

Gloria Vando (1936 -)



Gloria Vando Hickok has enriched the Kansas City area literary community since moving to Johnson County in 1980. She founded *Helicon Nine*, a nationally recognized women's arts magazine, which then became a press, Helicon Nine Editions. In addition, she and her husband Bill Hickok co-founded The Writers Place, a literary arts center in Kansas City, Missouri. She combines such service with writing award-winning books.

Vando is a Nuyorican: a person of Puerto Rican heritage born in New York City. She layers this cultural perspective through her verses. Most of her poems begin with autobiographical moments, which then expand into global perspectives.

Narrative is a strong element in all of Vando's works, and also history. She regales her readers with dramatic stories set in Sarajevo, Vietnam, Korea, San Juan, New York, and Kansas City. She personalizes political comment by adding emotional reactions to factual events. She also tells her own larger-than-life stories in well wrought verse.

"**Orphans**" is one of these stories. The fourteen-line poem follows an unrhymed sonnet pattern. The first eight lines set up the situation—death of a loveless parent—and then the poem shifts to the mother's advice about grief. Acorns and wind are familiar images to Midwestern readers, and here these natural forces suggest wholeness. The last two lines are the sonnet's couplet, with the surprising final chord—acceptance of "luck." The mother empowers her orphaned (or fatherless) daughter by framing her within a larger cosmos.

ORPHANS

***When my father died, leaving me
distraught for never having known
him as father, as friend,
for never having known myself***

***as child of one whose eyes and mouth
and temperament were mine, my mother
cautioned me, told me not to mourn
what I perceived as loss: you and I***

***are daughters of the wind, she said,
you and I are fathers of our souls,
sprouting intact like seedlings
from two wind-borne acorns.***

***We thrive on luck, she said,
there is no father's love in that.***

Education: Vando was born in New York City and lived in Amsterdam and Paris. She received a BA from Texas A and I College and pursued graduate studies at Southampton College, Long Island.

Career: Vando's *Promesas: Geography of the Impossible* (1993) was a Walt Whitman finalist and won the Thorpe Menn Book Award. *Shadows and Supposes* (2002) won the Poetry Society of America's Alice Fay Di Castagnola Award and was named Best Poetry Book of 2003 by the Latino Hall of Fame.