



SUGAR HOUSE REVIEW

VOLUME 1:  
FALL / WINTER

\$5

# SUGAR HOUSE REVIEW

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POETRY



# SUGAR HOUSE REVIEW

AN INDEPENDENT POETRY MAGAZINE

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# CAPRICCIO IN E MINOR FOR BLOWFLY AND STRINGS

*for John Ashbery*

Sometimes a wind is content to wrap itself in the flag  
where it was once inclined to raise  
the roof by, albeit discreetly, loosening a ridge tile  
here and there. This was before discretion became the better part  
of the fire-resistant velour of modern car upholstery. Not even the  
burning of a tire  
around a woman's neck may effect as much change

as a flaying Swift witnessed near the Bristol Corn Exchange.  
Now all vessels intending to proceed through the bridge must show a flag  
by day and at night a white light. It seems all youthful rebels tire  
of their youthful spirits, spirits we used to raise  
with the art-house title-sequence. Once Swift himself took the part  
of a lyric ode's ability to slate, a catch to tile,

against Vanbrugh's blockbuster of modern wit and style  
and exposed it to the elements. Sometimes maggots will fling their loose  
change

into the hat of a woman by the side of the road, a fiddler whose part  
is notated here and there by a little flag  
to remind her to try to raise  
the emotional stakes. Sometimes a wind betokens the fact we never tire

of describing Swift as a master of satire  
while leaving him for the most part unread. That Swift may have had a tile  
loose is a topic no one much cares to raise  
in this era of live and let loaf. Sometimes change for the sake of change  
might not be the worst flag  
under which to sail as when maggots, for their part,

are content to be in a crowd-scene from which they'll nonetheless depart  
about as gracefully as Swift would retire  
from a debate on the slave trade. It seems all youthful spirits flag  
where they were once so volatile.

Gone are the days when a wind would call for change  
in an art-house way, hoping to raise

the level of debate above the producer-paraphrase  
to which we've now succumbed. Sometimes a maggot doesn't want a  
speaking part  
like an animal "of largest size." Everything will change  
for Troy as for Tyre  
when it's doused in gasoline, like a woman dumped on a flame-retardant tile  
by two carjackers who would flag  
her down while pretending to change a tire.  
Sometimes it's not enough for a wind to play its part and meekly take its  
turn in the turnstile.  
Sometimes raising a flag isn't enough to raise a red flag.



## U.S.A. TODAY

When the tire shop confuses  
less with fewer, you're reminded  
that these days the *New York Times* uses "also"  
as a conjunction, and of the gift in your mailbox  
("to Lori from Jeff") without a return  
address, indicating a deeper  
problem: Freud would say Jeff really didn't want  
to give Lori anything, while the social psychologists note  
that a culture makes its own rules and people  
who abide by them are happier, even if the rules  
are terminal sloppiness and stupidity.  
You'd like to live in a kingdom of fact checkers  
whose phlebotomists never mislabel  
vials. Perhaps if people had less, said less, and did  
less, they'd be more exacting.  
You're looking at cabinet doors  
that don't meet, sitting on a couch with crooked seams.  
It's only a matter of time before  
a doctor injects you with methotrexate  
instead of methazolamide  
or your copilot remarks to the pilot  
that the runway seems awfully dark—

## SEPTEMBER 21: POEM FOR OMAHA

There's just enough mist  
for the lamp posts to masquerade  
as tent poles tonight;

instead of spilling  
down, they hold up  
canvases of light.

And 30th Street shines  
like a river under the moon  
washing past brown pawn shops gone to bed,

because this city smells  
beautiful, this city  
of wet leaves

sticking like frescos  
along the sidewalks, a masterpiece  
the length of my city

that I remember—with a start  
as I drive home, window down—  
I love.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF TRANSCENDENCE

When the colored lights come out,  
they fall as many as snowflakes  
on downtowns and neighborhoods,  
all somehow for that Jesus guy;  
    because the stories about salvation,  
    they're the best ones.

