

FOREWORD

To take in something new, to be given some things one's not before encountered. This is one way our lives galvanize, one way we keep salt salty. Encountering the assembled poets in *New Census* first of all attracts eye, ear, mind, heart, soul, whatever you call our life-fuel, whatever it is one wants to keep up and running.

Demographics aside, what all these poets have in common is will, is faithfulness to poetry's multiplicities, is some kind, manifest as many kinds, of tenacious tending to those powerful places a page of poetry sets before us. Before one word is read, before a line—if there are lines of the traditional kind—resolves itself toward another line, before syntax keeps it all together (and leans us one way or another) (and registers tones and moods and facts and figures), before almost anything has happened, poetry waits there, and we know it is there. It's almost as if a reader is a burning matchhead, about to touch a poem, resulting in lighting it on fire.

We encounter poetry differently. We are in need of different kinds of poetry. It enters our heads differently. It enters our heads and it stays there and it does something to us, sometimes with us, sometimes for us.

Poems gathered here have this in common: they are interesting, that is they are the opposite of boring, they collectively behave as though it is their duty to attract our attention, and then do something with it, something valuable, something useful, something necessary for a spirit's survival.

We're meeting these poets just as they've begun to go on their ways, they've all published at least two, no more than 3 or 4 collections. It's a crucial time in an artist's story. She's arrived on the scene, someone has noticed, now she's at a crossroads. Where will she go? The original spirit one brings to one's earliest work needs to be acknowledged, possibly found again, possibly over and over again, if one is to continue. These poets have crossed over from private to public, they've sacrificed their privacy, they no longer keep their delicious secrets to themselves.

I don't think anyone (not anyone with an ounce of sense anyway) presumes to feel what Rimbaud felt when he abandoned poetry for adventure. We glorify him though. We treat him as if, what—as if what he's done is heroic. I wonder why. It feels right that we do.

It's true that sometimes what we think we already know keeps us from seeing something fabulous and wonderful. What we know can obscure what we've never encountered before. The editors of *The New Census* have taken care to present to us what's new. It is coming over the horizon, toward us, to give us something, to alert us.

More people are writing and reading poetry on this planet than have ever before. We might as well call it Planet Poetry for all the bristling waves of poetry we sense circulating around the world.

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