turns her head,
Her hair is honey, sticky on my face.

I wonder what wonders she's making?
How much she is giving.
Who is she caring for?
Only the flowers know.

And as I slip back to the safety of my pillow,
She tells the rain to be quiet,
She scolds the sun for burning me,
She kisses my eyes to taste my dreams,
To see all my suffering.

And she wonders what wonders go to make a morning.
As the rain stops we hear the motorway.
Guess he was too kind,
It rained all night, to protect us...
From the waiting day.

DAVE LEWIS

Hope

I went to the forest to see what I could find.
I found a creature in the trees, writing songs upon the leaves.
And his words were oh so true
And his words were oh so kind.

He told stories of Man's wars, he told stories of Man's greed,
But no one heard his lyrics, no one heard his cries.
The grown-ups wouldn't listen and they told the children lies.
And all the time the forest was dying seed by seed.

Now the wind has blown like wintertime
And they've chopped the forest down.
The warnings and the prophecies, they're lost and dead and
gone.
Except for this one precious leaf shouting its Autumn song.

DR. ERNEST WILLIAMSON III

Absence of Mine

black patches of lent
crying on cracked resin paper.
movable type is your
life stuffed in outer gauze
faint yet happily surrounding
the wobbling slit vases.
red winding pennies falling
away from imagined bills
staring with angst at my frame
seeing it seethe like bothered
milk in pith of cup leaden yet strong
as death dies in your sands.
white green blotches of pink palms
holding me; twitching doting
on how I made love an orchestra
with no semblance of sound
with no remembered layered cadence.

DR. ERNEST WILLIAMSON III**Night & Day**

evening came last night.
the other ones were white lies
coated in residue from the black ones.
I stuttered as soon as the moon stood in front
of me and you. I knew exactly what was happening.
kissing was AP Latin; simply an F before
an A had a chance to boast of its coming.
yet after twenty minutes my cobalt black
body was laid and wet like baptized fish
caught unaware of its fiery conversion.
sadly I woke up dry and amazed
at all of the rainbows forming outside
my squeaking square red windows.
fading in and out of the white sky.
fully clothed and eloquently lecturing
me on the theory of evolution.

ROGER G. SINGER

Darkness

I heard the sound
of darkness

moving without shadows

like a stream
joining a river

its strength
smooth yet alone

in the black of night

its appetite full
until dawn

ROGER G. SINGER

Far Away

distant lightening
flashes without sound

the scene is apocalyptic,
a silent war
breaking the air

trees and leaves
are silhouetted
exposing the spine
of mountains

we watch in awe
as repetitive bursts
press their weight
on a town
or city
far away

FHEN M.

Pisces

I want to escape the storm of life
like the parent and the child escaping
the wrath and havoc caused by Typhon

the sea monster with snake-like waves,
gust of wind in the flapping of wings
smashing this fragile body and psyche

Pisces in the ocean of stars and planets
carry me on your smooth scaled backs
away from the storm
battering my life of mind.

FHEN M.

Saturn is in the sky today

the lawn of green and gray
needs pruning and trimming
a sickle cuts the grass and hay

Saturn holds an hourglass
sand fills the bottom glass
everything has an end
like planets and stars

blade cuts the old grass and hay
to make way for the new.

GARY BECK

New Landlord

The scaffolding gets higher.
Soon it will reach my windows
and they'll do the same thing
they did to Miss Perez,
cover them with plywood sheets
so she didn't get any light.
She held out for a while,
then gave up and moved.
I have nowhere else to go
so I'll try to hang on here,
even when they seal me in
as if I'm in a crypt.
I looked up on Google
landlord techniques:
'how to get rid of
undesired tenants',
so I'm preparing
for what they'll do next.
I'm stocking up on water
for when they cut the water.
I even have sealable bags
for when I can't use the toilet.
I have lots of power bars,
other kinds of dried foods
so I'll be able to eat
when they stop the elevator.
I don't dare leave the building

cause there might be an accident
that destroys the entrance.
I made arrangements
with my Pro Bono lawyer
to bring suit against them
if they cut the power.
Until then I have my Ipad,
internet services
and I'll hold out for a long time.
If they want to get rid of me
all I want is enough money
to live the rest of my life
without becoming homeless.
If they'll do that
I won't go happily,
but I'll go.

GARY BECK

Jitters

I trudge down Covid streets
masked, distancing,
though others don't,
not meeting people's eyes –
can I catch it with a look?
Alright. I know that sounds nuts,
but I don't want to catch it.
I have to go shopping –
I didn't stock up on food
and the store's always crowded,
not shoulder to shoulder,
but it always feels too close.
It's driving me crazy.
I'll have to make changes.
I'll order food on-line,
won't go out anymore
until the disease is gone
and hope I survive.

GERMAIN DROOGENBROODT

Petrified

At the town square
stands the statue
of a war hero.

He looks ahead
as if he looks to the future
as if he looks for a time without wars
a time of worldwide peace
– but his eyes are petrified.

GERMAIN DROOGENBROODT

Athena, my dog

When I need friendship,
and lack human warmth,
I call her and she comes immediately.
When I stretch out my hand,
she offers me her paw.
She cannot speak,
but her eyes say it:
“I love you!”

HONEY NOVICK

Writing the Silence

S I L E N T L I S T E N

same letters s i l e n t l i s t e n
equal importance different meanings
different languages
silence, the active relative of silent
whose importance is revealed by
writers, painters, singers and other artistic disciplines through
listening

how?

we are taught that silence is devoid of sound
it is not
birds' wings beating in flight
make a rhythmic melody
we cannot hear it. Yet, if we came close enough
the rhythm would entrance us

there are many melodies unheard, yet they exist
sonar, underwater songs go fast/slow/deep

What sounds do you believe are out there?

how do we write the silent language of the living universe?
perhaps with a certain discipline we can
tune into this language.

Sit in a chair with feet flat on the floor
let the coccyx (the bottom bone of the spine)
touch the back of a chair
make sure the spine is straight
just listen for a minimum of 30 seconds

This is not a meditation.
This is active listening.
It is the basis of all art forms.
It is how Beethoven was able to compose symphonies while
being deaf!
It is how some people think themselves into concentration.
Writing is not lonely when it is thought of as an action, an act of
doing.
Yes, we are alone when writing but
this is a form of focusing on deep listening to
our own self-expression
this is where we want to go to bring forth and share what we
hear.
Active listening tunes our ears to focus on silence or sound.

Become aware of all that you “observe” with your ears.
Do you live on a busy street with lots of traffic?
Does the flow of traffic sound like a symphony, getting louder or
softer?
When the phone rings does your ear flinch, or can you tell what
note it is?
What sounds do you hear in your daily life?
Does the opening and closing of a drawer draw your attention?
What does the sound of running water in the sink or shower
mean to you?
How does listening to people who speak other languages capture
your attention?

