



**POEMS
THERAGONIA**

POEMS READ
AT GALLERY ONE
FOR WOMEN'S
HISTORY MONTH
BY
THERAGONIA
OF LESBOS



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ABANDONED IN A FIREY LABRYNITH MY SISTERS DANCE TO A PAGAN SONG

and hold each other
until the young moon goes down
and lays upon a cloud rack
silentium et infinita
in God's hands.

I travel forward on the path
covered with ash
sordidas et aenigmata
no one knows why
I did not lose my faith.

Such sublime feelings
my mere utterances are music
obscurus et lumis
holding you in thrall
by their magic.

AS ABOVE, SO BELOW

He wants to know my birth time for an astrological chart.
He says a Gemini generally has a lot of boyfriends
and goes steady with one or more each week, says I'm
searching for a soulmate or another side to myself.

He's older and wise with intense blue eyes.
He holds a glass of white wine, twirling the liquor
in the glass with the Gemini twins painted in gold
and tells me what I need in a lover.

He'll stay up all night talking with me, remember the words
to "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band,"
tell me I'm the most beautiful woman in the world
when I look like a dead horse.

This guy is hot for me and wants to wait on me hand and foot.
I'm chain-smoking generic lights, and I can hardly breathe.
I'm weirded out. I can feel the bones of my skull in my head.
I wish I could dissolve into nothing in peace.

RISKING THE BOUNDARY

There's somewhere I want to go,
and so, I cruise the limits of the visible.
I feel the barrier, weird yet familiar
to my touch—is this a warning?

A car burns beside the road
where I meet the guardians of the way,
an old woman throwing bones in the dust,
a young man rolling stones on a board.

“Who are you?” he asks, “Elven queen,
white witch, she who has trouble
making up her mind?” If I pass, I know
I cannot return, but what more can I lose?

The wind carries me—I change.
I have no eyes. I have no sex.
I dance to the rhythm of the stars,
a dance that is older than love.

EURYDICE AWAITS ORPHEUS IN HELL

The distance he must go is
further than a poem
drips in either world.

I hope he thinks ahead
and brings three coins
and extra honey cakes.

Harpy claws will likely pluck his guts
and turn our love to carrion
on the winding stair.

Even so, I know
there'll be triumph
and tenderness in his last look.

WOMAN IN A BURQA

I walk straight ahead.
All I can see through my hijab is the horizon.
I know they want to see my ankles.

Last week a woman was shot in the leg.
A woman was burned with acid
for not following the dress code.

“We are asking Muslim women to wear the burqa,”
said Mohammed Aftab Alam of the Youth League,
but he added: “We will not force anyone.”

Gloom envelopes everything.
Nothing moves any more.
Life is too—

I dare not say it.
I shop.
I look straight ahead.

WHAT COMES NEXT?

What comes next?
Betrayal, theft, disease,
some calamity.
Or what comes next might be
appetizing.
Make a cake.
Bob’s birthday.
Bake him a spice cake
and decorate it with tiny army men.

He’s into the army,
so into this war.
Flags everywhere.
I told him,
“Your American flag decal

is not going to get you into heaven.”
He just stared and said,
“Well, my ‘When Worlds Collide’
license plate holder might.”
He’s got a point.
Seems like worlds are colliding.
Saved by the bell
from another high school massacre.
Kids with shotguns and dynamite.
That boy shot on the bus last week.
Another car bomb in the suburbs.
Metal detectors in pre-schools.
Lie detector tests.

“No, I’m not
supplying him with sugar.
How much television? Four hours,
no, not more than four hours,
four hours, that’s it.”

Better to have the violence
on TV than on the streets.
That was Shakespeare’s theory.
Show the blood.
Seemed a good idea, in theory.
Go ahead, gouge out Gloucester’s eyes.

Peckinpah made the blood gush.
Pioneered those gadgets
that make blood shoot out
like the bullet hit an artery.
And Tarantino takes bloodletting
to the level of a bloody ballet.

Why violence works on the screen,
it’s our surprise that we are just bags
of liquid and air, our sense of being
contained, and then we’re leaking,
shocks us, gives us a thrill.

Maybe we should eat out, tonight,
get some hamburgers with mad cow disease.
No, I’m going to bake a nice spice cake
with white frosting, and while it’s baking
I’m going down to the creek and meditate.
I’ve got an hour.

A flood came through.
Lots of trash on the banks.
Looks like the contents of a supermarket,
all these shopping carts,
and that tattered sleeping bag
hanging in the branches,
the belongings of a homeless person.

Pussy willow, blackberry bushes
the stalks of last year's anise
and a slab of blue plastic
reflected in the clear water,
the reflections—perfect
until a breeze ripples the surface
and warps the images.

Sitting by this creek, sensing the sap
in the vines rising, I feel love
for strangers, feel loving kindness,
so, I breathe the spring air,
knowing that the love I'm feeling
is real, and the “so”—a big word—means
volition, means by the force of my argument
to change the effect and be the cause,
because I can only be unbound by compassion.

Bob will be home soon...

I'd better check the cake,
the cake...God, the cake...
and after that, what?

SUDDENLY

Awakened by the tiniest sound
an insect hitting the windowpane—
how I wish it was his fingertip.

