

## **AUTHOR INTERVIEW OF TOSCA LENCI**

**A few years back, you published a work called *History of the Daughter* free, on the Internet. Describe it for persons who aren't familiar with it.**

It's a historical compilation, of the epoch from around 1935 b.c. to 144 a.d. It takes *Humankind* history, only, from biblical literature—that is, from the *Old* and *New Testaments* and the “*apocrypha*” (books that weren't canonized)—and combines it with reports by ancient historians—Herodotus, Xenophon, Josephus, and classic Greek and Roman histories.

**What compelled its 20-plus years of project research and assembly?**

There are two opposing schools about biblical scripture. ‘Minimalist’ holds that it has little actual humankind content; ‘maximalist’, that it does. I belong to the latter. *History of the Daughters* isn't a history of God; it's about *people*—flesh-and-blood persons trying to live in their world as it was, with the precious little collective knowledge that far attained, and subject to all of Nature's individual and collective forces.

I strongly feel that the “bibles” haven't received adequate *literary* attention as the oldest of human writings. I especially feel that participation of *females* in the entire epoch definitely hasn't been appreciated. While at least as many daughters as sons were born over those 20 centuries, most of us can name only a few. The work's format traces the four epoch eras mother blood, as well as including even more than usual of male involvement.

**Besides the history, you've collected a large number of other works at a different, unpublicized website. Why do that?**

I've been totally sequestered as a writer, without avenues into obtaining an agent—the publishing business, as you know, overwhelmed with manuscripts. Getting attention is impossible for someone without contacts. When I got to my seventh decade, I wanted to be sure that the manuscripts didn't get lost, which led to collecting finished pieces at lppublications.com. I haven't worked in one genre; my works cover the whole spectrum from the history through novels, short stories, essays, illustrated children's stories and poetry.

**I can see how that would make it even more difficult for one agent or publisher.**

True; and I haven't made much effort to find one, recognizing that I would need one ‘blockbuster,’ so to speak—that is, acquire a public identity in the reading world—before the other works would get serious consideration. I do have one manuscript, *Journey With JC*, that could market-wise fill the bill. That manuscript, which I've been keeping on the shelf, my husband called my “sex book,” and a practicing psychologist said many women would like to read.

**Looking over your whole library of work, some addresses woman's struggle in keeping up with the domestic side of life. You may be a retired grandmother now, but for the most part you were a full time working wife and mother, answering the private muse as well. And the History, alone, is a veritable tome--some 1,000 pages!**

Like a lot of other writers, I had no clue what I was embarking on at the outset!

**You didn't?**

No way! A youthful aspiration to write was arrested when I got married at 18. It wasn't until in my 40's that I found time again for it, with what I thought was to be just a little article about Mary Magdalene—that there was absolutely nothing on record to support the reputation she'd borne for 2000 years, a fact well known in scholarly circles but not, common), and to show how that ‘lascivious’

picture came about. At the time I was working for a law firm, and a Hebrew attorney there asked to read it. When he returned it with a couple of questions about the source on certain points, I proceeded to do what I thought would be just a bit more research. Well, that was in 1982! Binders of research and much, much typing ensued before uploading of the completed "History," which I consider the main contribution of my "writer's" life.

### **Why did you decide to, and how did you manage to publish it free on-line?**

Obviously there was considerable expense along the way—printouts, Xeroxing, webmaster services, etc.--all of it a philanthropic family effort, to make the data as accessible to as many people as possible, not being able to produce and market a print edition. Only a handful of bound print copies have been produced for copyright and Library of Congress purposes, although one is shelved in the reference section of the main Sonoma County Library at Santa Rosa. The book is assembled as user-friendly as possible, with a brief summary of each era supplemented by numerous charts, glossaries and narratives referenced to the core documents.

### **As you said, following matriarchal lines is a unique format.**

It really is interesting, how that came about. Despite personal interest in the females, I didn't envision that format. But as research accumulated it simply began to collect naturally that way, from which the final pattern then emerged. Often I've thought, how differently might have been drawn progressive dynastic and imperial regional borders, if over time they'd been determined through mother rather than father blood. I'm not able to watch any supposedly biblically-based movies, typically embroidered and/or romanticized accounts, when the strict record admits recognizable, common *human* practical motivations and behaviors, seen against the matrix of society and human conditions of the times.

