

Winter

By Marie Ponsot

I don't know what to say to you, neighbor,
as you shovel snow from your part of our street
neat in your Greek black. I've waited for
chance to find words; now, by chance, we meet.

We took our boys to the same kindergarten,
thirteen years ago when our husbands went.
Both boys hated school, dropped out feral, dropped in
to separate troubles. You shift snow fast, back bent,
but your boy killed himself, six days dead.

My boy washed your wall when the police were done.
He says, "We weren't friends?" and shakes his head,
"I told him it was great he had that gun,"
and shakes. I shake, close to you, close to you.
You have a path to clear, and so you do.

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Poet and translator Marie Ponsot was born in New York, and taught at New York University and Columbia University. Her first book, *True Minds*, was published in Lawrence Ferlinghetti's *City Lights* series in 1956. The book went unnoticed, and she did not publish another volume for decades, focusing instead on her career as a translator. Her three subsequent books of poetry won several awards, including the National Book Critics Circle Award. Her poems are both verbally complex and extremely formal, embracing such difficult forms as the sestina and the villanelle, as they engage with intelligence and drama the occurrences of everyday life.

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