

# Keynote Presentation:

## Poetry and the Politics of Memory

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**Abstract:** The politics of memory are full of acts of censorship, of anamorphoses, of provoked or induced amnesias, of therapies, of lobotomies, before they are attributed to psychoanalysis, left in the care of Freud and Jung, of Marxist-Leninism, of consumerism, populism, minimalism and post-modernism. I will read you a few poems and I will tell you a little bit about my volumes of memoirs simply in order to point out that poetry signifies memory and history. This implicitly brings to mind the Sighet Memorial, a place which gathers and recounts of poems written, passed on, and memorized in prisons. Memory is an essential bridge between two shores. That is why I wished so intently to bring recently the Sighet Memorial across the Atlantic Ocean, as well as on the East Coast of the USA, and further on on its West Coast. Memory defines us and becomes our true identification card, which may become also our driver's licence into the future, isn't it?



### About DOINA URICARIU:

*By Doreen Schmidt, Editor, Napa Valley, California, USA*

Rare is the poet who fluidly captures the world in its tiniest to most expansive detail. Uricariu's ecstatic delight dances across the page in precisely and perfectly chosen words. Those words abound and revel in the visceral elements of flora, fauna and minerals. It is illuminating to encounter a poet with such insistent and red-blooded reverence for nature and passion, baby goats and oracke, cornsilk and dandelions, roots and ore, agate and olives, pegmatites and chalcedony, architectures of man and nature. She enters the earth, rolls around inside it, paints its walls with words vibrant as blood, with war paint's urgency.

Uricariu deftly weaves together concepts that we in the West don't often experience through our poets: the sacred and spiritual, the ecstatic and mundane, who writes in wonder that "God was about to teach light how to write." Her work is informed but not encumbered by the orthodoxy of her religious belief, her words unblemished by twisted interpretations belonging to others. She wears her spirituality like Rumi: another rare and visceral, light-filled, reverent presence. It is all the same for her: her fervent embrace of religion, nature, sexuality and maternity. Why should it be otherwise? In a segmented society that often segregates earthly and spiritual concerns, the whole and every part of the whole, it is refreshing to be reminded of their integrity and integral connectivity by a poet who writes as she believes: with a child's purity, a purist's specificity, an academic's erudition, a poet's faith.

Doina Uricariu is an important contemporary Romanian writer with an unmistakable lyric voice born out of a generous sensuous universe, intersected by constant moral, philosophical, and political questioning. She started out in poetry with the volume *Healings*, published in 1976 after a seven-year wait in the hands of the Communist censorship. Eight other volumes of poetry followed: *Jugastru Sfiala*, *Happy Beings*, *The Hand-covered Face*, *Atrocious Eye*, *The Heart Institute*, *The Power of Leviathan*, *The Axonometric Heart*, three volumes of poetry published in Italy, a bi-lingual German-Romanian volume of poetry *Das Herzinstitut / The Heart Institute*.

Mrs. Uricariu's poetry has been translated in anthologies and individual volumes in English, German, French, Swedish, Norwegian, Russian, Serbian, Czech, Hebrew, Albanian and in other twenty languages. She published volumes of criticism and literary history, essays, and art criticism that are considered milestones on their respective subjects: Apocrypha on Emil Botta, Ecorches, Paradoxical Lyricism, Søren Kierkegaard, Maria Pillat-Brates: Poetry and Reverie, Antonovici, Vlaicu Ionescu, the Artist. Doina Uricariu prepared and edited reference editions on Emil Cioran, Dominic Stanca, Jeni Acterian, Emil Botta, and The Podrom Filokalia. She published four volumes of her memoirs in two books entitled The Lower Jaw and The Lions Stair.

Dr. Doina Uricariu is member of Romanian Writers Association, European Cultural Society, and International PEN CLUB. Knight of the Order of Faithful Service of Romania conferred by the President of the country. Knight of the Order of the Romanian Crown conferred by the Royal House of Romania. She is currently the director of the Romanian Cultural Institute in New York.