



100

Select Poems

plus

one

Martina Reisz Newberry

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General Information

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Martina Reisz Newberry

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Dedication

Larry Kramer

Poet, Brother, Teacher, Friend ...

I miss you.

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Author's Note

My publishing record is a little gawky and somewhat untidy, though colorful. There are a number of books and a chapbook published, all of which I love and which exemplify my passion for poems. I have edited the selected poems in this book by dismantling previous collections. They are presented in sequence by the titles in which they first appeared and, in that way, the book is its own story.

My unconscious models for the construction of these poems have been *Selected Poems of Norman Dubie* and *A.R. Ammons Collected Poems* both of which have provided a definitive influence on my life and work. I mention them because their work is so different and, at the same time, similar to mine. This is not to say that they are my only influences. There are so many other brilliant “ghosts,” talented minds I appeal to when trying to put my particular way of experiencing the world to paper. So, I thank them all and include in that thanks my publishers, past and present.

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Forward

It was in 1988, or maybe 1989; a long time ago, now, that Martina Newberry was standing at a wooden rail looking down across long, rolling, green slopes toward the ocean when I happened to look out the window from the kitchen to see her standing there. We were at Djerassi Artists Residents Program in Northern California.

Dear reader, please let me step away for just a moment. I am not a poet, not one who writes. I am a photographer. I want you to know this as you read my very slight observations. I feel the depth of the universe when I look at something, and when that thing's surface convinces me by its appearances in the world.

When read Martina's work, I enter it not by following the words, but by what my senses bring me, through those words. My eye follows less those words and more the line down the page Martina crafts from them.

That moment so many years ago of catching Martina, the person standing outdoors, taking in that long view from the Skyline ridge down to the ocean at San Gregorio is fading in my memory. I remember certain energetic warmth, the beating heart which touches me in her poetry. Martina stood out on the deck that day, and I walked out to join her, to share that moment in fellowship with her, looking out across that landscape.

In her poems is that very invitation, reoffered in myriad imagery.

One theme in this poetry is that of loss crossed by discovery, and of the heart enduring, albeit suspended between desire and fulfillment. On that long-ago afternoon, that great light-flecked space in the landscape before us might have reminded one of what might be, or of fleeting fulfillments which will come, even if not invited nor expected.

Forward . . . continued

A certain force in Martina's poetry seems to derive from slightly twisting imagery like this, as, in the poem *Neutrinos*, we are reminded of events which touch us but which may not register. So may it be with love, in these poems which remind us we may be the wiser without knowing it.

As with taking in the light and the land shape that afternoon, these poems need to be seen in space, not simply viewed on the page: read out loud. To hear these lines successive images come forth. Even that, for this reader, is not their real source. More than projecting imagery the poems amalgamate image, sound, and discursive flow. Description comes forth, a tactile palpable flow. For this reader this is the catalyst for an emotion that resolves into a "Yes" for life, for heart.

Might a love poem pass through me, yet I not feel a thing? Would love? Perhaps these poems, for whatever deadpan sincerity they affect, contain yet a dram of classic irony. To read them now, or then, may be enough: tincture of time will take care of the rest.

Bob Tyson

Photographer
Turin, Italia
13 November 2011

Namaste'





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Celebration

The morning's birthday rang through us like
a gong. Outside, no one believed there
was such a thing as mortality

and there was a perpetual grin
on the windshields of the cars down
in the street. Someone may have been

dreaming us, but we hoped they would not
wake up; our happiness was that
feral. We were safe and slipped into

the day on the remnants of last night's
moon. Over glasses of tea, we read
each other's palms to see where we were

going, but we could see only that
there is more than one truth in this world.
The morning's birthday showed us where to

how to begin the celebration,
where to put our things and where to go out
so that others could come in and find ease.