Often we describe “soundless observations” as “nothing”.
Something devoid of sound is not nothing.
When we train our ears to hear beyond our expectations,
we open to whole new world of wonder.
Some people in big cities are aware of the cadences of traffic.
In the country it could be the clatter of birdsong.
In stillness it could be the pulsation of blood flowing through the
veins.

Active listening is a true exercise
listening, silently, is the power of our essence!

IRMA KURTI

Musical Note

I have heard a voice like this somewhere:
it's the rustle of leaf, the beating of a
swallow's wings, the light fall of a petal.

I have heard a voice like this: it comes;
it troubles my heart, confusing its beats.
It's such a light musical note: the most
beautiful music that I have ever heard,
and on a day like this.

IRMA KURTI

When I Come to You

Sooner or later, a journey will take me
to you. It doesn't matter on what date,
in what season. My quick heartbeats
will guide me like a compass.

I won't be frightened by the valleys
of your village that stray behind the
mist; by the scattered buildings or the
dusty street; by a dog barking; by the
roar of a car; by the kilometers that
stretch out like aging arms seeking
an embrace; by the birds screaming
in the chaos, announcing the coming
of a rainstorm. Nothing will frighten
me when I come to you.

IVAN POZZONI

Carmina Non Dant Damen

The story of a coin is of no interest to anyone
two sides never so bold to see each other face to face
on one side imprinted the effigy of a queen,
austere, draped in silks and thirsty of drapery,
on the other the image of a minstrel, clad in a mantle of earth,
surrounded by the golden sadness of war songs.

The enchantment of love turns into coin
two hands, arranged one with care and other artisanship,
shake hands, and two faces, two metic eyes
protrude from the copper reliefs,
keeping alive, embraced, suspended in the void,
the one observing the amenity of a realm
where rivers run free, flowers smile,
clothed in forests and fruit forever,
the other gazing into hell.

My art is powerless
to cast spells so influential
to keep two faces timelessly suspended in the void,
mixing in forge the two worlds
into a single world where minstrel
and austere queen harmonise thoroughly.

Minstrel, continue to sing
your useless song with a broken heart,
waiting for fragments of tears
to flow again
in the blood of a halved love.

IVAN POZZONI

Journalists

On the website of the Corriere della Sera
Come out *marquette* (in)worthy of the Gazzettino di Valmadrera,
the freelance webetic, who have never had the misfortune to
work,
churn out pieceworks of bullshit that not even Baget Bozzo on
the altar,
in a relentless pursuit of fake news and the scoop with every
insert,
they beat, at a kilo a piece, the road that leads to Studio Aperto.

This is the same category that insistently interviews
the unfortunate during an earthquake,
without suffering, as a counterpart, in the street,
the application to the muzzle of a copious enteroclysm,
being able to reason with someone who lives
on the number of typefaces he pounds in the press room
considering human dignity out of fashion,
is like making Cicciolina drive a pump-truck.

Will anyone ever be able to explain to a cultural trader
living in a caricature market publishing,
victim of the hypertrophy of supply of articles without demand,
that independence and truth do not fit into the lexicon of
horticulture,
The bold Houdinis of the utilitarian neo-sophistication
with the collapse of the mechanisms of hyper-capitalist
publishing,
will end up being, finally, in their underwear,
demolished by the contempt of having been a 'journalist'.

JEFFREY ZABLE

Kindergarten

I don't remember how long I was into it,
but at some point I had one of those accidents
and because the teacher couldn't leave the room
I was entrusted to one of the more capable students
who led me down the steps and around the corner
to the office, and I don't recall returning that day
nor whether I missed something important
like how to form a lower-case f or how to add to 6,
which I must have picked up along the way. . .

JEFFREY ZABLE

Too Late

Too late to go back now and apologize for trying
to seduce her that night over 50 years ago after having
too much to drink.

And looking back I'm glad that she he fended me off
as it really wasn't meant to be, but what surprises me
is that after we graduated we never ran into each other
even once, though we both continued to live here in the city
and actually chose the same profession – teaching –
which she did here, while I taught a couple of cities away.

And when I heard through a male friend that she got
pancreatic cancer and passed away at only 53 years of age,
I felt very sad and wished that I had tried to contact her
along the way, which was just another of the many things
I wished I had done...

JOAN MCNERNEY

Live Oak Boughs

Boughs build archways as tips
of trees touch each other. What
was shaded green becomes
nocturnal shadow. A crescent moon
hangs from heaven. Light tracing
foliage falls dropping
dusty deep upon ground.

Secrets lie inside the edged shadow.
Animals hide under darkness
resounding through night
as leaves rustle. All changing
except this pattern of what
is now formed.

JOHN GREY

The Hands

They're fingers.
Or maybe just the one –
the thumb, or the middle digit,
pointed at the sky.

They can tie a tie.
Or reach into a pocket.
Even pat some loser on the back.
inferring a "Good job. Good job."

They can spread
and accept gifts.
Or crunch up
and give plenty in return.
And they can operate more machinery
than my brain would ever think of trying.

We are together in just about everything
from devouring chicken wings
to sexual foreplay.

I'm not Italian or deaf and dumb
so they can't double as conversation
But they can wave and pull
and touch and push away,
in concert with the emotions.

They have dirt under the nails,
calluses at the tips
from playing the guitar.
They can shake when meeting someone
and grip tight to extend that meeting
into something more.

Literally, they wrote this
though figuratively, they did not.
But they did type out the word
'figuratively'.

JOHN GREY**The Siren After**

Aftermath of rain, sidewalks shimmer.
A siren wails, ambulance speeds through
the intersection., its spinning red taken up
by the wet streets. The urgent shriek
won't let the neighborhood alone,
can't settle softly back into itself
now the storm's blown over. Even
the clouds are breaking but that didn't
stop a car slamming into a pole,
a delicate extraction of flesh and bone,
and then a loud and terrifying race with
death to the hospital. In its screaming
wake, there's drenched people trudging.
Others fold up what's left of their umbrellas.
A few, in rain hats and galoshes,
strut and stride like they can't help boasting
of their preparedness. Some come warily out
from under awnings, after an hour or two
of hibernation. Loud alarms and quiet dampness.
the worst of life would be a chill
if you could but hear yourself.

KATHRINE YETS

Tis The Season

Dead birds line the ocean shore.
Some still hang to life
with a small flutter of wing
or ruffle of feathers
as the breast rises and falls.
There's no way to know
unless you live in Oregon
the whens and whys
of these flit moments
of tiny hearts' last beats.
The fall from the sky
so far and the final view
of cumulus clouds in the blue.
Then, she wonders
about our choices in turquoise
dreams to nightmares to reality
without much thought as to
the reasons behind
each sigh of seasonal death.
There's only the chapters
of remorseless words
to fill whitespace.

