

## SHE WALKS THE DECKS ALONE

She walks the decks alone  
Sunny days or cool, windy evenings  
Mystique shrouding her every step  
Hand carved cane tapping out her cadence  
Long flowing skirts and sweaters  
Magnificent shawls wrapped casually around her shoulders  
Or luminous scarfs tightly wound round her neck  
Her head, with its strong patrician nose,  
Thrown back proudly to the azure skies, gathering the sun –  
Then shoulders bent into the cool brisk night breezes.

Enigmatic, she walks on alone approaching no one.  
If not intimidated by her aloofness  
A stranger might approach attempting to strike up a conversation,  
Perhaps thinking her lonely.  
She is cordial, smiling her still lovely smile through her advanced years,  
Sharing nothing of herself;  
Who she is, where she is from, what she has done in her lifetime,  
Why she is here alone, if she is forlorn – not even her name.

Strangers conjecture and gossip as people do  
When accosting someone distinguished appearing and disparate from them:  
Was she a lady of the night or a lady of society?  
Days sipping tea or nights entertaining,  
A paramour or devoted spouse,  
Were there husbands and children?  
Or lovers and liaisons?

Festivities abound and surround

People laughing and drinking

Making plans to meet later, taking in shows.

She has dinner at a table for one or on the deck of her stateroom

Gazing out at the coral sun as it is swallowed up by the amaranth tinted seas,

She walks the decks at night while the stars stud the darkened heavens

And the moon shimmers on the ocean swells.

When the ship docks she walks gracefully down the gangplank

In long flowing skirt and scarf – secrecy intact.

She tips the steward well as he loads her bags into the waiting limo

Then leaves alone as she arrived, inscrutability marking every step.

Where does she go?

Is there someone somewhere anticipating her?

Or is she boarding another vessel

To walk the decks alone?

~ Lona Haskins