

# **THE PROSE POEM: AN INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL**

Volume 8 | 1999

## **Commentaries: Spontaneous Breasts**

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## COMMENTAMES

**Nin Andrews**

### SPONTANEOUS BREASTS

All her life Rena had prayed to develop breasts. When she confided this to Barry Slick, the great Rishi, he informed her that she need only act as if she already had breasts. "It's all in your mind," he said. For seven days and seven nights Rena pondered. On the evening of the eighth night, a tremendous bosom flew out of her left side, soon to be followed by another on the right. A feeling of their presence filled the room, along with a soft white haze and the scent of rain. Rena could almost hear the breasts breathing. For many years after, Rena felt as if she were walking through a heavy fog with unexpected visitors.

### COMMENTARY

The idea for the poem and book, *Spontaneous Breasts*, first occurred to me when a friend, whom I shall call Rena, announced that she was planning to sprout breasts the natural way. At a meditation seminar she had heard of a healer who lived on the west side of Cleveland and who could hypnotize female clients, taking them back to their adolescence, thus stimulating dormant teenage hormones and inducing breasts to start growing again. After several months of visiting this healer, flat-chested women displayed major cleavage. The healer's name, if I recall correctly, was Dr. Slick. Rena confided to me how exotic her life with large breasts would be, complaining that she often felt as ordinary as a bowl of cornflakes. Privately, I imagined Dr. Slick as a tiny man in the midst of adulatory buxom women whose bosoms would never stop growing and whose hormones might never cease stirring. Although Rena was unable to locate Dr. Slick, she continued to relate his miraculous powers with breasts. And I started rewriting her life as if she were a victim of immense and instant breasts.

Because of poems like "Spontaneous Breasts," people often tell me I'm a surreal poet, suggesting that my poetry is not of this world. My inspiration, however, often comes directly from experience, and I believe it is sometimes in the surreal that we recognize ourselves. Why? Because people are quite surreal, especially when it comes to then-desires. Deep down many of us seem to believe that there is some kind

of magic, a secret recipe, lover, prayer, or, in the case of Rena, a big bosom or two, that could deliver us whatever we wish for, that could transform us from Cinderellas into queens, from humans into angels, from couch potatoes into Olympians, from frigid souls into athletes in bed. Of course, advertisers feed on our unconfessed beliefs and yearnings, selling us potions, gowns, diets, drugs, faiths and mantras of every flavor, species, and dimension. There are, after all, so many seductive myths, parables and fairy tales of both positive and negative transformations, how can we resist them?

Perhaps Simone Weil was correct when she said that one of the first things we know about ourselves is our imperfection. Perhaps the second thing we know about ourselves is how much we yearn for perfection. But what is perfection and where does it exist? In a museum, a snowflake, California, or in a poem or another realm? How close can we get to perfection before falling like Adam and Eve from Eden? How many of the rough edges of life need to be smoothed away before perfection and beauty occur, and how do we know when we've erased too much? Would we be happy if we were perfect, and is it possible to segregate perfection and imperfection? Do we actually have an unconfessed love for our imperfection, or our untransformed nature? Will Rena be transported with joy by her big breasts?

These are the kinds of questions which inform both the form and content of my poems. My vision or concept of prose poetry is of a genre which does not claim to be either this or that, fiction or poetry, but which is both and neither, attempting an impossible balancing act between the polarities of our human nature and our aesthetic aspirations. Because we are both the people of our dreams and the strangers and neighbors others meet on sunlit sidewalks, I think it's only natural to seek a literary genre that is, at once, mystical and ordinary. Just as many poems might be better off maintaining the verbal magic and mystery of poetry while retaining simple prose structures, Rena, herself, would probably have been happier if she had only dreamt of, yet never achieved, her ideal form. Part of the beauty of prose poetry is its plainspoken elegance and the very question its existence poses to our concepts of the ideal, our models or standards and structures.

"Spontaneous Breasts," from *Spontaneous Breasts*, Pearl Editions, 1998.