That baby in the manger is so everywhere,  
dozens on all the store shelves, lit  
on windowsills, lawns, and rooftops,  
every December  
    you look up  
    and see him, look

and see so much of him  
he seems common as the moon,  
so familiar you lose him  
in all that bright landscape.  
    Hold on to hope and wonder, hold  
    on to miracles and mercy,

our lives all have it, if we look, a moment  
after millennia of legends, myths, debate, and experimentation,  
that moment bursting through  
once in the history of yourkind,  
    that rocket journey, that remarkable step so ponderously planned out and  
    still unexpected

when it arrives: atmosphere falling  
like rain, hours and hours trembling  
through engine after engine's drop,  
your breath realized as a miracle  
    landing you on the surface of a spotlight,  
    amazed

at the scope, the expanse coalesced too briefly in the bare bulb  
floating in your kitchen, splashing these ordinary cabinets  
with something suddenly more, you rocking  
in the uneven chair, palms flat on the bare table, you  
    staring back at the earth  
    so incredible there above you.

## OVER YOU LIKE WATER

You never understand at the time,  
that when she leaves you, when he leaves you,  
your heart breaks  
into song.

No, it never feels like it, as if your cheeks  
will never dress in red again, but this  
is your heart breaking  
into blossom

as the seasons turn round,  
as you realize you mistook February for May,  
west for east as the sky skimmed past pastels  
where your heart was breaking  
into flight,

as you sat in a squeaking office chair, dripping formula  
into rhyme, planting poems in undersized pots  
until the night it all fell like rain  
and your heart broke  
into dance, broke free, broke open, yeah,

broke open,  
broke bread with this future you look down from like a mountain  
across those breaks so far below,  
the ones that broke you  
in

as you broke  
out into this wife,  
this baby breaking  
like water across your shore.

## HERO

1.

He is dreadful.  
He is alive.  
He is walking in the sun.  
The sun is in the small box he carries in his hand.  
How tall a hero looks.  
His legs go.  
Up & down.  
They name him for an animal.  
His name is Otter.  
People tell stories about his silly death.  
Otter Otter.

2.

At midnight.  
Otter Otter standing in the lamplight.  
Eating flies.  
Many flies drop dead before his open mouth & eyes.  
The more he eats flies.  
The more the night is growing dark.  
Goodbye.  
Don't cry.  
Be a hero.  
Be a man.

3.

Stop at three.  
Be Otter Otter in the dark cage of animal delights in which he bathes.  
A lamp in Otter Otter.  
A walk with Otter Otter in the clearing after light.  
It falls.  
A lamp is in the way the way.  
He walks around it  
& steps back.  
A night in Otter Otter.  
Half a moon.

A star inside a moon in Otter Otter.  
He makes a cosmical projection.  
What arms.  
What furry balls.  
What messengers.

4.

I can be a man & a hero.  
Very wise  
to be standing here & now  
here & now.  
I am slow to learn  
eager to repent  
fast to add up numbers.  
I was waiting the return  
of certain acquaintances.  
My career is clearly before me.  
When can we start?

5.

At the end of a line  
he draws a line.  
Then draws another down from it  
& down  
& down  
& down  
& down.  
Stands on the borders of a second world.  
He sees  
a second hero at his window.  
A second pair of shoes.  
Tracks in the dust  
behind the door.  
The hero is no longer held by time.  
He takes a flashlight.  
He is building worlds.

6.

A stone.

tap.

A lullaby.

tap tap.

A shadow in his hand.

tap.

A discharge.

tap.

The third door from the left.

tap tap.

A pressure at his heart.

tap.

The ease of being beneath himself.

tap tap.

Half a bar of soap.

tap.

He is awake in the space between two rooms.

tap.

The light against his eyes.

tap.

Against his eyes.

tap.

His eyes.

tap tap.

(I think this is the song he sings  
in making it.)





## THE IMPOVERISHED PAINTER REGRETS

A touch of red  
in cold white toilet  
twists like a worm  
in the swirling water—  
it can vouch you never  
    get what you want—  
finally settling  
                    at bowl's  
                    bottom,  
red like the heads  
of push pins seen  
mapping lines, connecting  
scenes of a crime.