KATHRINE YETS**DJ Dreams**

At times, I believe you play songs for me
as though each decision a wish
made upon the speaker
to make me cream as you stream
your beats – drop a mash up,
crossfade my emotions
into a remix then switch
to flip the edit
balance levels,
so I clearly and cohesively
feel what you're feeling
sync with your sensual movement
get hot by yours cues
with deck that vibrates
staccato tracks to make me wanna
shake my ass
past the seamless bliss of beat match
with bass that hits my heart rhythm
so hard
I want your key in my transition
of harmonic and melodic ecstasy,

but then you cut
to a song I'm not vibing with at all.
Throws me for a loop.
Kills my swoon.
Scratches out my desires

to take you to the bedroom.
Anyway, a spin back
into a relaxed stance tells me
there is no fact
to my disk fiction
just random decision
of hits that got me tripped
as I swallow my last sip.

KEITH INMAN

Still Fruit with Hare

perfection missed
the true colours
of a peppered meal

KEITH INMAN

To Soar

in India
he'd watched planes take off
their engines overtaking gravity
and borders
that clouds no longer held

and now he sleeps
among a murmur of roots
below swaying trees where a highway
fords a canal and vapour-trails
criss-cross the sky

LES WICKS

Win Lose & Awe

Been a long time coming
but I now trust in moments.

There was Sunday, a toddler's
anarchy of feet.
Why do adults forget cackling?
Hokey Pokey played on a loop
drowned out the pains. I too was dancing.

Tuesday saw a beach being peeled beneath
an uncrowned king tide.
A woman does Tai Chi
with passive seagulls balanced on her arms & head.
Long-time local Bob's ashes were paddled out past the breaks
& he was settled down, deep amongst the kelp.

Then Thursday I was naked
beside another naked & complete.
We were anchors
affirmation.

These moments, barely cracks,
they're too small for any belief to infiltrate.
One can't build there
or easily track a return...
mounds & fissures dictate our "progress".

Irretrievable
but inviolate
these glints string forward –
maybe not clear, no plenitude –
nonetheless my path.

LES WICKS

Rodeo

A man, his horse.
A man, his car
& loan due Friday.

Easily dismissed
Rob was working 13-day fortnights
for his family.
So maybe he got to like the workplace
a little more than the teary kiddy-chaos of home.
He *provided.*

Now every second weekend
he plans *fun* like a military operation...
those kids are his.
He'll never forgive her
what she took
the *you never had time for me* whinge.
He pulls into the driveway,
Jack & Terry come out.

Doesn't look much like a patriarchy from his end,
if everything had been planned for the benefit of men
it would have turned out so much better for them.
His boss is a woman –
as unhappy as the bloke she replaced.

Hasn't laughed since "Raymond"
but wears a sometimes peace.
Both boys, he'll raise them hard...
that hurt he carries, but *still too soft for sure*.
You can't lose if you don't trust –
heard that somewhere, it digs in
like those bindis on his neglected lawn.

MANDIRA GHOSH

Roses

Roses survived
Withstanding heat and rage of the sun
In colourful vases
The suffocating ones
Smile asking for pardon
Don't teach
Discipline to flowers
Don't throw
Sermons on them.

Don't ask for forgiveness
But don't let this world assault them.

MICHAEL LEE JOHNSON

April Winds (V3)

April winds persist
in doing charity work
early elbowing right to left
their way through these willow trees
branches melting reminiscences
of winter remnants off my condo roof
no snow crystals sprinkle
in drops over my balcony deck.
Canadian geese wait impatiently for their
spring feeding on the oozy ground below.
These silent sounds
except for the roar of laughter
those April winds –
geese hear nothing
no droppings from the balcony –
no seeds.

MICHAEL MIROLLA

In Diamond Dazzle

Crack of ice jacket
(bird wings bursting into air)
to free captive limb

In diamond dazzle
crystal forest that shudders
amid translucence

Fir boughs flung open –
a path reflecting footsteps
into deepest green

Fleeting flash of sun
through prisms plunging to light
brief slice of moment

A walk along edge
of shadows – quick erasure
into vanishing

MICHAEL MIROLLA

The [fill-in-the-blank] pool

I'm standing at the edge of a tidal pool
at the edge of a mountain-crowned island
at the edge of volcanic rock battered
by a sea's deceptively gentle waves
and trying to think of something to say.
Perhaps something that rhymes with "importance":
stance, chance, enhance, dance, romance, fer-de-lance.
Nope. I can't quite get it right. Irony
circles like a vulture and that's nothing
to sneeze at. The laughter that squeezes
through every available gap in the spaces
between tides sounds too much like the holes
in your logic. So now that you've gone out
as far as you could on this shaky limb
shall we get back to what was troubling us
in the first place? Have we ironed out
those little concerns? Or has the laughter
turned manic like a distorted bat signal
warning of a danger that doesn't exist?
Is that a grimace I see reflected
in the water, wavering as usual?
What exactly do you hope to find
in there? The meaning of corners that can't
be defined? The brightness heading towards you
with an intensity you can't deflect?
The worry of picking at your own flesh
in the hope things will come clear if someone else

is shining the light ... that refracted light?
Like swimmers' legs in a foreshortening
between smoke-filled air and sun-drenched water
that turns them into clownish sitcom stars?
Ah, so this was a deep pool after all
pulsing back and forth from an ocean
that couldn't give a shit about your logic ...
your tangents ... your diversionary tactics.
It reaches in and gets right to the point:
I give the salt and I take away the salt.
So dive in. The pool shimmers, the moon glimmers
and the tide, ah the tide, waits for no one.

MITHIL JHA

Just Hold Me

Not restricting and limiting to the destiny, I chose you;
For, with you and the trust in you, I rest without any fear;
The perfection; the beauty of my body, heart and the soul;
My feelings! I must let you know that you are my goal.

Being the world of my joy, all I think about is only you,
Maybe, since I feel you as myself, I want to be with you;
Eventually, I could see and feel through your presence
How I wonder! You board my ship and lead me to YOU;

Though only a fragment on this earth, I hope, only for you
Whether near or far, I believe in you; and so do I live you;
For I know, we are all one and your part on this paradise,
Just hold me, for, YOU are my voice and my only choice.

MOYA RODDY

Hollyhocks

Already the hollyhocks are twelve feet,
delicate pink flowers belying their vigour,
breath-taking beauty as they sway on their
high perches, dance among drooping wisteria.

We're always amazed at their return –
crooked stalks a couple of feet above ground,
a few straggly leaves which multiply,
grow the size of lily pads.

