

## POETRY

Cita Morei is a teacher and an activist who fought for the Independence of Palau.

### KNOW THAT I AM . . . (for Linus)

Washed in life's thickets  
white walls with crickets.

Dismisses as a displaced person  
Dying to live with reason.

Don't think I am not trying  
Open your heart I am crying.

"I have been there," HE said.  
I have heard you.  
and I am sorry for you.

I've been watching your closed doors;  
waiting by your drawn curtains;  
waiting to let My Light shine in.

Why be a prisoner in yourself?

You are free.  
I AM with thee.

I AM in the spectrum of the rainbow;  
present at your ship's bow.

I AM the sunrise you see at Desbedall;  
the sunset you savor by Icebox wall

I AM the rolling waves you see on the reef;  
more with you when you are in grief.

I AM in the grain of sand you feel on the  
beach;  
there, when your mom and loved one seemed  
to preach.

I AM in the rain you hear over the old tin roof;  
... AM waiting, others are waiting, you need  
no proof.

I WAS with you on the bus trip from Oregon;  
there, on the bike accident by safeway  
store.

I WAS with you on the long flight home.  
I AM with you, but you choose to be alone.

Why maintain your prison?

I cannot open your door;  
Your shutters are locked;  
from the inside;  
You have the key.

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### BELAUAN WOMAN

She is all there  
on pages of history  
weaving herstory in living legends.

She was melted down carefully for you  
and cast down to cradle  
to care for you through the ages

Belauan woman—she has always been there,  
a sister, a love, a mother  
She is a bastion after a tropical storm,  
an unwilting wild flower among the thorns.

She is rooted in the land,  
loving in the field of life.  
She is exceptional.

Belauan woman—she became a "mengol"  
a way she knew as protocol,  
which brought money and fame  
it was not a shame.  
You see

She is more than that.  
She sat in the "bai"

Your tattooed woman in command.

This is not an experiment.  
She sees to balance north and south  
an obligation she does with pride  
a love for home she could not hide.  
She is harmony.

Belauan Woman—she is all there  
she restored hope in the laws of man  
and peace unto the land  
when all did fail to see  
justice was meant to be.  
She is admired.

Belauan Woman—she is there.  
Keeping Faith with present joys  
Deferring the vice of flesh with poise  
Cherishing the womb that wisdom bore.

Belauan Women—Walk boldly in Truth  
my sister  
And do not deign to give.  
Remain secure through pain and gain  
to help preserve thy home, thy heart.

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Taslima Nasreen, a Bangladeshi poet, essayist, novelist and doctor, used her prose and poetry to battle social injustices in her country. For this, she was sentenced to death by hanging and hounded by the Muslim fundamentalists which forced her to flee to Sweden.

source: *Manushi: A Journal About Women and Society*, No. 85; c-202, Lajpat Nagar-I, New Delhi-24, India

## AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I don't believe in God.

I look at nature  
with my infatuated eyes,  
I walk ahead holding  
the hands of progress.  
But the crooked ways  
of the society  
pull me back  
holding me by my sleeves.  
I wish I could  
walk over the entire city  
in the middle of the night,  
sit down somewhere  
all by myself,  
and cry.

I don't believe in God.

Religionists secretly  
divide houses into sects,  
separate woman from humanity.  
I too get divided,  
I am deprived  
of human rights.  
The hard-boiled politician  
gets his ovation  
talking about class exploitation,  
but he cleverly camouflages  
words about exploitation of  
women.

I know all these characters.

The world over  
religion has spread its eighteen  
fingers.  
How much can one, alone,  
break one's bones  
challenging all these?  
How can the outspread  
nets of inequality  
be broken?

## ENJOYING A WOMAN

On the third day  
of our acquaintance,  
you questioned the way  
we should address each other.  
After seven days,  
you wanted to take me  
to Madras, Bangalore,  
Kathmandu and Calcutta.  
On the eighteenth day,  
you wanted to touch my fingers.  
In two months  
you demanded a kiss  
and in three months and a half,  
my body.  
What all you'll get  
in this beautiful body,  
you will also get  
in a full-time wife,  
in half a dozen office girls

and in cheap harlots.  
But then you go about  
wearing down you reels,  
talking nineteen to the dozen  
trying to drag me  
close to you, by deception.  
All these translate into one thing.  
Unless you enjoy a woman  
after some tactical moves,  
there is no satisfaction  
in such enjoyment.

And since I know that,  
before you can spit on my body,  
I spit twice over  
into your aberrant mind.

## ON THE EDGE

Go ahead I must  
though all my folk want me back;  
My child pulls me by my sari,  
My husband stops me by the  
door,  
Go I must.  
There is nothing before me,  
only a river;  
that I'll cross.  
I know how to swim,  
but they won't allow me  
to swim and cross it.

