

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

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.

"BUY ME A DRINK"

she says then slams her purse on the bar.

"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.

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.
[alert type=alert-white]Please consider making a tax-deductible donation now so we can keep
publishing strong creative voices.[/alert]

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