As summer wanes they show rust, spot over,
shrink, hang ashen-tailed. Reluctantly, we cut them off,
one by one, leaving the plant naked, vulnerable.

Like parents not wanting to draw attention to a child
who's ailing, the sudden bloom on her cheeks,
we talk in whispers, praising the plant's resilience,
blossoms still opening each morning; our hushed voices,
our reticence a dead giveaway.

MOYA RODDY

New Kid on the Block

It was one of those 1947 B movies,
bristling with chiselled-chinned men
paws for hands
and girls girls girls
(there were never any women)
high-kicking it
can-canning it.
Hey kid, the oldest said to the newcomer,
don't get any ideas, what you're looking at
is you – ten years down the line.
No one treated those kinda gals with kid gloves.
Kid – a young goat able to scale a mountain,
if it's not handed to you on a plate.

NEELAM SHAH

Time

Everyone knows Time is of the essence.
Prisoners do their time in prison for penance.
Hours, minutes and seconds go by so fast.
Time holds the present, future and the past.
The pendulum clock sways to and fro.
Babies are born every day and then they grow.
Time has power on everyone and controls how we live.
Time has nothing to offer and nothing to give.
Time has its limits and is precious.
Within 24 hours people have to be tenacious.
Days, months and years fly by.
Soon everyone who lives on earth will die.

PAWEŁ MARKIEWICZ**Germany in the nighttime**

1961 – the wall has been built
once sixty-one stars glowed over the native land
the East Germany rife with butterflies sparkled in the night
the Western Germany full of west wood garlics glinted in the
evening
the fall of the Berlin Wall was an indulgence
then shooting stars fell down
at the moonglow
the night reveals the policies
with the most amazing dreams
the dream about roses
from 1935
was killed forever
by the murkiness of comets
that never could be blazing fiercely
the night crawled
the German Bundestag was light-filled
by all kinds of lights of the new wizardry
thousands of laws are glistening
at the stars-shine
the myth of Germany
is an ancient legend
from the emperor Otto the Great
the history is a night rainbow
awakened in some dreameries
of a dazzling thinker
Hitler wants to be forgotten
forever and for sempiternity
of a night sorcery

glister – literary: glitter

PETE MULLINEAUX**Story Time**

The grandmother, skin dry as an autumn leaf, touches the innocent smoothness of the child's face, asks what her 'sweet girl' has been getting up to lately. There's a moment when even for this young one a worldly filtering mechanism, kicks in: "Oh, just stuff," she replies with a lazy yawn.

"And what particular kind of 'stuff' might that be?" insists Grannie, brow frowning as her mind's eye sees only a grainy haze – the child reaching for the safety of her phone, about to say, "I have some pictures", then remembering this person is blind. "Pick somewhere, anywhere," probes the older woman, "but take me there with words: make it up if you want." So the girl sighs, closes off the slide-screen world, shuts her own eyes, begins: "OK, you asked for it: once there was a very nice little girl, but she had a very very bold grannie..."

PETE MULLINEAUX

Alternatively

In a parallel universe, not that different from this one, but with a few marked variations, at the Eurovision Song Contest, a Palestinian singer takes the stage, filling it with olive trees and dreamy faces in love, wins over an infinite number of hearts. In this inverted world, it's not even a contest: a simple sharing of cultures, appreciation of diversity, each offering sung in its own language. Here, the humble English entry caresses the ears with its novelty.

QUDSI RIZVI

The Silent Threads

Desire whispers softly,
a pull toward what isn't here,
a promise of fulfillment
that lingers just out of reach.

Loneliness follows close,
its shadow stretching long,
a quiet reminder of absence,
of the spaces that longing leaves behind.

In the vastness of existence,
we seek meaning,
connection,
a purpose to light our way.
Yet, each pursuit circles back,
to the echo of ourselves,
fragile, searching, unsure.

In solitude, the truth waits –
not despair, but clarity.
A mirror reflecting fears and dreams,
the rawness of who we are
when the world turns quiet.

And in that silence,
desire and loneliness entwine,
threads of the same fragile fabric,
binding us to the tender weight
of being human.

QUDSI RIZVI

Silencing the River

The tongue,
once a river carving the earth with sound,
is now a desert –
cracked and breathless,
where whispers curl into dust storms,
carrying echoes of unspoken truths.

Language,
a wild creature of boundless flight,
now clipped, now caged,
its roar caught in the throat of the wind,
its wings folded into shapes
that please the sky's silence.

Syllables that once danced
like fireflies in a dusk of ideas
are swallowed whole –
devoured by the mouth of absence,
where the scream folds inward,
becoming a shadow
of what it could have been.

Pens falter mid-stroke,
the ink recoils like a tide
dragged unwillingly to shore.
Metaphors wilt in unseen heat,
their petals crisp,
their meaning reduced to ash.

And yet,
beneath the tyrant's stillness,
the river dreams of its flow.
The roots split stone,
hidden and relentless,
words gathering like seeds in the dark,
waiting for rain –
to rise, to burst, to bloom.

RAM KRISHNA SINGH

Haiku

after the drone bomb
stuck between concrete rubbles
a mother and child

each sun aggravates
sadness moment by moment:
watching lonely street

splashing the eyes
for clearer vision:
faith in tension

fishing silver coins
in the depth of a bottle
a drunken veteran

warblers fly back
seeing the soft-stepping cats
in the grassy yard

a long golden net
surges on the ocean tide –
fishing memories

in green flower pot
white magnolia fading –
end of the season

April sickness:
couldn't penetrate
the night's darkness

RAM KRISHNA SINGH

Search My Own Music

Dull notes of life
await re-ordering –
rhythm and pitch
behind closed walls humming
to search my own music

shake the silent soul
before the final beat
create symphony
merging truth and dream on
lips and eyes that are alive

RAKESH BHARTIYA

Yogi

Years, months, days, hours, minutes and all that
Human beings love to classify 'time' like that
But Yogis are different, different from all others
They say that about such classifications Yogi never bothers
For a Yogi, all mortals remain in the zone of Kaal
Mortals mistakenly tend to refer 'time' also as Kaal
But Kaal's definition and functions are quite different
Kaal's function is to keep mortals limited to its zone
Kaal's definition, therefore, is one which limits mortals' zone
Yogis see beyond Kaal, always aim at transcending Kaal
They strive to shake-off any limitations put by Kaal
And be one with that one and only one, called Mahakaal.

RAMZI ALBERT RIHANI

The Return of the Man with Long Brown Hair

The roamers never left the room
still filled with smoke, liquor, and women.
Drunk and forsaken,
they waited for the man who left
a month, a year, or a decade ago.

They cannot remember.
They thought his last verse
that morning could not be the last.
It was like a chorus. They've been
chanting it in a loop, in ecstasy.

