

## Michael Ansara – Two Poems

### Starlings in Rome

In from Siberia, five million  
Flying small hearts, wing flung,  
Drawn to the heat of Rome,  
vast columns, clouds, waves  
wheel, fall, turn, dive, rise  
a pointillistic vision of motion.

Into the heart of Rome, a hunger  
honed hawk, peregrine falcon  
needing to lock on to just one  
among the many as starlings  
seek safety in synchronicity,  
shifting together, teams of seven  
wheel, blow, bend, drop, rise,  
schools of soaring fish swimming  
in sun-setting air, avoiding  
death through a precise belonging.

### Savannah

Heading South, out of seas of snow, along the highways, everywhere  
Hawks hang in the sky;  
Outside the South Carolina border, one perfect formation, slowly rotating mobile  
Each bird fixed in relation  
To the other, hunger hunting, vectoring on Southern heat. Savannah—

A surprise: lush, civilized,  
Twenty two squares, a colonial design of a city. We walk by a marker  
For President Washington's Letter  
To the congregation, *Kahal Kodesh Mickva Israel*; Sephardic Jews exhausted by  
deception,  
Tired of pretending to pray with a cross,  
Fled here, lived here, prayed here, welcomed here.  
Owned slaves here;

We walk in soft rain; too many old friends have died this year,  
They seem to be  
and then blinking they are not. As we walk I think ...*passed over*  
Why do I think  
*passed over* instead of *ended*. My life no arc unbroken; small moments,  
a mosaic life, a Chagall  
not Greek or Roman. My mother's people from the *shetl*.

We walk from square to square; down Bull Street to the U.S. Customs House,  
grand and out of time now,  
down Drayton Street, by Bay Lane; here were the pens; here were the open air markets;  
here a young Jeffrey was sold and begged:

*Please buy Dorcas, I love her well and true. She says she loves me, and I know she does;  
The good Lord knows  
I loves her better than I loves any one in this wide world – never can love another woman  
half so well.  
Please buy Dorcas, master.  
Dorcas prime woman—A1 woman. Tall gal, sir; long arms, strong, healthy,  
and can do a heap of work in a day.  
First rate bargain, at that.*

No plaque for that. I hate people who cannot pass the test of their own history  
I think of Sherman's march to this sea;  
no fires hot enough to finally burn away the salt ash of this legacy

We walk. We eat at Alure, served by a tall woman; charmed by a tall woman  
Her long arm a secret code of tats;  
she should have been an actress, she should have been a model; she should have sung  
in a rock and roll band;  
She must be a writer/waiter. She talks us through dinner, she talks me into more wine;  
she talks us into bourbon pie,  
she shares her name, talks me into trance.

Why did my generation feel so free to be heedless with their children  
and their names  
*Montana, Wildflower, Moonbeam, Blossom, Chakra, Willow, Moonshine, Monterey.*  
Names matter.  
We become what we are called to be. Impulse, indelible, writing more powerful  
than any inked needle.  
I am increasingly uncomfortable within this worn carapace of age.

Now I worry that my silent eyes shout; might even be seen to be begging someone  
younger than both my two daughters:  
take me home, take me to your bed, take me, make me other, make me young  
again, fool me  
into being; I blink, wide eyed - hawk or hare- and look across the table

At you; your knowing,  
Slight indulgent smile. You have known me so very long; known my faithful foolery,  
My many felonies,  
Never of the flesh. Time after time, I cannot believe you have stuck with me,  
No nullification, no secession.  
If I were to say any of that aloud, now or ever , you are ready to shoosh me  
Into silence.

The slack tide turns, rising, rushing up rivers, creeks, capillaries.  
Slivers of moon throb in my throat.  
The years are sculpting your face. Once wide cheeks, now carved away.  
A new elegance of age.  
I cast a sly look at each etched line, each worthy wrinkle  
Each evolving familiarity--  
for ten thousand mornings now, I have woken up to them.  
Here in Savannah  
I feel the soft moldering of history, contorted as the Harry Lauder's Walking Stick  
We planted in the back garden,  
Now sleeping under 6 feet of snow, so twisted; so beautiful.

**Michael Ansara** spent many years as an organizer and activist; then ran several businesses. His work has appeared in *Ibbetson Street*, *Salamander*, *Midwest America Poetry Review*, *Del Sol Review* and *Passager Magazine*.