

## **Artists who inspire me**

Faryal Velmi

I'd like to talk about two writers – a screenwriter and a poet – who both inspire and push me to be a better writer.

First up is prolific screenwriter Paul Laverty. I have long admired Paul's work. He has written nearly all of the films Ken Loach has directed over the last two decades.

There are two Laverty-penned films that have made a lasting impression on me.

The first is the film *Bread and Roses* which was released in 2000. It is the moving story of Maya – newly arrived from Mexico – and her sister Rosa, who has been living in LA for some time.

The film charts the struggles of Maya and a group of undocumented Mexican cleaners in Los Angeles who try to organise a union after being treated badly by their employers.

Despite being over two decades old, the film's story and theme still remain current. Or, rather, the struggles of migrant workers in the US and here in the UK unfortunately haven't changed.

Then there is the 2006 film *I, Daniel Blake*.

It howls at the injustices of a decade and more of Tory austerity having hacked away at the benefits system and introduced a range of punitive sanctions that have plunged hundreds of thousands of people into poverty and despair.

I am inspired by how Laverty's unapologetically political stories are told through the personal. There is turmoil but also heart and humour. That is what pushes me – how to find humour in even the darkest of life's corners when I'm writing.

It's also amazing that Laverty (along with Loach and the film's producers) managed to achieve what many screenwriters and film makers can only dream of: box office and critical success that included winning the coveted Palme d'Or at the Cannes Film Festival. What also inspired me about these wins is that you can write stories that are on the face of it about ordinary people in very specific localities, but that are universal in their reach. Hardship, struggle – but also solidarity – touch people across language barriers and borders.

The next writer I'd like to speak about is also someone who manages to do this. The awesome Lisa Luxx who describes herself as 'poet, essayist, activist, dyke'.

I'm a massive poetry fan and frankly... in awe of poets. To me, they are the ultimate wordsmiths.

Performing somersaults with syntax. Pushing and bending language... every word earning its place on the page.

This is what I aspire to do when I'm writing. Be economical in word count but also whip up the emotion. No mean feat!

For me, lisa is one of the best wordsmiths around.

I first came across her at one of my favourite poetry nights – Out-Spoken – where she won the Performance Poetry Prize in 2018.

Her self-published chapbook *Trust Your Outrage* is a searing takedown of sexism and patriarchy, as well as a celebration of sisterhood and her lesbian identity.

Her latest collection, *Fetch Your Mother's Heart*, is inspired by her experiences in Beirut, where lisa has been living and working in solidarity with community groups to support those affected by the devastating blast that rocked the city in August 2020.

Her poems take us on an exploration of her British Syrian Arab identities, as she rides her moped through the Beirut streets alongside comrades and lovers.

There is a lyrical and romantic quality to lisa's prose that I have long admired. Oh, how I desire the scene descriptions in my film scripts to be like that. Well, I'm working on it!

So... a poet who puts her body and her verse on the front line.

A screenwriter whose stories celebrate the resilience of working-class people.

Both prolific writers. Both inspirational! Do check them out!

### **Faryal Velmi**

Faryal is a screenwriter based in London. Having spent a decade running the Disability rights charity Transport for All based in Brixton – her work is inspired by campaigns for social justice and the multi-cultural tapestry of city life. Faryal's credits include writing on the Channel 4 drama *Ackley Bridge* and she is currently developing a number of TV and film projects.

A recording of this talk can be found at **[writersmosaic.org.uk](http://writersmosaic.org.uk)**

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