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from



Running Like A Woman
With Her Hair On Fire



Red Hen Press ~ 2005

Links

Expatriation: three girls,
children really, running-not looking back.
One thinks of tidying her room.
One thinks of a grilled cheese sandwich.
The third thinks of the boy back there
in the trees, of his hands, his moans
extinguishing the bird sounds.
“Run!” she screams to those two behind her.
“Run faster. Don’t look behind you.”
Which one was I?
Which one were you?
That evening, remembering, you said,
“Don’t forget. We promised never to tell.”
Tell me something covert-even if it’s a lie.
Tell me: where you were when John Kennedy’s ear blew off.
Tell me: how you observed the place of your lost gods.
Tell me: who you were in bed with then? Was he/she living in
your eyes, your throat?
Tell me: what were your darkest impulses in those days?
What did you make stronger and what did you endure?
Were you ready then, as in the wind of your daughter’s hands,
your son’s laughter, for the difficult contours of this earth?
The phone rings and rings in this empty room.
I will never regret not answering it.
Did you wish to be broken?
Did I?

The Orchard

We visited Aunt at her house with the
cement porch and the acre of apricot trees.
Our mothers and fathers said, "Be careful,
"stay clean." Aunt said, "Now don't rile the bees."
Cousin Lou, Cousin Pauline, Cousin Craig, and me
wandered as far into those trees as we dared,
then took off our shoes to step on overripe,
fallen fruit. Lou kissed Pauline and dared Craig
to kiss me, but he wouldn't answer the dare,
only led me further into the trees
until we found a clear place to sit where
we could see Lou and Pauline pressing themselves
against each other, mouths open, tongues working.
"They oughtn't," I said, "it's wrong." Cousin Craig
bit his lip and pulled my hair. "Don't worry,"
he said, "it's ok as long as it doesn't
'rile the bees.'" They called us to come back then.

We stared at the sound their voices made.
A fury overtook us as we
started back-a rage. We picked up apricots,
as many as we could, began running,
throwing them everywhere, running with our hands
in the air, shouting and crying out
as if the sky were on fire. "We're here!
We're coming! We're here!"

A Reckoning

Minds break almost
in the same way a heart does.
It just takes longer.
Even when a heart stops
expecting, stops waiting,
for sleep or peace or the
contrite word, the mind
does not. It stays alert,
on the job. It takes
the photographs, puts forth
the reasonable explanation:
*Soon, the mind says, when
he has rested, when it is
cooler, when it is morning...*
The heart has given up
by this time, has broken,
is shattered. But the mind turns
away from its own distraction.
It refuses to notice
the danger: the exposed root,
the shards of glass, the blown fuse.
when, at last, these things are irrefutable,
it breaks. Just like a heart-
almost exactly like a heart.

The Woman Who Read The Bible

She would get out the Bible.
On an afternoon sometimes,
Mother would get it from
the top shelf of the big
mahogany bookcase.
It wasn't faith she was looking for
among the prophets and poets.
Her mind wasn't right at those times.
She craved a louder voice than
those that wailed inside her head
and beat at her ears. It was
a quick stab at heaven
she wanted; thinking how it might go:
how she might turn a gilt-edged
page and a ray of brilliant light
would shoot forth from the words
and Jesus
Jesus would heal her then and there.

The Woman Who Read the Bible . . . *continued*

I was the little child who
would lead the savior to her.
I sat still as stagnant water while
she read almost inaudibly
those dreadful stories of miracles:
demons driven into a herd
of swine, a few loaves and fishes
feeding five thousand people,
Lazarus waking up from
death and leaving his grave like
some benign Boris Karloff.
My mother's voice bent and
broke. Finally silent,
she waited for God to see us
sitting side by side on the bed,
bathed in purity and
resolution. Almost shy,
she'd bow her head to whisper
"Amen," and get up unredeemed,
put the book away, and start dinner.

Thinking About What Might Happen

You thought about what might happen:

Contemplation of the Wheel-A Portrait

(You were framed.)

We went to buy books; your hands were busy
touching titles as if they were Braille.

Poetry by Touch, a nice concept.

