

Wilderness House Literary Review 7/2

Elegies for Michael Gizzi
by William Corbett
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Review by Zvi A. Sesling



Obit

Roethke in a swimming pool
Schwartz outside his hotel room
Jarrell walked in front of a car
Berryman from a bridge
Lowell in a cab
Bishop at home
O'Hara, Olson, Wieners,
Whalen, Creeley—hospital
Michael, you in your Providence bed

This poem is about Michael Gizzi who is dead. William Corbett's *Elegies for Michael Gizzi* makes me wish I had

known him because the poems in this volume are a touching tribute to the man Corbett says in one of the poems, "You want to make laugh."

In March Glare you understand the pain and of a friend's death:

*Michael: I'll believe
You're dead when you
Don't show up for
Trevor's birthday dinner.
It's March 26th this year
He'll be sixty-six
We'll argue as always
Over how many years
He's come to Boston
To celebrate. Thirty-five?
He missed the year
His father died.
Called on the phone,
"My dog is dead,"
Broke down and passed
The phone to Billy.
His dad. Trevor meant
His dad had died.*

As written in the inside dustcover flap, "You can get the facts of Michael Gizzi's life and more on the Internet. From these you may guess that

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he was one of those generous souls who served poets and poetry." More than that you may also surmise a gentle man who wanted to give poets an audience and, vice versa. Place and size didn't seem to matter. Poets and poetry did matter.

On the Internet is Michael Gizzi's obit. It reads in part:

Michael Gizzi 1949-2010 Poet Michael Gizzi died Monday in his home in Providence, R.I. He was born in 1949 in Schenectady, New York to Carolyn B. and Anthony J. Gizzi. He received his BA and MFA from Brown University. For seven years he worked as a tree surgeon in southeastern New England, before moving in the early 1980s to western Massachusetts. He taught for several years at Lenox High, and later returned to Providence to teach at Roger Williams College and Brown University. He was the author of more than 10 books of poetry, including "Bird As," "Aois," "Species of Intoxication," "Continental Harmony," "My Terza Rima" and "New Depths of Deadpan." He also worked as an editor with Hard Press, "Lingo" magazine, and Qua Books. He is survived by his daughter Pilar and grandson Hollis of Portland, Maine, his brothers Thomas and Peter, and his former wives Ippy Patterson and Barbieo Barros.

So many poets have died who are not remembered, but Corbett's tribute will serve to remind us that here was a man worth remembering not only for his poetry and the poets he helped, but for his own worth. We have Corbett and Kat Ran Press to thank for this tribute.