Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Dave Newman: Four Poems

Dave Newman · Wednesday, August 10th, 2016

Dave Newman is the author of five books, including *The Poem Factory* (White Gorilla Press, 2015), the novels *Raymond Carver Will Not Raise Our Children* (Writers Tribe Books, 2012) and *Two Small Birds* (Writers Tribe Books, 2014), and the collection *The Slaughterhouse Poems* (White Gorilla Press, 2013), named one of the best books of the year by L Magazine. He lives in Trafford, PA, the last town in the Electric Valley, with his wife, the writer Lori Jakiela, and their two children.

THIS FUCKER SAYS

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he's going to throw me in the Allegheny River.
"Why's that?" I say.
"You're looking at me" he says.
It's three AM and he's a lot drunk.
              You can hear the water.
              You can hear my lungs.
Sometimes I tell time by reading
the clock on the mountain.
Sometimes I walk so I can sleep.
The drunk pulls a pack of cigarettes
              like a gun
              and asks for a light.
The river beneath us is the Monongahela.
West is Ohio, south is West Virginia
              north is New York, east is the worst.
I know it sounds confusing
but no one is getting tossed in the Allegheny.
Sometimes I get lost in my own neighborhood.
That's why I left my apartment.
That's why I'm going home.
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"BUY ME A DRINK"

she says then slams her purse on the bar.

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"Okay" I say and buy her a drink.
The bartender is a mouse
              with a tail of hair
              dangling in his eyes.
He's 24 or 25 and will be embarrassed
by all of this when he sobers up
and goes back to law school.
The woman says "Look in here"
and peers into her purse
              which is empty as her womb.
"Did someone rob you?" I say.
"I forgot to put anything in here" she says.
Some days my life is like that:
              I stay up all night reading
              then walk out without my brain.
"Buy me another drink?" the woman says
clicking the clasp on her purse
              a little less arrogant
              a little more hopeful.
The mouse scurries over
and takes a couple ones from my pile.
I hope he remembers me
              when we finally go to court.
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POLITICS AND THE AMERICAN LANGUAGE

I'm not against guns. I'm against being shot.

THE STANDARD REJECTION LETTER

I send a query letter and some short stories and the New York publisher says "Sure!" so I send along my novel.

My novel is 275 pages long.

I feel like should say something more than that in my cover letter.

Remember me? Here's my book:

I'm the next Charles Dickens:

I'm great, I've been rejected

300 times by The New Yorker!

Writing queries and correspondences makes me feel like a used car salesman and I write maybe exclusively

not to feel like a used car salesman

so I don't say anything and lick the envelope shut. I thought: done! though I don't know what done means except that I immediately start writing another book. I'm old enough to understand this all ends not with fame or money or even a job teaching college but with me writing another book and another book after that. A year later my novel comes back dog-eared and missing pages. No one where I live writes books and no one read books when I was growing up and when I am around other writers they generally treat me like a trained gorilla. The standard rejection letter always starts: we regret to inform you... I regret to inform myself something similar every day then upon sitting down to write I open up and rejoice.

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