Filament flesh,  
our insides  
are drowning  
beneath fluorescent light.  
We wrap our pain  
in plain brown bags,  
blanch at clerks and presidents  
clutching chest and abdomens.

My God, scarlet's a sign!  
of what was lost too soon  
when we were too new,  
before we knew each  
other. Heaven cracked,  
the oceans gagged, coughed  
contents, people, forward.  
It is cold,  
                    the silence thought  
takes as it drips, slowly,  
down the legs of July.

## SINFLOWER

*(Another Confession in Coeur D'Alene, Idaho)  
In the voice of Joseph Duncan*

Truth be told I'd rather spit this razor blade  
from under my tongue & tell you what it's like

to finger black flames from inside a wave  
& have an aqualine piano tap-out a gelid rush

turned wrong side up. You ever seen your shadow  
burn a gasoline rainbow? Feels fluid

like the Devil hisself arched his back over you & dropped  
a velvet night of violence right in your lap, all nice & tidy.

You think I woke up this way in ink-volt wattage  
then licked my fingers like a cherry-covered child,

her kerosene curls in chemical sheen in one hand,  
the other a sliver-gleam of silver & a smile? It don't work that way.

Pa says a mud puddle has a head on it to a man counting cactus  
and any scrag of rock is Texas to a fool in a rowboat.

Truth is I've got a hole in my chest like a pierced ear  
only it don't grow back; swallows everything with an eye on the convex horizon.

I stalked her thru a prairie full of parking meters,  
Aurora Borealis gutted a glitter-line on her forehead;

melted her rusted autumn tassels like wax over an open wound,  
a tight coil wound my spine in the rain.

That night I stepped on the sky's gigawatt coat tails.

Maybe I should start again: when I was born  
momma said the witch doctor had an afterbirth premonition.

Said she saw the man-child coming sun-up  
like a yellow langolier riding a torch-touched chateau,

every finger a fishhook & Montana winter trapped in his held breath.

J.R. PEARSON

CARTE-DE-VISITE #6: DIG

the bones show  
achilles tendons cut clear  
to marrow. this was before  
quick death. heavy furniture  
dragged across soft floors.  
do not try to blame the backhoe  
that caused all the trouble to begin with.  
some sounds cannot be imagined.  
such as repentance. when this becomes too much,  
there is silence. men sing  
*Nearer my God to Thee* to drown  
    out the digging.  
the others, unable to walk  
    pull themselves slowly  
    upward.

CARTE-DE-VISITE #25:  
OUTSIDE QUINCY, CALIFORNIA

*for Scott*

though not first death

not even the first by water

open mouth of a river

salivating

a current's slow swallowing

with unhinged jaws

the peristalsis

you are the first that is only body

found displayed for science

in a shallow stream

face down

palms flat against water

surface tension

keeping you afloat

a clean cut

to the back of the head

a last sound

carried off like snowmelt

MICHAEL McLANE

the stone beginning    the autopsy  
you are specimen  
    splayed on styrofoam froth  
identifying marks recorded  
name now silt  
scene of no ritual  
paramedics hoisting  
    veins in their arms like tributaries  
    of a river's dirty work  
    wilder taxidermy    water and blood  
    both fighting to be where they should not  
you are flashflood and cutbank at once  
all the weightless parts of you  
watershed

## LANDLADY #7

2B is on vacation.  
She'll bring in his mail,

commandeer his parking spot  
for one of her lovers—

or more than one, she has two weeks—  
plenty of time.

She likes young men, and they like her.  
She can drink them under the table,

screw them dead and screw them again,  
usher them out, the light of moths

flying about the porch light, shadows  
of her skin a memory to haunt them

in the brilliant hours of oncoming day.  
She sweeps the porch and thinks about tonight.

Purple stars ring delicately at her throat.  
Melody, like light, through her veins.

