

Night of the Republic: Poems



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NIGHT OF THE REPUBLIC: POEMS

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Houghton Mifflin. 1 Cloth(s), 2012. hard. Book Condition: New. (Finalist for the 2012 National Book Award for Poetry) This 12th collection by one of America's most inventive and accessible poets takes us on an unsettling night tour of America's public places a gas station restroom, a shoe store, a convention hall, and a race track among others and in stark Edward Hopperlike imagery reveals the surreal and dreamlike features of these familiar but empty night spaces. Yet Alan Shapiro finds in them not alienation but rather an odd, companionable solitude rising up from the emptiness. In other poems, Shapiro writes movingly of his 1950s and 60s childhood in Brookline, Massachusetts; these meditations, always inflected with his quick wit and humor, lead to recollections of such tragic and haunting events as the Cuban missile crisis and the assassination of JFK. "What makes Shapiro so important to American poetry right now is the success with which he's taken over the territory of fiction writers. While his poems maintain the compression and intensity of lyric, they also open to the twists and bursts of colloquial American speech, that mongrel medium with which we craft our lives together. His poems are both artful and unpretentious." *Boston Review* Shapiro, who holds an endowed chair at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, is concerned with phenomena and places. He finds the most generic location and douses for its most evocative associations. A gas station restroom at night, for example, has a stink and anonymity that seem to evoke the general unease of road tripping. An empty strip club during the day holds the presence of its lonely strippers and their lonelier clientele, inching their chairs too close to the stage and the women's nudity. 'Stone Church,' 'Hospital Examination Room,' 'Indoor Municipal Pool' all receive this schematic treatment. Old buildings are 'embarrassed'...

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