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Review: The Large Economy of the Beautiful by Phoebe MacAdams

Harry Northup · Wednesday, November 8th, 2017

Introduction to Phoebe MacAdams' *The Large Economy of the Beautiful, New and Selected Poems* (Cahuenga Press, 2017).

Words to describe Phoebe's book: compassion, grace, dignity, resplendent.

There is a simplicity & a richness in Phoebe's poetry.

Phoebe was brought up on the Upper East Side of NYC. She moved to Princeton, New Jersey, when she was in high school, where she met Lewis MacAdams. Lewis introduced her to the Lower East Side and the New York poets. They moved to Buffalo, where she met Robert Creeley, then to Bolinas, California. She has also lived in Boulder, Colorado, and Ojai, California. In 1986 she moved to Los Angeles. She has always been a member of a poetry community.

Is it possible for an urban poet to be a nature poet? After reading Phoebe MacAdams' *The Large Economy of the Beautiful, New and Selected Poems*, the answer is a resounding Yes! Phoebe is a poet of nature, a love poet, a spiritual poet who sees the intangible in the tangible.

Here is the entirety of "March 28, 2005":

> *the sound of wind / comes through my window / from my childhood, / blowing through / the spruce of Selkirk, New York, / the aspen of Colorado; / wind blowing down / the Eastern slope of the Rockies. / I have always loved trees and wind / the sharp edge of fall in New York City, / the quick movement in the eucalyptus of Bolinas, / the sound tonight that echoes through my life, / my 15 year old back against a pine tree. / feeling the air 40 years later.*

In "Cucumbers, Tomatoes, Air," Phoebe states her thesis, "after two and a half hours of fertilizing, / I am grateful for shadows / and life seen through language." In an earlier poem, "Essential Lesson," she wrote "at the heart of every / essential lesson: tubes feeding water to the roots of cucumber and squash. // absence of darkness." There are a lot of colons & prepositions & an "absence of darkness…" in this book. This is a light-filled journey, a fear of derangement, a chapel.

She has learned how to integrate loss. In "About My Children Leaving Home," she writes "All the roads lead home, and / all the roads leave home behind."

She writes about L.A. & love & angels. In “Cupid and Psyche,” she ends “Now my hair is all different. / What does this mean? / Oh, I don’t know. / Mountains and light! / Mountains and light!”

She ends this book with sixteen poems from *Touching Stone*. They are poems of valuable dreams, death, grief & love. This has been a joyous journey of shadows emerging with rock, not a funeral cortege but a procession of inner grace etched with cut edges precise & open, a door complete. A healed blessing.

You are in for a treat with this book. A journey from childhood memories, incandescent learning experiences, love, loss, travel, regenerate love, family, poetry, & always poetry, to wisdom. An educated woman dedicated to teaching, lives with her husband Ron, whom she loves, stands up straight in her home, states the poetry tradition she emerged from, upholds & extends in a consciousness that can only be called resplendent. *The Large Economy of the Beautiful* is a lifetime of superlative poems.

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