## BILL BITNER MEETS SUBWAY'S JARED

I shouldn't have punched him,  
but those jeans weren't scuffed  
around the heel or thin  
in the thigh where fat should rub them.  
Nobody took the time  
to check that one fat  
Jared picture probably photoshopped  
by some commercial people.  
I had a poster of Jared  
on my bathroom wall above  
where I pee, and in 2001,  
when my prostate infection  
flared, I stared at the pants  
for long moments and swore  
to expose the truth between  
sharp pains and short bursts.  
It was an easy recall when,  
across the street in Indianapolis,  
the plump pants were being  
folded outside an auditorium,  
and I jaywalked, screaming  
"Jared" like a battle cry.  
My fist cracked the jaw  
of some comedian who 'personates  
Bill Clinton better than Jared.  
In a ceremony the next day  
I burned the poster  
and a meatball sub and wore  
my own size 44 pants  
around my head like a warrior.

## SIDE EFFECTS MAY INCLUDE

waking in the morning still drunk,  
problems with zippers,

dull visits from the better angel of your nature,  
self-attempts at a heart tattoo,

occupation by an army of mercenaries,  
a neighbor who keeps goats,

fear of drowning in the bathtub,  
curiously fat fingers, and, in severe cases,

a soul like a broken shoelace.



## PEASANT WARS OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

A cottage in the woods.  
A woman weeping at the table.

A wolf with eyes like red slits  
spying through the window.

A wood-cutter passing,  
an ax on his shoulder

and his thoughts faraway.  
Another night on earth

preparing to fall.

## QUEEN VICTORIA WAS NOT A LOOKER

If you saw that face today—  
round as a cabbage, hooded eyes,  
big nose, no chin beneath a mouth  
grim and louring—you'd expect  
to find it attached to someone

at the Motor Vehicles Department  
or working behind the counter  
of Burger King. What a gas

that dukes and earls once gazed up  
timorously at such a mug—clearly,  
a scepter, crown and veil confer  
mind-boggling authority. To be fair,  
she gave her name to everything

from literature to architecture  
to morality. She inspired  
some truly hilarious statues,

from Glasgow to Melbourne  
to Nairobi. She had a diamond  
jubilee. Still, slapping that puss  
on currency was a grave disservice  
to the Empire. Think of the poor

guttersnipe in Bethnal Green turning  
over a ha'penny in his grimy palm.  
Wasn't life hard enough for him

already? And what about the Indian  
sepoy coming home on payday?  
Those ten and twenty rupee notes  
must have been a great affront  
to his aesthetic sense. No wonder

practically the whole army took up arms  
against its homely monarch, crying out  
in righteous anger, *Revolution! Mutiny!*

DAVID STARKEY

## THAT OTHER THING

There are stories told of finding frogs in stones  
occupying their own perfect negative space  
nestled in as if they had grown there  
emeralds bathed in mud  
as if one stray cell had driven itself hysterical  
and erupted  
knitting together the most bizarre thing  
it could think of.

This is what I'm thinking  
afterward  
with your ruffed head on my chest  
smoking old cigarettes which pinch  
the soft flesh of the throat.

Underneath your toasted hair  
that big vigorous bloom  
beneath the china plate of your skull  
is everything you've ever known  
or been or seen or done  
twisted into the folds of your brain  
waiting to be discovered  
by a thick-fingered miner  
dribbled and dappled  
with the film of light  
that covers your body  
running in rivulets  
down the hollow of your hips.

Suddenly I am certain of two things:  
The existence of secret frogs  
and  
that other thing  
I'm about to say.

## LOOSE CHANGE

At night we raid the wishing well  
with rough ropes tied around our waists  
and we slip beneath the surface  
threading the shaft  
black clad like gobs of ink bled  
into the earth  
inching underground  
until we hit bottom  
where our old shoes sink into the muck,  
disturbing a sediment of pocket change  
which shifts beneath our feet.

Each coin just one more  
tossed-off dream:  
a desperate wish for happiness,  
contentment in existence  
or an answer to inexorable longing.

But we scoop the silvered stuff,  
sieving filthy water through  
our freezing hands.  
Tenderfoot archaeologists  
cramming our pockets with grimed loot  
which sags the fabric and holds us back  
as we climb out into the night,  
burdened with wishweight.

