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God Lives in Norway and Goes by Christie

by Arnie Yasinski

published by 21st Century Renaissance

Why a second collection? Arnie Yasinski knows he has come to the game late but his drive to explore himself in poetic form and language has the muscular energy of a man forever in his prime. So, why not?

Who is it for? You might think it is just for older white males — (Arnie is indeed one of these) but the writing will catch you, gift you with a Zen stillness-in-observation and gentle lifts — no matter who you are. All that's needed is to give yourself permission to read each poem slowly, read it again, let it will reveal its nuanced taste, like slow food. There are some sweet hits (see Postcards from the Pandemic) — but don't expect them throughout. This is serious stuff.

The collection opens with Arnie anchored in his present life in Ireland, swimming at the Forty Foot in “Changing”

Irish swimmers bring their togs in a bag,
wrap a towel around, wriggle out of
underwear and into the suit. I'm not
limber enough for it, needing to beg
modesty and face the wall.

and later, in this light-touch sonnet, he turns our attention to the changes in himself as he ages physically, yet, still gives us hope:

Catch a glimpse of thigh or thong, though, and I
rumble with energy of what used to be.

As the mood shifts from Ireland to the U.S. Arnie reflects on his peripatetic past including being one of the young men in the 1969 U.S. draft lottery (yes, a human lottery) for Vietnam, living with his wife and child in married-student housing in Indiana

a boy bent over a fading radio,
hoping the static doesn't mean
my birthday's been called, but I don't
know it yet.

In the title poem, which comes at the end of the collection, Arnie muses on a painting of a man he imagines as God, a god getting tired nearing the end of his life

He knows he's endured
all the pain and betrayal
and experienced all
the beauty of existence
but no longer thinks
he could begin again,
bring fire the next time.

Yeats once said, “We make out of the quarrel with others, rhetoric, but of the quarrel with ourselves, poetry.” After reading what remains with you is this: Arnie's gentle quarrel with himself, his disarming

honesty in recalling moments of fear, joy, loss and love, doubt and embarrassment. The human condition writ large.

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C. is the inspiration for the cover design by Nick Geoghegan

MORE INFO: Arnie reads from his new collection <https://www.21cr.ie/>

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21st Century Renaissance is an independent publisher founded in 2012. It focuses on history, illustration and poetry placing the highest value on the imagination and skills of the writers, illustrators and designers — all based in Ireland — who create its books and art works. All production details: editing, design, print, binding are completed in Ireland (excepting *The Visual Time Traveller* production which required the expertise of a fine art printer in the Netherlands). Exhibition prints from *The Visual Time Traveller* are made using archival pigment inks on Copperhouse Cotton Rag. <https://www.21cr.ie/>

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