

MORTON MARCUS (1936–2009)

Born in New York City

POETRY

Origins (Kayak, 1969; 3rd ed., 1974)

Where the Oceans Cover Us (Capra, 1972)

The Santa Cruz Mountain Poems (Capra, 1972; 2nd ed., Capitola Book Company, 1992)

The Armies Encamped in the Fields Beyond the Unfinished Avenues: Prose Poems (Jazz Press, 1977; 2nd ed., Brown Bear Reprints, 1988)

Big Winds, Glass Mornings, Shadows Cast by Stars: Poems 1972–1980 (Jazz Press, 1981; 2nd ed., Brown Bear Reprints, 1988)

Pages from a Scrapbook of Immigrants: A Journey In Poems (Coffee House Press, 1988)

When People Could Fly (Hanging Loose Press, 1997)

Moments Without Names: New & Selected Prose Poems (White Pine Press, 2002)

Shouting Down The Silence: Verse Poems 1988–2001 (Creative Arts, 2002)

Pursuing the Dream Bone (Quale Press, 2007)

The Dark Figure in the Doorway (White Pine Press, 2010)

MEMOIR

Striking Through the Masks (Capitola Book Company, 2008)

TRANSLATIONS

The Star-Wizard's Legacy: Six Poetic Sequences (White Pine Press, 2010)

NOVEL

The Brezhnev Memo (Dell, 1980)

EDITOR

In A Dybbuk's Raincoat: The Collected Poems of Bert Meyers (University of New Mexico Press, 2007)

THEATER AND OPERA

The Eight Ecstasies of Yaeko Iwasaki: A Legend in Poetry, Dance, and Music, performed on the West Coast in Autumn 1984 and Winter 1985.

The Peace of Wild Things. Choral composition. Music by Imant Raminsh. Three of the nine featured poems by Morton Marcus. Performed in Carmel, 2006, and at Carnegie Hall, New York, 2007.

The Eternal Forest. Opera. Music by Imant Raminsh, libretto by Morton Marcus, 2008.

POEMS IN PERIODICALS

Marcus published more than 500 poems in literary journals across the country, including *Poetry* (Chicago), *TriQuarterly*, *The Nation*, *Ploughshares*, *Chelsea*, *The Prose Poem: An International Journal*, *The Chicago Review*, *Kayak*, *Choice*, *The Iowa Review*, *Zyzzyva*, *Ironwood*, *The Exquisite Corpse*, *Poetry Northwest*, *The Quarterly Review of Literature*, *Fiction*, *The World* (St. Marks Poetry Project), *The Denver Quarterly*, and *Hanging Loose*. His work was selected to appear in prize poem annuals four times (*The Borestone Mountain Awards* of 1967 and 1975, and the 1985 and 1987 *Anthology of Magazine Verse*). Marcus was also published in *Red Wheelbarrow*, v. 10 (2009), *Poetry East*, fall 2009, Number 66 "Seasons," *Hanging Loose* 96 (2010) and *Poetry East*, Numbers 67–68, Spring 2010.

POEMS IN ANTHOLOGIES

Marcus's poems appeared in more than 90 anthologies, from Paul Carroll's *Young American Poets* (Follet, 1967) through *A Geography of Poets* (Bantam, 1979) to *A Curious Architecture: New British & American Prose Poems* (Stride, England, 1996), *The Party Train* (New Rivers, 1996), the most comprehensive collection of prose poems in the history of North American letters, *American Poets Say Goodbye to the 20th Century* (Four Walls Eight Windows, 1996), *New to North America: Writing by Immigrants and Their Children* (Burning Bush, 1998), *The Geography of Home: California's Poetry of Place* (Heyday Books, 1999), which contains five of his poems, *The Best of the Prose Poem* (White Pine Press, 2000), *Truth & Lies* (Henry Holt, 2001), *The Body Eclectic* (Henry Holt, 2002) and *No Boundaries: Prose Poems by 24 American Poets* (Tupelo Press, 2003), which contains ten of his prose poems. In 1975, *Dryad* magazine