Afterward, we wrap it  
and concern the bank with our  
muddy cylinders  
which we trade for crisp bills  
to pass out to those forgotten,  
those huddled into city corners  
as if they had welled up from  
cracks in the concrete  
and settled there like blackened oil  
daubed with dull rainbows  
too tired to shine.

And we hope that the wishes  
we've granted  
are some substitute for those  
we have denied.

## NOTRE DAME DE PARIS

A cluster of us, round-faced Americans  
gathered like mussels on the cobbles,  
cameras held up, black Cyclops eyes  
cropping the Parisian sky from the towers,  
the black ash of age in each crevice,  
limning each eroded saint. We were  
pointing, babbling, our tourist euphoria  
oblivious to other voices, other eyes  
on us, when like a red ribbon in her long skirt  
the woman wound through us, balancing  
a small child on the jut of her hip,  
her body canted to carry its weight.  
For the baby, she said, in English,  
her accent like perfume, a rough mélange.  
For the baby, to me. No smile, no pleading.  
The child's eyes were dark; its face  
quickly forgotten. Gold coins left the shadow  
of weight on my palm. Then she moved on,  
gaunt arms and leaning spine, accepting  
other gifts with a quiet nod, unsurprised  
by the goodness that rose from us  
as oddly as flowers from the stones.

## GHOST PROVINCE

We are driving through Quang Tinh,  
a province that doesn't exist.  
Punished, after the fall of Saigon,  
for allowing the U.S. to build and grow  
Chu Lai into a military city.  
As if that matters to rice and manioc,  
to the shiny palette of greens, to those  
who have always lived  
here, whatever it was called,  
to whoever moved through, like us,  
on their way to somewhere else.

## BUT IN CHINESE YELLOW IS EROTIC

*Huang*

With a first tone  
Means wasteland

*Huang*

On second  
Empress dowagers  
Tenterhooks clicking  
Like *huang dou*  
Like (soybean)

*Huang*

On second, also  
Pornographic  
And yellow  
Like wasp at dusk  
Looking for *huang gua*  
For (cucumber)

*Huang*

Given third degree  
Forces falsehood  
A façade of *huang hua*  
Of (lies)

*Huang*

Number four  
The least tender tone  
Is a small boat rocking  
On a river

*Huang dong*

(Shake and sway)  
(Shake and sway)



## AND MYRRH

Her cure  
For an immaculate hymen  
Was blessed smoke  
Then purple girth  
They say she birthed  
Hymn  
Inn horizon  
Toward sentimental stars  
A donkey's myth

They say time  
Stood on the rim, the sky  
A curry of barn  
Swallows  
Mirth and rhyme  
In earnest  
While she courted  
Frankincense

They say she learned  
How to swaddle

## GOLDEN BENDED KNEE

This field knows his favorite radio program  
and each tired midnight furrow on his face;  
knows how many times he checks the sky for cumulus.

Shares his lunch of fresh juice and a sandwich.  
Hears every thought between this row and next  
and nudges him to rest when fifteen hours have passed without sleep.

Sleeps next to him, all summer dusk to dawn  
reviewing each dream of long horizon and dust devil.  
Tracks the days between each laugh.

This field wants to perform for this man.  
Be the kernel of joy that cracks his worry.  
Grow yellow and plump inside the great cast of his gaze.

And, when this man walks out onto the platform of his harvest,  
this field knows the exquisite weight of his bended knee.  
This field wants to weep a rainstorm just for this man.