They wondered if he would come back.
This time, he will not be a stranger.
They grew older. He didn't.
They kept the song, and so did he.
Men and women mingled with Whitman,
the free-wheeling and Dylan.

He went away to be free. He knew
that there is no greater suffering in life
than being stripped of his freedom.
Instead of counting his time,
he made his time count.

Memories fade. But the woman with
green, watery eyes, remembers. She was

convinced he would be back one day.
The morning breaks, she breathes heavily,
she opens the door and collapses on his guitar
while he renders the same verse as when he left,
and the sun rises again.

SUSAN P. BLEVINS

Life Without He Art

Why don't we express our love in
words of poetry any more? Why
have we lost the words that speak
the language of the heart?

Does anyone play music to express
their love today? Why don't we pick
up our violin or cello and play a rhapsody
for the one we love? Or simply sing a song?

So many paintings were once conceived
out of love, for someone, for nature, for
God, color and brush-strokes expressing
that love in vibrant hues of passion.

All that matters is expressing love in
any way we can. The world needs
more love, however we express it,
through word, song or painting.

Only art can express the inexpressible,
lighten our inner darkness, transcend our
lonely separation, and merge our hearts and
spirits in celebration of the oneness of life.

SUSAN P. BLEVINS

A Plea

Death, turn your face toward me,
show me your beauty, your ease, your peace.
Turn around that I might see you clearly,
accept you, know you, love you.
Surely, as one who loves life
I may love you too, sweet Death.
For are you not but two faces of the
same wholeness?

Death, reach out your arms to me,
caress me, hold me, comfort me.
It is your face, your arms that give me strength,
it is from you that I take courage, for it is
life, that ambivalent angel, who offers us
pain, sorrow, suffering,
tempting, teasing, elusively avoiding
all but the most dauntless.

Death, shed your Lethe tears upon me,
soothing rivers of cradled sleep.
Cleanse me, purify me, prepare me
for the great encounter,
wash away perfidious life's pollution,
distortion, separation, fragmentation.
Teach me how to navigate your gentle waters
that with guiding star will bring me to your place.

Death, open to me this door which stands before me.
Down the tunnel of darkness I have walked,
and now I knock for entrance.
My pulse quickens as I sense the miracle before me,
beyond that door, the key to which you hold.
The light I come from is but a gaudy imitation,
vulgar substitute for that celestial light where you reside,
the fount, the source of all true light,
beauty, and eternal truth.

TAPAN KUMAR PRADHAN

SexMuseum, Amsterdam

Last summer I took my son, wife and mother
to the great Museum at Amsterdam Square;
once we entered though, I sheepishly thought
I should have come here all alone, for such

unimaginable things were so imaginatively displayed,
my mother suddenly had a terrible headache,
she said she would rather wait near entrance
while we could explore the museum, and pick her up

Later. So we started off with a huge glass cabinet
Of dildoes – all shapes, sizes, angles, thickness
material, colour, texture, all designed to suit
every possible taste of every epoch in every continent.

My son ran from statue to statue, laughing, pointing
at the grotesque figures, the white woman's "duddu"
the black hunk's "sussu", and shouted, mama! mama!
animal man same-same! No pants, no shirts, papa!!

He also showed us a glistening man and woman
in marble – she looking up, he down, in a strange
figure like 69 – What are they doing papa!
They are doing some difficult asanas, my son

to make their bodies healthy, supple and strong
I myself will teach you a few when you grow up
but you must eat all the vegetables mama serves
so you can grow up fast and become this strong!

After two hours we came back, mother still seated
in her chair at the entrance, silently watching
a giant mural of a snake circling an apple tree –
a beautiful blond girl in nude perched underneath

munching a shiny red apple between her red lips.
I told mother, without looking at her, we must
hurry now, we have to cover Madam Tussaud's
and Diamond Factory before it gets really dark.

For three days I didn't look at mother's eyes,
though wife was her usual cheery self; she said
mother had asked her that very night, 'what kind
of civilisation is this...? Such things in public...!'

My son had the most memorable time of all;
he told his school friends at the end of vacation –
'You know we went to a museum in Holland,
where no one was wearing anything – *anything* at all! '

YUCHENG TAO

She

She is like Venus –
a lost harmony of form.
I long to touch her hair,
flowing like the ocean.
I lose myself in her sparkle,
drawn from the aquamarine blue,
drawn from the depths of her eyes.
But I search,
on and on,
tracing only the muddy shores
she leaves behind.

She is the Venus of the sea,
swaying with the ocean's endless
rise and fall.
Her brokenness,
like shells left behind after a storm,
is pure and beautiful.

ARTICLE

1

The Keeper of Life: Remembering Keki N. Daruwalla (1937-2024)

JAYDEEP SARANGI

Born in Lahore in 1937, Keki N. Daruwalla is a prolific map maker in Indian Writing in English. Among his amazingly rich volumes of poetry include *The Keeper of the Dead* that won the coveted Sahitya Akademi Award in 1984 and *Landscapes* which won the Commonwealth Poetry Award, Asia, 1987. His historical novel, *For Pepper and Christ* was shortlisted for the Commonwealth Fiction Prize in 2010. Among his short story collections are *Swords and Abyss* (1979), *The Minister for Permanent Unrest & Other Stories* (1996), and *Love Across the Salt Desert* (2011). His latest short story collection *Going: Stories of Kinship* came out in 2022.

This sincere return to Keki's prolific contributions to Indian literary scene can trace its genesis to when Keki N. Daruwalla and I stayed at IAS, Shimla in October 2006 where we spent almost a week together, and discussed matters of contemporary Indian poetry, criticism and other different genres of literature. Like an ardent student I was mesmerised by his intimate style of descriptions of the things/objects and other matters of life and poetry. During our meeting Keki mentioned his travelogue *Riding the Himalayas* and I was spurred to get a copy of his travelogue from a shop at Shimla Mall, and found

myself reading, and re-reading it, marvelling at the mastery of his craft. Keki, a seasoned poet, novelist, critic, and storyteller explores the heart of a nation admirably in *Riding the Himalayas*, by capturing its mythology, wildlife, politics, customs, gastronomy, history, linguistics, culinary and cultural ways, aesthetics, modes of living, human values, and landscape, with allusions, facts, and legends that bind a nation to its citizens. I took it as a source book when I visited some parts of the Himalayas mentioned in this book. It was my impression that this book could serve as a source book for future trekkers. *Riding the Himalaya* is a very special travelogue – a car-trek odyssey starting from the Siachin Glacier across the entire Himalayas right up to Kibithoo, the easternmost point of the Himalayas. The narrative is supplemented with rare photographs of stunning mountain photography by Ashok Dilwali, who relied on his Nikons 35 mm and Linhof to capture some beautiful images of Himalayan life. The end result is an unforgettable book, a fabric of happiness, and exotic excitement. Keki's book explores how the Eastern part of the Himalayas is a biodiversity hotspot, with exotic bicultural assortment. Keki poignantly narrates the political immigration from undivided Bengal. No narration of the region is complete without a reference to its languages. Keki's narration gives a lucid account of the Khasi language, and its philological development from the Roman script. Keki's vivid details of wildlife reminded me of his love for birdwatching, and of his many poems invoking birds. A lover of plants, Keki's superb ability to describe the topography of any place includes the description of many rare species of fauna and flora. I was struck by the ending of the book – a beautiful and simple image drawn from life – women carrying firewood on their backs. The poet artist is at his best! As a poet, Keki is subtle, never bluntly head-on.