There is nothing  
beyond the river,  
only an open field.  
But then I want to touch  
the void once.  
I'll run against the wind.  
I feel like dancing;  
I must dance one day,  
and then come back.

For a long time now,  
I have not played  
my childhood games.  
I will play them one day  
shouting to my heart's content,  
and then I'll come back.

For a long time,  
I have not cried  
with my head in the lap  
of loneliness;  
I'll cry myself empty  
and then I'll come back.

There is nothing before me;  
only a river.  
And I know how to swim.  
Why shouldn't I go?  
Go I must.

BLACK STONE



Grace Mera Molisa worked as Executive Secretary to Father Walter Lini, former Prime Minister of Vanuatu.

Statelessness

?  
 the  
 native  
 aboriginal  
 autochthonic  
 heir begotten  
 of mother earth  
 legislated stateless.

Matrimony  
 the grafting  
 of a male  
 to a female

The parasite  
 saps and smothers  
 the female  
 so to flourish  
 and bloom  
 in resplendent glory.

A woman  
 has no future  
 no identity  
 the backbone  
 hidden  
 by Man's exterior.

Women  
 wanting to grow  
 into entities  
 in their own right  
 do not marry.

Marriage  
 terminates  
 growing  
 thinking  
 independence  
 identity.

Marriage

The morgue  
 of the living dead  
 bedazzles  
 suicidal moths  
 swarming  
 in their hordes  
 to inevitable  
 slaughter.

The hallowed  
 institution  
 of holy matrimony  
 a sanctified  
 social order  
 for security  
 guarantees  
 property right.

Basic  
 political unit  
 of power  
 imbalance  
 root-cause  
 off-shooting  
 social order  
 and disorder  
 in human relations  
 and organization.

Wedded bliss  
 is ne'er amiss  
 wearing, tearing  
 aging  
 and seeding  
 the female  
 transforming

nubile form  
 to formless blob  
 of vegetating glob.

Considering  
 the realities  
 walking the aisle  
 should be  
 the last thing  
 in life  
 if at all necessary  
 for women  
 of good sense.

The formality  
 of marriage  
 involving  
 esteemed socialites  
 guarantees  
 the binding bonds  
 of bondage  
 confining  
 the spirit  
 within  
 the prison fortress.

The commendably  
 courageous  
 defy  
 insurmountable  
 odds  
 to choose lovers  
 and have children  
 forfeiting  
 the dictatorship  
 of a Husband.



### *As Need Dictates*

A joker  
cracks jokes

A nature  
freak  
extols  
the beauty  
of the golden  
daffodil.

A foreigner  
raves  
about  
the orchid  
exotica

A tourist  
fantasizes

waving palms  
white sands  
glassy seas.

The lonely heart  
romanticizes  
the glorious  
sunset  
and silvery moon.

My verses  
not intended  
as jokes  
provoking  
merriment  
raise issues  
stimulating  
second thoughts.

### *Delightful Acquiescence*

Everybody loves  
a self-effacing  
submissive woman

Vanuatu men and women  
love self-effacing  
acquiescing women.

For better or worse  
we force  
talented women  
into acquiescence.

The power echelons  
and hierarchies  
thrive  
on acquiescent women.

Vanuatu pays homage

to foreign women  
womanaples ino gat ples.

Vanuatu supports  
liberation movements  
in other parts of the world.

Half of Vanuatu  
is still colonized  
by her self.

Any woman  
showing promise  
is clouted  
into acquiescence.

Vanuatu loves  
self-effacing, acquiescing  
submissive, slavish, women.

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## THE WOMAN IN BLACK

by Tess Raposas

Holding on to the piercing railings  
of this interminable gateway,  
dragging your flagging footsteps  
to some unknown destination  
under the sun's scorching heat,

slowly, crystal line particles  
drop from your eyes catching up on each other  
to the ground. Could these be pebbles  
which will mark your way to the monster?

You murmur angry, cursing words  
only the wind understands.  
And I am just a passerby;  
How was I to know your beginning?  
(or end)

A sullen but dignified looking face,  
unmindful of curious gazes,  
could my hunch be true?  
No, you're not out of your wits.  
Not now, not yet.

That long black dress casts a shadowy figure  
and your limp body oozes of blue(s)  
from the heart. The monster gripped  
not your body but internal crevices  
of your heart.  
Wrung, entangled, knotted and still unsatisfied,  
sprinkled with salt. Yes, salt.  
(who says only vampires are salt-treated?)

Is a philandering husband?  
A man with no face who's struck  
your soul, clenched your heart  
and emblazoned wounds and scars  
around its vessels?

Holding on to the piercing railings,  
you are holding on for life.

No, you're not out of your wits.  
Not now, not yet.  
The way you stand up against the wall  
not ever.

28 March 1995