## ONE POTATO, TWO

I have an eye inside me  
that has never been blinded. To life!  
For it is a potato; it grows  
in job orchards where eyes are there to grow  
another potato. Once  
my eyes went straight for  
the heart of you; I scooped you up  
and the surrounding city like a backhoe. Worked  
in an office where sky was always on  
the other side of me. Filed  
papers until my fingers bled. I forgot  
to harvest my sight before first frost. Where  
Eyes' hoodwink is my hoodwink. It goes, *I'm afraid  
we're going to pass on you.* Followed by weeping.  
When the mouth is Sahara,  
when the tubers are yanked, when the stray  
woman dashes around doors and no lovers  
and the rain fizzes up like garden  
cabaret sloe gin, perhaps the presentiment  
slurps us to an anyone. And this woman goes,  
*I can't even get a job I don't like.*  
I spent half my life  
before the end closed on me,  
right where I was born—  
in this rucked rough place  
where woman chasing jobs chasing  
me away by women chasing beauty  
for themselves  
chased me to the scrim in the earth  
where a real minority fall through.

## PLOTS

The first weekend in September, Mother  
gathers the garden's final harvest,  
pulls up the aureate tendrils of summer's success.  
Everything is puny and parched, willing  
to let go—spongy vines of cucumber,  
late blooms of blueberries, all slack,  
softened by the season. This  
is the plowing of her hope, loosening,

loosening—she knows it takes love  
to heaven the tender plots of earth,  
to make kingdoms bloom their brilliance.  
She gets prepared for the distancing sun,  
the degrees below zero, the bareness  
of branches and roots. A flock of blackbirds  
crowds a phone line, eyeing worms.  
The earth gives and gets,

all plans can brown and bend  
back to their beginnings. She prays  
between the morning trills of thrashers,  
mockingbirds and cardinals, hopes  
I am too much of a child to identify  
these names, to realize every living thing  
knows endings, how they grow  
in the mind like weeds.

## SUBTERRANEAN

It's raining and it's January.  
Not a metaphor but actually  
the first and coldest month  
of my year, complete  
with slippery walkways  
remnant of the moon's shadow.

Last night a ring around the moon  
appeared, a paraselene  
foretelling this cold air.  
My lungs are nothing—  
empty shells working in a foreign land  
above the earth.

I want to dive back in  
where I know the terrain,  
can tongue the grit out of my molars,  
fish worms from my nasal cavity, sleep  
beneath the mountains which sleep  
beneath the stars.

## THE ORACLES DO NOT LIE TO HIM

This time, the face of the Blessed Virgin  
staring up from a folded matchbook, four  
draws to a poker hand studding her cardboard  
gown, the fifth card hidden inside with all  
her fire, a two of clubs, and down her back  
an ad for business school, 1-800-  
A-NEW-YOU. He doesn't even smoke, a mistake

he sat at that table in the first place. Still,  
shimmering incidents track him in the park  
like the eyes in haunted houses: A bunting  
talks to him in code, *sweet-sweet, chew-chew,*  
*spit*. The bench's grime scrawls fluent  
Mandarin along the back of the sniveling man,  
his hand out even in sleep. By the time

he reaches the great lawn, he's grown comfortable  
at the center of meaning, the crux  
of the mandala. He wonders if giant  
monks drizzle sand on the city at night,  
if Navajo *brujos* spin history  
out of a hidden cave in Arizona. Who's  
responsible, he wants to know and thank,

for the lamb shawarma at Mamoun's  
in the Village? He wants to know who pulled  
the trigger on the train that very morning:  
whose hand, whose hand in the sky, whose hand  
above the hand? Someone in orbit could look down  
on one and all and see nothing, or trace  
the golden hemline of the buddha. All around him,

boys and girls play softball, football, then, farther away,  
lacrosse until the lawn runs out and forest  
begins. How do children, metaphors for humans  
they never become, steady themselves  
so easily on the limber blades of grass and walks  
slick with fallen leaves and wayward spray  
from fountains? How do bunting and jay

RICHARD ROBBINS

and squirrel, metaphors for motion and heart,  
put up with each question and still  
find their way? On a gray rock inside  
the green woods, the man in a tuxedo  
sings Italian to the secretive  
rodent, the feral cat, all the uncatalogued  
night species, the budding virus and bacterium,

each of them waiting for its colored  
grain of sand. No one chases him toward  
the tenor. Still, he's moving in that direction,  
a wrinkle on the great lawn, a pixel  
on the cornea of hovering, dispassionate  
earthmakers, a blip on cave radar. He  
thinks he knows this song the way he knew

a coat he once stepped into and drove  
a car inside to another country.  
He drank the local beer and listened  
to its one river. He sampled  
the national dish. When he returned, he never  
noticed how his talk had changed—all his friends  
swore to it—or how the animals

looked back at him when he whistled  
the familiar tune out his door, under  
his breath on the subway, past that holy  
ashtray, the newsstand of doubt, past pilgrims  
colliding with their grief, making his own  
invisible trail to the center, long past the time  
he hung that old skin back in his closet.