Unique of his writing style, there is absolutely no unwarranted mystification of facts in this well-knit narrative. Daruwalla is a first grade story teller, even his poetry tells stories. And in this prose narrative, he is at his best. Keki is a map maker of culture of the region. Though not an insider, his committed narration conveys the landscape in detail transporting the reader there tangibly. The immaculate splendour of the Dhaula Dhar Range, exquisite Kangra paintings, and sweet tribal songs mesmerised me as I turned page after page, reminding me of the fact that the narrator is a seasoned poet. Magna Graecia (Great Greek)!

I read Keki in all seasons, discovered his rare ability to evoke poetry in his observations and his narrative. He also provides minute historical details. For example, the sunset over the Rapti river, and elephant ride in the Rapti river at Chitwan National Park are described with felicity. Though it is not a travelogue's fundamental duty to include all factual information, Keki includes factual titbits to strengthen his story-telling and narrative skills. Mentor for many poets, Keki is a committed artist who is attentive to politics at home and the world.

Keki is no more. He is at peace now. But this language he reminds me, is his. With Jamshedpur-based poet Basudhara Roy I was fortunate to host Keki in many online poetry events through *The Hearth Within*. Keki was generous enough to send us ten of his poems in our jointly edited anthology, *Mapping the Mind, Minding the Map* published by the Sahitya Akademi, New Delhi. I remember his guidance during this book. He was desirous of his sprouting roots in poetry and beyond. Keki's poetic canvas is known for a unique blend of personal reflection and historical insight into the subjects and themes with the idiom of his own. Many of us taught his poetry to the students. Many of us inhabit him. Keki and I met many times in different

places. Each meeting is vivid in my mind. My conversations with him remain on-going.

I have been carrying the impressions of *Riding the Himalayas* since I read the book. Keki was the Himalayas for many of us. In the last seventeen years, though some things have changed naturally in the regions described, the flavour and the flamboyance are still relevant. Since I read the book for the first time, certain passages, and indelible images such as the different mountain shapes still haunt me. The enormity and grandeur of the Himalayas described made me defer to the glories of Nature. Its impact made me a different person.

Sahitya Akademi has recently published *A House of Words* edited by poet Usha Akella, a festschrift (a collection of writings published in honour of a scholar) that celebrates his staggering contributions and multidimensional personality, including his professional engagements with the Indian Police Service. I was fortunate enough to act as a catalyst for this enduring festschrift.

As is with so much of Keki's writing, it leaves a permanent mark asking us to return to his texts again and again. I must travel to his innocence to the falling awake to rejuvenate my friendships with poetry and the poets. My land, too, shall be his abode. His immortal lines linger deep in me, between the soul and the crossroads of life, this silence. Let me conclude this dedication with a poetic tribute (my own poem) to Keki:

The Map-Maker

for Keki N. Daruwalla

I have always thought that if I were a
river, I'd be the sacred Ganges
keeper of life in a landfall of truth
flowing deep in time and fire-hymns

Sad but joyful, history on my back
windy but restful, caring yet desirous
and emptying my everything
when I have almost nothing left in slabs

Standing under his Orion of winter poems
Sappho to Aphrodite, all underwater notes
everyone of us is the Ganges
between the soul and the night river.

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INTERVIEW

1

An Exclusive Interview with Louisa Calio: Insights from the Award-Winning Writer

TIZIANO THOMAS DOSSENATHE

L'Idea Magazine: Louisa, what inspired you to get involved in the artistic world in general, and in poetry in particular?

Louisa Calio: What an interesting question. My first piece of art was a drawing of a boy on a bicycle that won a citywide competition in Brooklyn, New York, when I was 5 years old. I attended PS 95 for one year before being sent to parochial school. That drawing at the time seemed to come to me out of the blue, until I later learned when I was 1, my mother left the house with me in her arms, fell on the steps and a boy on a bicycle hit us. My head hit the concrete fracturing my skull. I now believe, this was the way I processed a trauma, transforming a destructive experience into a creative one, as art can do.

Later on that year, I was transferred to Catholic School. My nun asked me to do the introduction to the Christmas play as well as dance. I can recall the first waves of love I felt as I looked at the audience searching for my parents before beginning my speech. You could say these two events prefigured my journey. I loved dancing, especially in my grandfather's garden, where I

sometimes heard and saw fairies. I read avidly, even as a child, and made little plays with neighborhood friends, as well as rituals to the sun. Catholic school could feel oppressive and confining. In third grade, I had a terrible experience with a sister who seemed to love to torment children. To comfort myself, I memorized John Donne's poem, "No Man Is an Island" and found the words of poets were healing, musical, and profound. I lived around opinionated philosophers in our family and was already serious enough to question the need for human suffering. At 8 years old, I confessed to being a heretic...a long story which is all included in my novel in manuscript, **Lucia Means Light**.

My Grandparent's duplex was a hotbed of divergent and passionate political and social opinions as well as profound silences. The main character in my novel is associated with Santa Lucia, the symbol of illumination and compassion. I called our family a "tribe" In many ways, it operated on a tribal structure with extended family living upstairs and next door and down the street. When there was a financial problem, Grandfather was relied upon. He was highly disciplined and financially stable even in the depression, because he made fine furniture for the wealthy, a job he did not relish, later opening his own business with his sons. A communal energy pervaded the household where elders came and went. I felt free to offer opinions with absolute authority too even when ignored.

