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Ghost Orchid

poetry by

Maurya Simon

In *Ghost Orchid*, Maurya Simon's stunning poems of longing, angels "curl their hair with corkscrews," Lucifer's "moustache [is] glazed with powdered sugar," in Hell, "the Devil doles out / ice cubes to-day to four hijacked come-latelies," and "If God had a wife, she'd be a doozy." Lyrical, melancholic, humorous, these fresh, ambitious poems take us literally into untravelled territory.

— Maxine Kumin

In her most recent collection, Maurya Simon is doing something new, and doing it wonderfully well, at the point where religion and poetry intersect. The great strength of her language has always been its lush sensuality. In this new collection, she deploys this language in contexts where it is not conventionally found. The home she starts from is Jewish and American. The God she speaks of and to is the God we know. But without being ill-mannered (there would be nothing new or challenging in that), she is other-mannered.

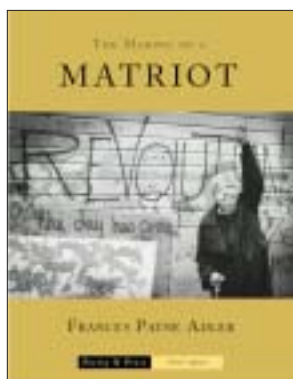
— Jack Miles

For what does the spirit yearn? To know God. Maurya Simon's wonderful new book, *Ghost Orchid*, throws fresh light on that traditional question and answer in poems full of the sensuous language of the "Song of Songs" and the graphic images of modern disaffection. She shows us good and evil, both conscious and unconscious, and, even as she doubts such a reality, asks for God's "touch upon our waking lives." The yearning to know God, the legacy of human generations, has its latest expression in these ravishing poems.

— Mark Jarman

Midway in her poetry's journey, Maurya Simon, one of our country's finest writers, now offers us her God book, brilliantly crafted but also Blakean in its powers of illumination and insight. *Ghost Orchid* is a "grace-haunted" translation of the "hieroglyphic heart," a visionary marriage of heaven and hell consummated somewhere near the cross-roads of the spiritual and erotic. We encounter not only God, "who loves us all to death," but also the "albino angel, a helium virgin, / who lifted off into space like a chrome rocket," and Beelzebub, "poet laureate of latrines" and "kingpin of sinners." A true master of metaphor, Simon here performs poetry's ultimate task: the alchemy of body and soul.

— B.H. Fairchild



Check out other Red Hen Press poetry collections such as Frances Payne Adler's *The Making of A Matriot* at www.redhen.org

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