
Advance Information

At the Foundling Hospital

Poems



Author:	Robert Pinsky
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Selling Points:

"Since the death of Robert Lowell in 1977, no single figure has dominated American poetry the way that Lowell, or before him Eliot, once did . . . But among the many writers who have come of age in our fin de siècle, none have succeeded more completely as poet, critic, and translator than Robert Pinsky." - James Longenbach, The Nation

Description:

The poems in Robert Pinsky's *At the Foundling Hospital* consider personality and culture as improvised from loss: a creative effort so pervasive it is invisible. An extreme example is the abandoned newborn. At the Foundling Hospital of eighteenth century London, in a benign and oddly bureaucratic process, each new infant was identified by a duly recorded token. A minimal, charged particle of meaning, the token might be a coin or brooch or thimble or sometimes a poem, such as the one quoted in full in Pinsky's poem "The Foundling Tokens." A foundling may inherit less of a past than an orphan, but with a wider set of meanings. The foundling soul needs to be adopted, and it needs to be adaptive. In one poem, French and German appear as originally Creole tongues, invented by the rough needs of conquered peoples and their Roman masters. In another, creators from scorned or excluded groups - among them Irving Berlin, Quintus Horatius Flaccus, and W.E.B. Du Bois - speak, as does the Greek tragic chorus, in the first person singular. In these poems, a sometimes desperate, perpetual reimagining of identity, on the scale of one life or of human history, is deeply related to music: The quest is lyrical, whether the subject is as specific as "the emanation of a dead star still alive" or as personal as the "pinhole iris of your mortal eye."

Author's Previous Books:

SELECTED POEMS ISBN 9780374533168 and GULF MUSIC ISBN 9780374167493