However, the old hierarchy of respect for a single chief or male shaman was crumbling. My mother came from a generation of women who were not satisfied with the role of householder. She seemed to sense it was time to seek power from another base beyond mothering. I had

many talented aunts as well. My Aunt Anne, actually I had two, both gave me books to read since I can remember. My mother's half-sister Anne encouraged my creativity and sense of adventure. She had no children and traveled the world. My paternal Grandmother played piano and her daughter sang opera. My parents loved music and we had quite a record collection. When I wasn't making up a musical or reading poems, I found the voice of poets spoke to me beyond the surface offering a depth I longed for. Yet, it was my mother Rosa who was the storyteller and a primary inspiration. Rose Calio born Rosa Marchesani, May 23, 1922 in Brooklyn, NY was my confidant. Being the eldest, she treated me like her best friend. She shared her fantasies and romantic dreams of lost loves and possibilities. She shared with great feeling. I sensed my mother's hunger for life. She never lacked for an opinion or the facility with which to express it. Unlike most of our family, she was at ease with sharing intimate details and feelings in the English language and openly expressed her thoughts on most topics sometimes much to the dismay of others. She loved to read and point out lessons. This gave her a certain power over me as I willingly offered my ear and empathy to what I would later call her feminine bias. Yet, despite Rosa's verbal bravery and aptitude, when a real struggle or confrontation ensued, she could be reduced to tears. Later those tears turned to sadness, depression, and illness.

In the opening pages of my manuscript *Lucia Means Light* the heroine of my novel expresses her mother's influence as well as what she sees is a pattern manifesting in her lifetime:

“Like many women of my generation, I was destined to be my mother’s ambassador to the larger world, and although I’ve never been able to get her to admit this openly, I feel I am my mother’s prodigy. She, along with my maternal grandmother, raised me, while my father and grandfather spent the larger portion of their time working, sometimes late into the evenings. Although I do not in any way feel this diminished their deep imprint on me, I believe it gave my mother an ability to understand and forgive some of my choices and excesses. I am the only one of her three children who strayed so far from the nest, and being first, grew up during the early part of her married life when she most longed for freedom and adventure, which her role as an Italian American wife and mother did not allow for.”

Poetry is a way of knowing, much like dreaming, and a poet/artist often lives at the borders of internal experience and outer revelation. She values the inner and the imaginary because it is the source of creativity and a greater more universal truth. I needed a broader vision to bring the seeming impossible polarities I lived around in my life. Poetry explores the far reaches of the psyche, a depth of feeling in a heightened language carried by the breath. At its best, we can call poetry a language of the soul. Many women wrestled with issues of soul proportion in our time. After two thousand years of patriarchy, a history marked with periods of persecution, witch burnings, torture, severe punishment and repression of women and all dark others, the silence of repression was about to be broken wide open.

L’Idea Magazine: You appear to stand by your Italian American heritage while developing at the same time interests

in other cultures. How strong was the influence of your Italian family on your work and career choices?

Louisa Calio: My Italian-Sicilian heritage was the cauldron from which my life and work emerged. I came from both an artistic and practical family, who like many Italians arrived in America to make a better life. They worked hard to do so and often had to overcome great losses. Both my maternal Grandparents lost their spouses in the 1918 pandemic, before meeting and marrying. Each had children from the previous marriage. Coming to America meant they had left some of their family behind. My Grandfather left his parents at age 14. He left the land he knew, the language, and a language of feeling repressed in order to survive and fit into a foreign culture with a complex history of slavery, Native American abuse, and British roots. Sometimes those stuffed feelings erupted in terror or rage. I believe poetry was my way of exploring and reclaiming those lost feelings and parts of the self and sometimes transforming them.

L'Idea Magazine: Your first book, "In the Eye of Balance," won many praises and it turned into a traveling performance. Could you tell us about it?

Louisa Calio: This collection of poetry in many ways traces my "initiation" in the most ancient and traditional sense into a more conscious understanding of myself as a woman, an artist, and an individual with a strong interest and love for foreign cultures and world affairs. The "Isis" theme in this collection is not chosen for pure literary allusion but rather emerged from my personal search to understand my girlhood dreams and hopes for a double/a mate; as well as my repeated thoughts and visions of desert landscapes, Egyptian scenes, and island

seas. In learning to understand and accept my love for African and Indian culture, despite the difficulties this sometimes caused me, I found books to be a key to comprehending these personal questions in a larger context.

Performing: In the Eye of Balance. Art by Terry Lennox with dancer/ actress Rachel Ellner and Purity Smothers, music by jazz composer Oliver Lake and Michael Gregory Jackson.

In my youth, I idealized the power of the intellect and believed all the serious questions could be resolved through education. Yet, I was repeatedly disappointed to meet very scholarly and well-educated people who remained ignorant at the core: racist, intolerant, and unenlightened. Education was not enough to penetrate the deeper layers, and only after years of struggle and despair, did I find a glimmer that life was indeed changing for the better, but not in the progression I had expected and hoped for. Patterns seemed a better way to describe the means of discerning the changes in my life and the world I saw around us. A subtle, more elusive order that we affected and reflected was there. This level I found was more readily tapped through mediation and dance and better articulated in African and Indian culture as well as abstract physics and mathematics. I studied Jung, Tantra, Taoism, and most deeply, the Dogon, whose cosmology seemed to clearly reflect the means and purpose of human evolution and a process of unifying the oppositions we lived in. As the ancients saw, we are the microcosm of this macrocosm; and if we do not change ourselves and our most personal relationships, we cannot change what is outside of us in a lasting and desirable way.

The poems about women celebrate and critically probe this driving feminine force that was often feared by those who did not understand it. The women are real and in my life. Their search for love has sometimes nearly destroyed them, but as we all learn to understand and handle this power, we will (as the Dogon say) be the force that brings about a better world.

Isis II

I come as Isis
Again, again, again, ...
Up from pyramidal smoke
That rises
From distant fires
That once lit my shrine
Where I was worshipped
In ancient Egyptian enigmas
Far and wide;
I was loved in Greece
Adored in Sicily
For my words, words, words
Words of Power!
Healing words
Ancient herbal words
That save men and restore them to life.
I took the sun's very eye
To make myself goddess
To rebuild humanity to lead it to sanity.
I walked across all the great waters of every Nile
For I am bold, bold as love.
I speak words made of flesh...

L’Idea Magazine: *In 1985, you had another project of this kind, “Sacred Rites.” What was it about? What does it mean to you to be a performance artist?*

Louisa Calio: “Sacred Rites” was a chapbook and performances with the intention of renewing the stagnant images women carried in their psyche and the materialism consuming our western society. Rather than identify with the fallen Eve, the sinner, a woman could now be “An Amazon Goddess Warrior” who speaks from an inner, true power derived from love and knowledge. The poems revealed some of the mystical body and symbols associated with renewal in ancient civilizations.

As a ritual act, the poems are meant to ground our ideas in sound, in movement, and energy, literally connecting us with the living earth. What comes through us can move and affect the world in a healing way. I did this production with friend Cheri Miller and her Tapestry Dance Co.

