



All the Wasted Beauty of the World

Richard Newman

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Newman sifts through the complexity of place and humanity to find both the ugliness and the beauty in our world.

Richard Newman's latest collection of poetry, *All the Wasted Beauty of the World*, strips away the rose-colored lenses without apology. Beginning with winter and ending with spring, Newman meticulously teases out the way the natural world and the human world are equally saturated with ugliness and beauty.

Newman writes in "Digging Up the Elephant Ears," "My neighbor stumbles drunk down the alley. / Beneath his dirt and puke I sometimes see / the good. Sometimes it's easier to pretend." This type of honesty pervades Newman's poems. He calls an urban mulberry a "junk tree" and a "mutt plant," labels the possum "primordially stupid," and seethes about Asian carp. He treats humans much the same way, capturing the reality of an old lady at the beach, of the ugliest woman at the bar, of the homeless in the park, of his drunken neighbor. The result is a collection that is muddy brown: all colors and all things come together to make light, to make earth.

Poems that unravel the complexity of place are particularly striking, most notably "Bricks," "Stopping for Lunch Near Goshen, Indiana," and the award-winning "Bellefontaine Cemetery." From the way "September rain in streetlight / silvers the cypress needles" to the Amish couple eating enchiritos in the Taco Bell parking lot, there is much to see in Newman's poems, and much to evoke the ache with which the poet crafts many of his lines. Nowhere is this more evident than in "Great Blue Heron of Southern Indiana," where the heron remains unfazed by "suspicious hawks that pinwheel into semis."

The world depicted within the pages of Newman's collection is not an easy one to grapple with as it requires openness to what many would rather not see. But the poet reminds us in anything but muddy terms that "we must love the world, / the gentle and the violent, / the kindling and the new bud. / For all is not in vain / and we must love the world."

MARGARET FEDDER (Winter 2015)

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