devoted its thirteenth issue to his work, and one of his poems was chosen to appear in *TQ20*, an anthology of the best writing to appear in the *TriQuarterly Review* for the past twenty years (1985). Several of his innovative prose pieces were broadcast on National Public Radio's *The Sound of Writing*. In 2010, Morton's poems were included in Dennis Maloney's, *Finding the Way Home*, and *The Place that Inhabits Us: Poems of the San Francisco Bay Watershed*, foreword by Robert Hass.

READINGS AND LECTURES

Marcus read his poems at universities throughout the nation, including Columbia University, University of Notre Dame, University of Iowa, Ohio State University, University of Oregon, University of Washington, Lewis and Clark College, University of Wisconsin (several campuses) Gustavus Adolphus College, State University of New York (several campuses), Providence College, University of Arkansas, and the Berkeley, Santa Barbara, Irvine and Santa Cruz campuses of the University of California. In 1989 he was invited to do a reading tour of Australia, and has given workshops in poetry, the prose poem and the short stories of Raymond Carver in numerous high schools, community colleges and universities.

IMPORTANT ARTICLES ABOUT

"Vasko Popa & Morton Marcus," by Aleksandar Nejgebauer, *Filoloskog pregleda*, I-IV, 1969, pp. 109-123 (Belgrade). An examination of the influences of Vasko Popa on *Origins*.

"Morton Marcus, Origins," by Vern Rutsala, *Minnesota Review*, Winter 1970, pp. 262-265. Review of *Origins*.

"3 Kayak Poets," by Gail Barnett, *Dryad*, #10, 1970, pp. 62-66. Review of *Origins*.

"The Santa Cruz Mountain Poems," by James D. Houston, *Rolling Stone*, Issue #126, January 18, 1973. Review of *Santa Cruz Mountain Poems*.

"The Mystic Twang," by Andrei Codrescu, *SHOCKS 3 & 4*, March, 1974, pp. 71-84 (San Francisco). Comprehensive look at *Origins*, *Where The Oceans Cover Us*, *The Santa Cruz Mountain Poems*, and the manuscript *Celestial Acrobats*, *Terrestrial Clowns* (later renamed *Big Winds*, *Glass Mornings*, *Shadows Cast By Stars*).

"The Poetry of Morton Marcus," by Michael Hefernan, *Dryad* #13 (The Morton Marcus Issue), 1975, unpagged. Washington, DC, A detailed examination of Morton's first three books.

"Morton Marcus's *Big Winds*, *Glass Mornings*, *Shadows Cast by Stars: Poems 1972-1980*," by Robert Peters in *The Great American Poetry Bake-Off*, second series (Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1982), pp. 161-164. An insightful, positive review reprinted from *Kayak Magazine* in this collection of Peters's reviews.

"Morton Marcus and the Ethical Lyric," by Jerome Mazzaro, *The Cream City Review*, Vol. 12, Number 2, summer 1988, pp. 30-42. Review of the first five books in light of the social and moral impetuses which inform them.

"Morton Marcus's Family Portrait," by Tom Maderos, *The Sun*, November 17, 1988, p. 28. Strong review of *Pages from A Scrapbook of Immigrants*.

"When People Could Fly," by Peter Johnson, *The Prose Poem: An International Journal* #7, 1998, Book Reviews, pp. 109-114. An appreciation of Marcus's prose poems presented as a review.

"When People Could Fly: Believing in Every Possibility," by Elliot Roberts, *Caesura*, pp. 10-12, spring, 2000. Insightful review of book's main concerns.

"In Praise of the Prose Poem: An Interview with Morton Marcus," by Ray Gonzalez, *The Bloomsbury Review*, March-April 2001.

