Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Phil Taggart: Four Poems

Phil Taggart · Thursday, June 9th, 2016

Phil Taggart has three collections of poetry. His latest is *Rick Sings* (Brandenburg Press). His other two are *Opium Wars* (Mille Grazie Press) and an art book in collaboration with Texas artist Ann Harithas, *Cowboy Collages*. He served for nine years as the Poetry Editor of *Art Life*, and is currently editor and publisher of *Askew* with Marsha de la O and Friday Gretchen. Phil runs the weekly poetry reading at the EP Foster Library in Ventura.

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Birthday

He's outside his hotel
pacing muttering
waiting for dinner
waiting for me
Rick's 50 today
his party is gathering
at a restaurant downtown
pacing is never a good sign
I check in with Rick first
it's always dicey taking him public
his hair is sticking straight out
clothes disheveled and dirty
he's ranting
we go to his room drop off presents
Rick rants begs-off-dinner rants
I leave, walk down Main Street, call my sister, cry
and join the party

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Rick Phones

Says he hasn't eaten in a week
could I bring some peanut butter
and jelly sandwiches over
toward the end of the month

his food money is stretched to gone
I got some burgers
he opens the door
Jasmine is there
broken foot crutches
staring at the TV
once she was manager here
Rick takes me aside,
She’s homeless now
I drop off the burgers and leave
tomorrow I’ll be kicking her out

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Food and Cigarettes

I pass him
sitting at a
picnic table
in the park
go to my
PO Box
return and watch
Rick’s on the move
checking trash cans
eyes wary
looking again and again
over his shoulder
not entirely
comfortable here
this safe zone
could easily be disturbed
if the police
clear the park
Rick settles into
a bench swing
smokes swings
He called me
a few days ago
said he wanted a job
he was tired
of choosing between
food and cigarettes

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He’s with Me

At the bank Rick waits

sitting in a chair
while I’m in line
he’s hunched down
trying to be invisible
as the security guard approaches
he says to the guard,
The paintings are nice
Rick’s pretty grubbed out
I’d like him to bathe more, wash his clothes,
clean his room, not drink so much
I’d like to tell him about my problems,
talk politics, art, watch a game with him
I yell out to the guard,
He’s with me. He’s my brother.
[embedvideo id=”D7j2dU9SkYc” website=”youtube”]
[embedvideo id=”0JiXMCsgd78? website=”youtube”]
(Author photo by Alexis Rhone Fancher)

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