### **Care to give some examples?**

The first that come to mind involve King David's acquisition of important women during his rise to power over Saul. Royal mothers and their children were part of a leader's or King's chief properties. Besides personal preferences, the makeup of a harem mirrored political and military alliances and resources. Abigail of Carmel tried to save her husband, and a woman can imagine many reasons why she subsequently would have given over to David. Then there's the simple statement--per strict English interlinear wordings of the Hebrew and Greek, not reconstituted as in common testament renditions--that, "Ahinoam [Saul's wife] had David taken... and they even both of them [Abigail included] to him wives."

Very different conclusions can be drawn from the record when processed through female consciousnesses. Women can imagine good reason why Saul's daughter, Michal, as another David wife, exhibited disgust with him. Five of her father Saul's grandchildren were turned over to his enemies and killed. Michal, by the way, then was the last-mentioned female in descendency of Neri-- a post-Babylon-exile name in Luke's Jesus' lineage line, potentially Zerubbabel's grandfather. Bath-Sheba, too, invites consideration, it being possible that Saul's surviving son and grandson at one point were with her father or brother. Interesting, too, are the differences between the two lineages given of Christ--Matthew's and Luke's.

It gets really 'hairy' in and around the second century b.c. with all the Cleopatras—Syrian as well as Egyptian princesses and queens-- Egypt's famous Cleopatra being a *seventh* Cleo. Some of the women (and remember, they became mothers at very young ages--Christ's mother appears to have been 14 or 15) wound up with and had sons by successive conquering men, those siblings later competing for succession (Absalom and Solomon come to mind), and some of them in outright warring. At risk of sounding heretic, one can go all the way back to Elisheba, and speculate why her first two sons

met disaster, and whether—given the way text is worded-- Miriam wasn't Moses' and Aaron's *half*-sister.

Moving on through time, Herod the Great is infamous when it came to protecting claim to the throne, killing his own sons by Miriam of the Hasmonean bloodline. And then there was his intent to rid himself of John and Jesus (who the people of "The Law" would know as lineally legitimate under It). If the apocryphal Protevangelion is believed, the Great's henchmen actually killed at the temple high priest Zechariah, John's father, when he wouldn't divulge the infants' whereabouts.

As you can see, I get pretty garrulous on the subject! Some of it is in my *Leftover Week in a Writer's Life* collected essays. However, I'm emphatic that conclusions on either side of the coin—male and female— remain partially speculative absent further ancient records being found. It's precisely for that reason, laying a basis for new objectivity, that "History" eschews subjective conclusions. It simply reports all data neutrally, male and female, fully referenced from a core bibliography, open to any and all critical review. Neither it nor I claim any final authority. I merely was a tool of compilation.

**In 1999 you self-published an adjunct to "History," a print pocketbook called "Beloved Disciple, Daughter of Logos." It's fictionalization of the last four years of Christ's life also is quite different than usual versions. What was your intent there?**

After I published it my mother told someone I had written a 'religious' book--*quite* the contrary! After *History's* research, it mattered much to me to see an account of those four years totally against the recorded history and politics of the time. Jesus' importance as a *man* of his time had been negated totally by later deification; and his symbolization as "The Word" cried out for giving truth *to* words. Secondly, I wanted to present Mary of Magdala as I believe she was, a middle-aged woman, along with the mothers supporting Jesus' band. It also concludes, based on accurate grammatical rendition of the Greek text, that she was the 'disciple'/student to whom he, from his impalement, committed his mother's care.

Since then I have uploaded a copy of the book to the lppublications site, in which ancient versions of characters' names used, for neutralizing reasons in the pocket book with, with their names as given in the *New Testament*--allowing for direct identifications—and retitled, *Children of Logos*. Meanwhile, remaining copies of the paperback are offered for postage cost only, from a webpage linkable on *History's* table of contents.

**All these years of sequestered writing had to have been grueling.**

My husband would say on occasion, "Why don't you write something just to *sell*?" But my major works insisted on being vehicles for advancing their subjects, whether in human relationships or material realities. Oh, at first, I did go through all the standard would-be-published-writer's thought processes--like thinking about myself on the Johnny Carson show, twitching my ear for my family's benefit. Then Carson retired. Time kept moving on; I was getting to the point when thoughts of one's demise begin to hover. After putting out *History* I decided it best to preserve all else created to offer some ensurance of life to pieces that might be worthy of it. That's when I established the separate domain.