## FALL

Like the sloth I would be looking  
up toward the tree crowns, even though  
I hung heavy from the longest branch,  
all my weight supported by claws

and the stupid faith of these arms  
moving me relentlessly toward  
the outer reaches, the sweet new leaf  
close to the place where I decide

when effort and desire will part.  
The truth is, I don't want a thing  
from this world. I look into sky  
to flush out the cluttered detail

right in front of me. These ants,  
for instance: They march onto my tongue  
as if sinners could go somewhere  
wet and dark with their grief, as if

I could release them easy  
as a syllable. Who am I  
to be a palace of expectation?  
I'd rather fall to the new life.



## NO ONE WILL BE LONELY WITHOUT ME

*en route to see Kerouac's scroll of On The Road*

I am in

my *what the fuck are you looking at* mood.  
I walk to the dining car with fists in my pockets.  
I want to punch someone (in the face). I want to  
tell someone to go screw.

I am in the mood  
to suck back a bottle of beer and make the waitress  
cry (so I do).

The train car smells of piss and I,  
I am at the point of saying goodbye. Almost ready to tear up  
everyone's ticket home and buy a suitcase  
to carry the typewriter I don't have yet.

On the outside  
of it I'll write, as if in my own skin, *this is the life*  
*I never lived and the suitcase I packed*. I'll decorate it  
with stickers of all the states I'll see. I'll see.

There's something welcoming about wet tracks.  
Something nostalgic. There's something to be said  
for traction when there's no friction in life. I am almost  
ready to roll.

What are you looking at?

Turn your head  
to the window where broken down properties line  
the tracks.

Turn to the coffee houses that won't welcome  
new customers (their coffee is too strong for your mouth  
anyway).

Look at the tension wire where birds perch.  
Their eyes, perfectly round like blueberries, search.  
All they think about is eating.

The man across the aisle  
scissors his legs, sticks a dog track ticket under his hat,  
creases The Herald and holds it in front of his face.

At Billerica  
station there are large culvert pipes where one can escape  
their neighborhood and float downstream.  
(O, how I envy them!)

Their ability to let go and go.  
The ones leaning against the side of mom and pop shops  
with their feet flat on the wall don't understand.

The ones smoking  
cigarettes while sitting on a pile of tires are on their way.

The ones  
spray painting the names that got away, or lovers that didn't  
last, in the middle of the night are simply reporting.

I notice  
a rusted swing set with its legs sunk in the ground.  
The train wheels slip and grip, roll me up and out  
of the station. One more stop until Kerouac's birth  
and final resting place.

(O, to be running  
down these tracks,  
chasing the last car,  
reaching for a hand.)

## AT THE END OF YOU

*after Dan Beachy-Quick's "Unworn"*

When I learned I can move      this evening  
when I learned      I can move this evening  
away from the streetlamp      above the bench  
away from the street      lamp above the bench  
when I learned I can move      above this evening  
away from you      I closed my eyes      moon full

shined down on the storm surge      that leaped  
shined down      on the storm surge      that leaped  
over the seawall.      Covered      path submerged  
under the seawall      covered the path      submerged  
the bench's feet      lamppost base      up to the first step  
up to the park.      I closed my eyes.      I was at high tide.

What will I remember in one year's time?      The water?  
What will I remember?      In one year's time the water  
will subside.      I will embrace that moment      transparent  
the flow of mirroring stars      sipped into my mouth  
to subdue tears.      The flow of mirroring stars      sipped  
to subdue the stars.      The tears subdued      my mouth.