Your mouth was set as if for chocolates
or custard. Consider what was done:

how you smoothed the pages and your fingers
moved, danced-fast as coyotes over
the words. What if. . . what if. . . what if I
had been a whore and not who you know
at all? What if my name was Babylon
and I pulled sentences over my legs
like stockings?

Ah! Bow your head now-hope that, this once,
the night won't be dark.

On The First Day Of October

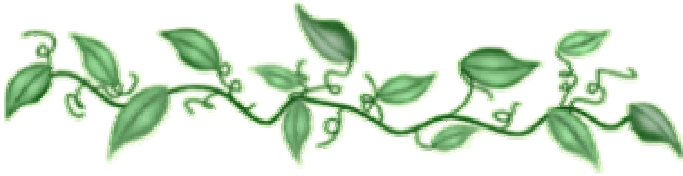
When I learned to tie my shoes,
I always stopped at the same place.
You know that place where the lace
goes around itself, right before the bow
is born. I always stopped right there,
frozen. Time went nowhere, birds stopped
flying, dogs stopped scratching. It was
like a photograph of a bicycle rider-
you can see that he should be moving,
but the picture has caught him in the place
he will be forever: one knee raised, ready
to push down on the pedal.
There is so much one needs to go on through
to all that is waiting. In the case of
shoelace tying, it is courage; in the case
of bicycle riding, it is coordination;
in the case of loving, it is vision.
I once left a friend in San Rafael
who wrote to me. She said: *"I can't believe
how small I have become. I have been
reduced by events, surprised, hurt without
reason, artfully carved up."*

I don't know. . . check with me later
for the things you need to know.
We can talk about them sometime
when the coffee is poured and too hot to drink;
maybe on the first day of October
when we find just the smallest bit of ice
on the car windshield.

Something I Know About

You inhale the certain grassy smell,
note the towel blowing soft on the line.
“Yes,” you nod, “*it will be clear today;
and there is the cat and there an owl.*”
You clearly understand, for the moment,
how things are. But, inside, where your hunger sits,
are vital sounds wicked as meteors.
Each small thing competes for its own realness:
A child hugs himself to sleep, a snake
naps in the warm roadway, some tall creature
bends to come in your door,
and, subtler than waking from a nap,
you will go back to where you began,
disposed toward another way of loving.

Epilogue



Publications

Non-Fiction

Lima Beans and City Chicken: A Memoir of the Open Hearth.
E.P. Dutton & Co. 1989

Poetry

An Apparent, Approachable Light
Chapbook, Astra Press 1998
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Running Like A Woman With Her Hair On Fire
Red Hen Press 2005

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Arabesques Press 2006

After The Earthquake
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Poet's Series,

Coffee: Two Creams, No Sugar 1997

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Achievements

Residency

Yaddo Artists Residency

1987

Pushcart Prize for Poetry

Nomination by Andrew Hudgins

1988

Residency

Djerassi Artists Retreat

1989

Residency

Anderson Center

Tower View Artists Retreat

1992

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Astra Press 1998

Reviews

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Best Poems Encyclopedia

All that Jazz and Bad Manners

Trivia Magazine

At the Polish Club

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~ *fini* ~





What separates us from each other, from the universe, from anger, from hope, and passion, and love ? Only the mountains of our own fears and doubts.

There is, in that case, only one thing to do : put a sandwich in a bag, along with a pen and a notebook and head for the hills with your heart and mind open for whatever poetry has to give you. In the world of poems, nothing is unspeakable, impossible, or insurmountable.

¡Vamos a viajar
Martina Reisz Newberry



"In this collection; one hundred poems culled from previously published volumes; the salient qualities of Newberry's work are adroitly represented: the invocations of loneliness and connection, valor and despair, self and other. In poem after poem, Newberry asserts her voice, a particular moral stolidity more and more apparent with each reading. These are evocative poems with an implicit philosophic grounding, pieces that feed a reader's longing and curiosity alike."

John Amen, *Editor of The Pedestal Magazine*



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