



Sidewalks

By Valeria Luiselli

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Grantland Book of the Year

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"Valeria Luiselli is a writer of formidable talent, destined to be an important voice in Latin American letters. Her vision and language are precise, and the power of her intellect is in evidence on every page."—Daniel Alarcón

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Valeria Luiselli is an evening cyclist; a literary tourist in Venice, searching for Joseph Brodsky's tomb; an excavator of her own artifacts, unpacking from a move. In essays that are as companionable as they are ambitious, she uses the city to exercise a roving, meandering intelligence, seeking out the questions embedded in our human landscapes.

Valeria Luiselli was born in Mexico City in 1983 and grew up in South Africa. Her novel and essays have been translated into many languages and her work has appeared in publications including the *New York Times*, *Granta*, and *McSweeney's*. Some of her recent projects include a ballet performed by the New York City Ballet in Lincoln Center; a pedestrian sound installation for the Serpentine Gallery in London; and a novella in installments for workers in a juice factory in Mexico. She lives in New York City.

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Sidewalks By Valeria Luiselli Bibliography

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Editorial Review

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Luiselli's debut book of essays, published in conjunction with her first novel, *Faces in the Crowd* (2014), brings the captivating, meditative work of Mexican-born Luiselli stateside. In these short, linked essays, Luiselli explores themes of motion, travel, transition, and reflection. Whether wandering in a Venetian graveyard in search of Joseph Brodsky's resting place or navigating neighborhoods and contemplating the state of longing described by the Portuguese term *saudade*, erudite Luiselli writes with a cosmopolitan appreciation for cityscapes. She nods to such literary figures as Swiss writer Robert Walser, French poet Charles Baudelaire, and German critic Walter Benjamin, joining the long tradition of writerly saunters, strolls, and flâneries. Luiselli's prose moves quickly, and the resulting essays challenge readers to rethink notions of space and place. In "Relingos," Luiselli considers the cartography of empty space and addresses the imaginary architecture of Roland Barthes without sounding unpleasantly academic or didactic. By combining the perceptive intelligence of Hélène Cixous with the free-form sentences of W. G. Sebald, these essays establish Luiselli as one of her generation's finest nonfiction writers. --Diego Báez

Review

"Together with [Luiselli's novel] *Faces in the Crowd*, her essays in *Sidewalks* are a wonderful contribution to the long tradition by which authors re-imagine their cities as dream-like spaces created for them to wander around, daydream and discover." *?Los Angeles Times*

"[Luiselli's] subtexts become almost a guide?asides we might hear from the city itself, whispering to us as we walk or bicycle through it, speaking of its secrets. So it is with the best travel books and memoirs, those that go beyond simply recounting a journey. They allow the reader to wander with the writer; to tap into her voice and imagination." *?Los Angeles Review of Books*

"Luiselli's writing is full of verve." *?Irish Times*

"The disciplines conversed within *Sidewalks* include cartography, architecture, and urban planning; Luiselli bicycles through Mexico City, strolls the New York City streets, and visits Joseph Brodsky's grave in Venice. These wanderings are unified by a distinctive narrative voice: pensive, questioning, always something of a stranger in a strange land." *?Publishers Weekly*

"If every word, for her, has the shadow of two others behind it, and if every city in which she lives carries the ghostly afterimage of all the other cities she has known ? as well as the voices of the writers she has researched upon her arrival ? then her books become all the more entralling for the multiplicity they champion. . . the great beauty of her art is seeing all her contrasting stories collapse or blend or combine into an unexpected whole." *?Los Angeles Review of Books*

"The essays in *Sidewalks* don't connect or come together, and they aren't commenting on a single thing; what we have is the Mexico City native (the book was lovingly translated from Spanish by Christine MacSweeney) distilling observations from her walks and the thinking she does on them. Handled any other way, that sort of thing could render any book of essays tedious and ultimately boring, but Luiselli turns it into something illuminating and delightful." *?Flavorwire, Book of the Week*

"These essays take an unhurried pace well-suited for the ambling walks and bike rides that inspired them, deepened by literary and historical asides that situate these places in a context beyond the present moment. Language holds as much significance as geography here." ?*Publisher's Weekly*

"Place, identity and the limitations of language converge in this slim collection of illuminating and incisive essays. . .[T]hese essays are more impressive in both their expansiveness and epigrammatic precision." ?*Kirkus Reviews*

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"Whether they are tectonic plates shifting beneath the surface of a paragraph or the double wrecking ball of the line break above and below every aphorism, the formal choices of *Sidewalks* are in conversation with the loud silences and composed fragmentations inherent in life and literature." ?*Lapham's Quarterly*

"This book is the greatest of all things: a novel meant to be reread." ?*The Rumpus*

"Luiselli's experimental essays are subdivided into brief, poignant observations that combine elements of travel writing, literary criticism and memoir. . . Places, even the absence of places, are the landscapes across which her imagination and intellect travel in this masterful collection of essays." ?*Longitude*

"[*Faces in the Crowd* and *Sidewalks*] have a combined weight that dwarfs the already considerable gravity they individually have." -*KGB Bar Lit Magazine*

"For Luiselli, like Borges, the continuity between literature and reality is such that, if literature is a process of the imagination, then the world from which art is created is inseparably a part of that dream." ?*PANK*

"Luiselli is exceptionally good at weaving together seemingly disparate parts to make a whole essay that feels at once thoughtful, surprising, and carefully constructed." ?*Your Impossible Voice*

"A writer is a person who distributes silences and empty spaces." What a pleasure to wander through Valeria Luiselli's meditative, precisely constructed landscapes of the city and interior. To read her essays is to have access to a map, a history, an passionate library, a thoughtful gaze, a sensitive and beautiful mind." ?*Kate Zambreno*

"In a little over one hundred pages the peripatetic Luiselli covers Mexico City, Venice and New York – amongst others – with a quick eye and a scholar's heart. She is a keen excavator and expositor; the history of places, people, words and ideas are deftly woven together in brief tapestries of a life lived around the world." ?*Review 31*

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