When the old ones, the shamans, and the village people performed sacred rites and the old mothers in Sicily and Italy said their prayers and novenas for their loved ones, this wasn’t entertainment. Entertainment is wonderful and uplifts us, but to create sacred space, a space that allows in spirit and growth for uplifting and improving the world for the better. Women and vulnerable others have been deeply wounded over 2000 years of patriarchy. Self-healing and development are central to our evolution, both personally and for our planet. Here we are whirling in the new world. I saw something very similar at the amphitheater in Sicily just a few years ago. The word being made flesh as in total theater is the best way I can describe the intention of Sacred Rite as performance.

“Signifyin Woman”, the poem that won first prize in Canicatti, Sicily in 2017, Il Parnasso International Competition Angelo Vecchio, not only was a deep honor and reconnection with my Sicilian ancestry, it was perhaps the best expression of who I felt I was and am.

“Signifyin Woman: An Italian American Jazz Poem”

Rumor has it she was born a gypsy on the streets of Palermo,
Sicily

Then again, some say it was on the bay of Naples
While others claim she was made in New Orleans
under one of those giant trees
with roots that go down so deep
they reach into the earth’s center. Trees with arms
so long, high and wide, they come out and grab you
like the Great Mama.

The dark bark betrays our true origins.
Straight from the core she’s come
with silvery lips, wide hips, menstrual blood and Oracular
Vision.

Part witch and bewitching,
she refuses to be from one place or one race.
SHE travels... in **any skins**, many skins,
spotted like the leopard, black as the panther
white as the milk in her mama’s rosy-red breasts.
She is red tongues licking fire
a bold soul, an old soul
backyard worshipper and gypsy wanderer.

Sicilian queen,
a dew’s drop on mint green
pure, liquid, mercury,
the sharp in turns,
the quick in glances,
a grain of sand in the Sahara

& between cracks of concrete.
 She is the wave length Green, a fish-bellied, crab-crawling,
 moon-child
 secret reptile, Virgin & Mean...the final curtain
 the call before the Great Silencing....a Global-eye, spy
 the rhythm and the drum-beat of eternity
 the curse of blessedness
 all female feminine woman
 Madonna- puttana, the funneling that germinates
 Seeeedzzzz.
 The veiling revealed!
 unsettling, rumbling, pulsating speech
 earthquaking, rumbling and shaking like she do
 when she walks and sways her hips.
 YOU got to admit she is Bee-loved
 by everything and everyone.
 Life'sssssssssssss
 final, exhausting, suffering moment,
 when the word is made flesh.
 I hate to admit it, but I'm one of her devotees...

***L'Idea Magazine:** You share your residence between New York and Montego Bay, Jamaica. What prompted such a decision?*

Louisa Calio: Brooklyn and New York City as well as our migration to the suburbs of Long Island did split up our tribe. Yet indelible imprints remained: a deep appreciation of nature, love of our roots, the arts, and a longing for community. Being able to travel to Manhattan to study dance and enjoy theater, music, and museums also had an influence. It was my family again who would bring me to Jamaica. In the 1960s, my Uncle and Aunt left their home on Staten Island to resettle in Montego Bay Jamaica, West Indies.

I had always been drawn to places of great light, perhaps as a result of the many stories I heard my Grandparents tell about the beauty of moonlight on the Bay of Naples and the sunlit fragrant gardens of Sicily which I visited recently. My bones ached for warmth and light, something New England's long winters did not provide. When I first arrived in the late '60s, I felt at home at once and found a source of inspiration. Here was the light I had longed for, a light that filled one's spirit. Philosophers say that the Soul dwells in light, and this environment was the closest expression of my soul I'd discovered with the exception of Sicily and Africa. After living in an era that seems to be suffering from a type of soul loss, in the hurried pace of a high-tech world, computers, tv, fast foods, and lanes, I discovered that Jamaica's sunshine, clear skies, turquoise sea, an incredible variety of intense color and varied lush landscape, made it easy for me to get in touch with my deeper nature, the poet within me. Each return to Montego Bay became my re-member-ing or the coming together of lost parts of myself within the greater whole. Jamaica's generous bounty filled me with a rush of exquisite color at every turn, blossoms, scented-flowers, greenery, hillsides, ocean vistas, rivers, waterfalls, lagoon views, mountains almost as high as those in Ethiopia, and a fertile garden of exotic fruit trees, plants, herbs and vegetables that all seemed to call, "Come and walk with me, get to know your true nature that you may treasure it and keep it sacred." Surrounded by water and sunlight's shifting play, I need only awaken and look outside at the beauty of the dawn to remember who I was. Here, my writing flourished and my creativity overflowed. This may also account for the many fine artists, painters, and sculptors who are

Jamaicans. I wrote poems and stories to express what happened each time I visited and experienced an expanded awareness without any effort on my part. Over time my work would include photos which I have exhibited in “A Passion for Jamaica” at Round Hill Resort and Villas. My newest collection of poetry, prose and photos come from this passion and will hopefully be published soon.

Note

This is an excerpt from a longer interview of the internationally award-winning writer Louisa Calio by Tiziano Thomas Dossena *Editorial Director of L'Idea Magazine that appeared on Dec. 20, 2020.*

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12. **Irma Kurti** is an Albanian poet, writer, lyricist, journalist, and translator. She is a naturalized Italian and lives in Bergamo, Italy. In 2020, she became the honorary president of WikiPoesia, the encyclopedia of poetry. She also won the prestigious 2023 Naji Naaman's literary prize for complete work. Irma Kurti is a member of the jury for several literary competitions in Italy and also a translator for the Ithaca Foundation in Spain. Irma Kurti has published more than 100 works, including books of poetry, fiction and translations. Her books have been translated and published in 20 countries.
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18. **Keith Inman's** favourite lit class was in Dublin; best reading, a Spanish cafe; coolest invite, L.A.; nicest critique, Cuba. His books can be found in over fifty libraries worldwide. Keith lives in an old limestone cottage on the Niagara Escarpment.
19. **Les Wicks:** Over 45 years Wicks has performed widely across the globe. Published in over 450 different magazines,

anthologies & newspapers across 39 countries in 17 languages. Conducts workshops & runs Meuse Press which focuses on poetry outreach projects like poetry on buses & poetry published on the surface of a river. His 15th book of poetry is *Time Taken – New & Selected* (Puncher & Wattmann, 2022).

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Engineering before joining a public sector bank. However, he left the banking sector after clearing the Civil Services Examination and went on to serve in the Government of India, where he retired as Joint Secretary. Following his retirement, he served as an adviser in the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights for three years. Currently, Rakesh Bhartiya is a full-time writer, composing works in both English and Hindi. He has authored six collections of short stories, two novels, two collections of poems, two travelogues, and four collections of articles addressing social, cultural, and spiritual issues. Additionally, he co-edited a literary quarterly, *Pashyanti*, for three years.

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