

The Pearl Diver of Irunmani

By Marc Vincenz

White Pine Press

www.whitepine.org

ISBN: 978-1-945680-60-1

141 Pages

\$17.00

Review by Dennis Daly

Slicing through the surface of airless consciousness toward unfathomable truths can excite the artistic imagination into a rather unique understanding of being and self. Marc Vincenz in his new book, *The Pearl Diver of Irunmani*, concocts distinctive and curious metaphors from these rarely explored oceanic depths with their hitherto undetected, and sometimes priceless, gems.

Many of Vincenz's poems are disguised narrative pieces seemingly connected with a dreamlike, almost metaphysical logic. His sparse, but poignant, imagery belies the substantial emotions and mnemonic thought subsumed within.

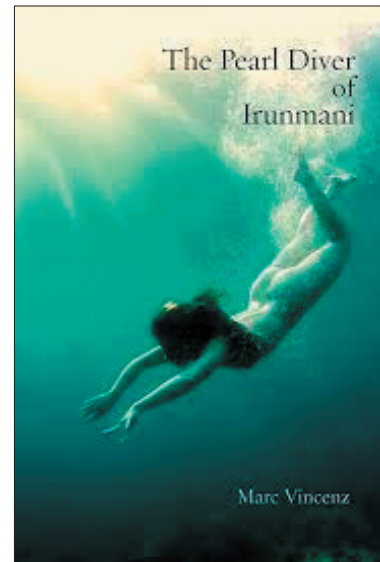
A Crest of Memories, Vincenz's opening poem, details "some other knowledge," where mortality's threat and the confrontations of life are held in check. The poet commences this poem of love with a complaint and a question,

*When the wind becomes
my heart and I undo
your eyes on night's
other edge, a bitter
taste floods my tongue
like a nub of tamarind.*

*The absence drinks
you dry and you re-
call the reasons
for forgetting and why, why
you've learned to sleep
in that shadow memory.*

*What is the sound of love
In this dark hour of death?*

Life's breath takes center stage in Vincenz's poem *Nephesh*. Sometimes translated from the Hebrew as "soul," *nephesh* inhabits both humans and animals in a hierarchical way. Night terrors and memories fill the mass of humanity with history and godliness. And godliness is nothing if not alert to particulars at varying levels. Consider the transformation that comes with understanding in these lines,



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Surely everything is interior.

*An ancient fear, primordial
almost. Therefore all this
flesh and bone armoring the heart?*

*The forest, the ocean,
the mountain—also
all daunting, no?*

And who has the most ferocious eyes?

*a reclining figure sighs;
and suddenly as if by magic,*

*at that unsure moment,
everything transforms
and we burst into song.*

Cogito, ergo sum (I think, therefore I am), famously said Rene Descartes in his Discourse on Method. An active consciousness (or thought) proves existence, and beyond that, well.... In his poem, To Discover Descartes, Vincenz exalts being and the small truths derived from it, but acknowledges a concomitant loneliness, both pushing back and profound. The poet confirms his alienation, albeit opening illumination, in the interior of the piece,

*And those thousand eyes
of mammalian*

*longing. O, to sleep
among the scavengers and predators*

*but alive in the dark,
obliterated in the pavilions*

*of the insects, in the wake
of pollen and fragrance,*

*everything filled in and used,
but barely used up. The sparkles*

*that catch the light of the passing
cars or trucks carting*

*consciousness, or perhaps,
more aptly, a self-*

*consciousness edging toward
the warmth of morning.*

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Dreamtime pervades each of the luminous shores that slither under the watery universe of human memory. Drawing on Past Lives, Vincenz's poem, which explores the nature of death and mindful life, pictures a dazzling morning in the preternatural beginnings of innocence. Childlike with wonder these lines strike home,

*It's too early still,
what's visible, not awake,
what's awake, not yet visible.
What's audible is running
away with itself—
upwards, the stars still present,*

*winking into silence.
beginning their dream
of bone and flesh,
of dazzling storms,
an endless text
leaping from planet*

*to planet, flowers-
and trees- and fossils-
to-be, a power of such
beauty above and below in the pitch
beyond death, where worlds
are repainted again and over
in shadows, where a curious
child is hypnotized
by a future unknown—
and then, the dream
subsides and walks
into itself*

Consciousness flirts and flutters. It has no truck with stability. Vincenz's delicate poem Enchantment on the Islands moves lightly with a looking-glass narrative delineating a beginning, a climax, and a denouement in logical succession. Love's logic, that is. Or, perhaps, humanity's interior search for truth. A metamorphosis at the heart of the poem enchants,

*... someone suddenly
took my hand*

*and drew me through
the wave of weeds.*

*As far as the tarnished
tinsel she led me,*

*through a thin tangle of myself
she led me, no maps*

*no sense or hint
of technology,*

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*and we tumbled
in the grasses and the leaves*

*mirroring the quilts
of clouds, to a space*

*where joy and awe communed,
and soon, we sprouted*

*wings, clamoring
for distance...*

Alone with oneself silence governs in a dive to find the right word, the right phrase, the pearl that unpuzzles the surrounding chaos. Here the poet conjures up the sums of deceit until the right combination delivers the sought after, defining truth. In his piece, Every Subterfuge, Vincenz enters this watery frontier of tightening depth. Aquatic voices stream past him as he reinvents himself as the subject of being. A personal history nudges at him,

*How much has sunk in,
bled into your pores
over the years: the salt,*

*the hard calcified shells,
the ink of invertebrates—
it fills you with clear, warm*

*blue, and all the waters
in a tight embrace,
the voices borderless,*

*the tones tied in knots
then freed again, pieces
of a puzzle spread through*

*another heaven where almost
everything flies, fragments,
plumes and scars*

After reading Vincenz's exquisite collection of poems, the reader rises to the surface of self with an often startlingly new appreciation of life and its sometimes stifled, but then omnipresent, insistent, and musical voices. Here drawn-in breath turns sweet and poetic comprehension begins anew.