A major discussion of the author's ideas and literary practices. "An Interview with Morton Marcus," by Ken Weisner, *Red Wheelbarrow*, spring 2002. A long interview on such topics as Mort's writing procedures for *The Santa*

Cruz Mountain Poems, masculinity in poetry, getting past writer's block, and his comments on six poems from his new books, including "The Request," "My Encounter with the Eternal Mystery," "Monsters," and "Suffering."

"Imagination and The Shape-shifting Beast: An Interview with Morton Marcus" by Robert Sward, *Caesura* 25, 2004, pp. 48–56. Another long interview that focuses on the writing process, the place of the imagination, and the importance of "human-heartedness," empathy, compassion, poignancy, and naming things in writing and life.

"Morton Marcus." A biography in *Contemporary Authors*, Vol. 218 (Gale: Farmington Hills, Michigan, 2004), pp. 52–71. A long, very complete sketch biography focusing on the development of Marcus as a writer.

OTHER LITERARY ACTIVITIES

Morton was active in the *Poetry in the Schools* program on both coasts. He served as the director of the Monterey and Santa Cruz County programs from 1973–1975.

He was selected as a MacDowell Fellow and was in residence at the MacDowell Colony in New Hampshire in the winter of 1975. In 1980 he was elected to the American chapter of PEN International.

Since 1986, Marcus was on the permanent teaching staff of the Foothill Writers Conference in Los Altos Hills, CA.

Marcus gave many short poetry workshops across the U.S. and was poet-in-residence at the State University of New York at Buffalo (Jan. 1974), the State University of New York at Alfred (Feb. 1976), Mt. Hood Community College, Oregon (Nov. 1992), and the University of Arkansas (Oct. 1997). In the fall of 1998, he was Visiting Poet at Providence College, Rhode Island, a position he repeated in the fall of 2001 at Fullerton College in Los Angeles, and also served as a judge for many poetry contests, including the state poetry awards for Delaware and Oregon.

Marcus's memoir of the short story writer Raymond Carver appeared in *Remembering Ray* (Capra, 1993) and was reprinted in several journals. A similar memoir of the poet William Everson (Brother Antoninus) was reprinted in four different literary journals. Marcus served as the president of the King Fisher Flats Foundation, the non-profit organization committed to preserving and promulgating the work of William Everson.

In 1999, Marcus was elected the sixteenth *Santa Cruz County Artist of The Year* by the Santa Cruz County Arts Commission, only the third poet to be honored by the Commission, the other two being William Everson and Adrienne Rich. That same year he was named contributing editor to *The Prose Poem: An International Journal*.

In 2006, Marcus taught graduate-level writing courses for the *Prague Summer Program* in the Czech Republic.

Marcus was a longtime co-host of *The Poetry Show*, on KUSP Public Radio – the longest running poetry show in the U.S.

His biography is listed in *The International Who's Who In Poetry* (England) and *Contemporary Authors* (Vol. #105), Gail Pubs., Detroit, 1982.

OTHER PROFESSIONAL PURSUITS

A film historian and critic as well as a poet, Marcus taught film as well as English at Cabrillo College in Aptos (California) until his retirement in 1998. In 1989, he was invited to give a series of lectures at the Australian National Film School in Sydney, a project that was planned to coincide with his poetry tour of Australia that year. His sixteen-part TV history of film has been the prime visual source of film history at the school ever since, and has been shown on a number of cable TV channels in California. His film reviews, profiles of contemporary authors and book reviews appeared regularly in the *Metro* newspaper chain from 1985–1998. In 1999, he curated a festival of Ernst Lubitsch films at Santa Cruz's McPherson Museum of Art & History. In addition, he lectured several times on film at the Steinbeck Center in Salinas, California.

Marcus was the co-host of a bi-weekly TV film review program on the Comcast Broadband cable channel, and then Santa Cruz Community TV called *CinemaScene*, which was shown in San Francisco, San Jose, and Santa Cruz County.