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Maxine Kumin in The New Yorker

BY PAUL MULDOON

Like the horses she raised on her farm in New Hampshire, Maxine Kumin was a thoroughbred. She belonged to the line in American poetry that may be traced back through Robert Frost to Mistress Bradstreet. Her poems—some thirty of which were first published in *The New Yorker*—have the virtue of being meticulously observed and of dealing plainly with the things of the world. Though often quiet, her poems are not without their quirky aspects, as in “At a Private Showing in 1982,” a piece that appeared in the magazine:

This loving attention to the details:
faces by Bosch and Bruegel,
the mélange of torture tools,
the carpentry of the stake,
the Catherine wheel,
the bars, spires, gibbets, pikes—
I confess my heart sank
when they brought out the second reel . . .

Maxine Kumin’s is a voice—humane, humorous—that will be sadly missed.