**Do you see yourself as a "feminist?"**

Again, quite the contrary—*Journey* underscores that. I wish for a neutralization of male/female differences and true friendship between us. Betty Friedan summarized it, when she said that what we're seeing is "a rise of something larger than the first women's movement-- men in it, too, who've been harassed by a no-win definition of masculinity; a human liberation from polarization of sex roles." I'd like to take it farther, because I believe that consciousness apart from body is genderless, that the sexual nature it obtains depends on the body into which it is born—not the *form* of body but the

*material* constitution of it, which determines how mind, or consciousness, develops against all the stereotypical labeling and expectations based on form.

**Sounds as if you don't believe in 'free' will?**

True—but that's a subject I won't argue.

**Why is that?**

It's like with politics and religion. A person can't change the life she or he has lived, and people live their entire lives according to their beliefs. To try to change a mind's fundament is to pose that one lived all of one's life wrong. I think it cruel, as well as a waste of time.

**I won't ask you to convince me then, but what's your fundamental take on 'free' will?**

I see our existence in a closed system, where there's no such thing as empty space— not a new idea, by any means, but a certainty toward which quantum physics seems to be leading. The way I see it, everything has preceding causes, including one's state of being—Body and Mind. It might seem that I have choices in a given situation, but the one I make will be according to my fixed, developed nature, which I didn't 'freely' create. Another work, "A Child's Book of Light," that involves Physics and especially Perception, is the armchair scientist of me drawing a material reality I can live with.

**So which do you think--Science or Religion--will win the "creation/evolution" battle?**

Another debate I try to avoid. First of all, I don't want to disparage all the good done by religious persons who believe in a personified god. However, like with 'free' will, I would expect them not to try to budge me from my life concepts any more than I, them, their. I heartily do believe, though, that we would be much, much better off if we abandoned trying to establish a 'before' and 'after' to this existence and took full responsibility ourselves, for the here and now.

**What books would you say most influenced your life?**

It's impossible overall, because different books affect us at different stages. Rammurti Mishra's "Fundamentals of Yoga" comes to mind first—that, and a work by a swami named Svatmarama, because of the great salvation Yoga afforded me at a critical time of mid-life—I've written about that, too. Wilhelm Reich and C. J. Jung were other beloved 'advisers' in getting through a major life change at the time. As to authors, either for enlightenment or 'recreation', those who come to mind are Chekov, Remarque, Hemingway, Haggard, Poe, Eliot (T.S.), Tolstoy, Doyle—but there have been many others at varying times, especially more recently, depending on my state of being. I only wish I could remember a thousandth of what I've read.

**What's the hardest thing about being a writer?**

If you mean the Mind that served the "Writer" in me, it's cutting out enough concentrated time from the requirements of family and wage-earning life. There were long periods when I managed time obsessively, often working with a timer in between chores. Sometimes I often worked through a night, going to work without sleep. The initial creation part is relatively enjoyable—that's when garrulous Mind freely spits out words, in journal keeping of a sort. The assembly/editing/production part is killing, because that's when Mind encounters its greatest efforts, all the while fending off the 'Witness's' doubts about which words(or any!) are worth keeping, and how best utilized.

The hardest thing for an aged writer (this one, at least) is coming to grips with the fact that one never can know the true value of that which was forced through one. I wish I could live long enough to see the analyses and interpretations of history to be done in coming decades by women, relative newcomers in its associated fields.

Finally, like so many persons given to write, it's difficult to believe one *is* a writer, because that connotes being publically recognized *as* one. Ultimately I saw the 'writer' as an anonymous entity-- "writing" *per se* simply something one did with one's hands, putting words on paper, which is what I did for a long time by pen, pencil, typewriter, and finally word processor. If I'd been born in another age, it could have been a stylus on clay.

What really grabs me is how everything that 'a person born to write' writes is dictated by the individual life--one specific consciousness against specific life circumstances. If I'd been born to affluence, raised in a different culture, able to complete a formal degreed education and had followed youthful goals--instead of the traditional domestic I was reared to be--I may have worked in the publication industry, instead of as a frustrated secretary. But then the 'writer' in me would not have written what has been written; and I'm happy with that.