

Lucia Marchitto

LADIES OF THE STREET

Angelica does not hear the noise of the world as she draws.
And when she must color the eyes of the Madonna, she opens her hand and makes a tear fall.
A blue tear..

Translated from the Italian by Benjamin De Maio Montalbano

Born in Calitri, Lucia moved to Brescia in 1980. After her first novel "Partenze," she came out with her second novel MADONNE DI STRADA." [Ladies of the street] The life Angelica lived up to that moment is reexamined in her merry go-round-like memory using a changing writing style that is sometimes contemplative and is sometimes impelling because of the almost absence of punctuation. When she was a child, Angelica lived in the basement of an austere apartment house in a large, gray city. She lived there with her mother, who was the caretaker, with a father, who came home drunk every day, and with her four sisters. Her life consisted of daily violence and periods of silence, of hardships and absences, and of privation and indifference. One after the other, her sisters, no longer able to tolerate such an existence, left that closed and dangerous place, that house. Only Angelica, the youngest of the family, resisted that hell. Her father's killing of her mother suddenly forced her to go elsewhere.

The street is a transitory place if you go anywhere, and if you go out to meet people, it is possible to meet someone, and there is the possibility of danger when it is dark. For Angelica, it was the labyrinth of a new life. But

you can escape the labyrinth if you find an Ariadne who will give you the thread. Black pros-



titutes offered Angelica the first piece of thread: Makeba and her companions paid that ransom themselves by risking their life for her. Forced to abandon even this protection, Angelica again finds herself in the street, again alone, but not without tools. The encounter with Makeba left her with something important, like some chalk, which was another piece of thread, given to her by a pavement artist thanks to whom she discovered an unsuspected talent for drawing. Fi-

nally, Angelica receives the last piece of thread, which allows her to enter into the full light, if not from the street, at least from the dark of her own incompleteness, and she receives this last piece of thread from Ettore, a violinist who, unlike her, was not thrown into the street but chose it as his home. This novel, with the malaise that we all carry inside us, with its emphasis on brutality in some areas of life, consigns us again, if one does not admit the Manzonian Providence, to Fate or to the accidents of life. Everything in this novel, as in the fairy tales, after the heroine travels a difficult road, turns out well. At the end of the tale, everything echoes a return to the paradise that was lost, which is implied by the story's happy ending that says, even if it isn't stated explicitly, "And they lived happily ever after."

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