I entered into the water like an exposed nerve. I felt  
the kiss of your embrace      subdue. What will I remember?  
The kiss? Your embrace?      The park bench? Submerged  
feet of the park bench      where we leapt over the seawall?  
I was transparent. I was      at high tide. The moon was full.  
My eyes      transparent pull of the moon.      Surge of stars.

## HANDLING YOUR AUDIO MEDIA

Grasp lightly  
because vinyl scratches—  
crow's feet, heeled at the label,  
defy etched circles  
with thumps and crackle.  
Milliseconds disappear  
when the ridges dull,  
like the concert hall  
where an F sharp might slip  
past your ear,  
into the rafters,  
through the vents,  
diffused in the night.

Reels unravel  
black streams for miles.  
Two angled splices  
and you will never miss  
the crinkle of a chorus  
tangled in the carpet,  
a writhing pile of analog tape  
disassembling assimilated waves.  
It's almost weightless, snowflakes  
of iron or cobalt or chromium  
bound in plastic,  
magnetized,  
shadow physics,  
almost invisible.  
Touch it with a magnet (try it), and  
silence.

You can't touch music  
on a compact disc.  
The purest of plastics,  
shrined in aluminum,  
entombed in lacquer.  
But you never touch anything.  
What you feel are your electrons  
repulsing other electrons.  
You barely scratch the surface.

DUSTIN M. HOFFMAN

My friend boasts  
a month of music  
wrapped tightly inside his computer,  
no sleeves or leaflets or cases.  
It could play for weeks  
and never repeat, and all this  
without your hands.

## OUR LAST CHRISTMAS EVE

That night, at the crowded café you claimed  
I stared at another woman because  
braided red hair reminded me of *her*.  
When I sidestepped, your words went fugitive.  
Outside, the Prescott streets became wind-chilled  
to near vacancy. When I told you there  
was no middle ground for us to concede,  
you released my hand. So we strolled blocks north  
in silence, past bars full of revelers.  
In the thin light of one of their doorways  
a young woman—likely in her twenties,  
answered her mobile phone in a low voice,  
*don't you ever call this number again.*

## CLOSET IN THE MONTAÑAS

These cowboy bars are far from  
frontiers. What's inside me has  
goals: to buzz, blur, disbelieve.  
(Who's the best rodeo horse here?)

I wear tight jeans to brag about  
my personal doubting Thomas.  
Hock shops in Mormon world  
hide wedding rings, winged bongos,

and rhinestone cigarette lighters.  
We hold on to all the nothing  
that's ours to squander. Men  
circle me, a safe to crack open.

## WELCOME BUT LOCK THE DOOR BEHIND YOU

Mountains move only at night.  
They'll crush my house soon, but  
I'm not believed in this land

of faith. Utah's demons are  
lyrically anthropomorphic.  
Forget evil winds, death dreams

that come true if told by drums,  
or cold rivers that steal names.  
Moon spurs landscape to wander.

Human math can't judge the inch-  
ing. The ice age didn't sprint.  
I've rare carrier pigeons

ready to save my poems—  
or drop them inside cities  
where the darkness that rings them

is an honest enemy.  
Here, I'm lent basic lessons:  
*The Christ is blonde and Satan*

*isn't. The last days are nailed down.*  
Secret crucifixions, friends?  
I listen to wolves flee, friends.

Can we live without Tricksters?  
Forget saints. Feel a stone's weight.  
Multiply that until there are mountains.



## SHORT VERSION

It's supposed to get easier: post-earthquake, the wrong messiah, someone moving out who leaves only shadows behind. Then why

am I crossing bridges at midnight as if a twenty-year old again who wants to parachute off Miss Liberty? I was just in Utah a decade ago,

before decadence became a yawn. Dawn, then, was a shower of gold without hockshops waiting to be fed. For a bed, we had backseats.

Once, politics fell off me when my clothes did. There are more empty diary pages than days that will fill them with flotsam like

getting a paper cut while reading a used copy of Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* in an especially wet Pittsburgh spring, than nights

inside hotel mirrors until I found a lover my friends called "the anchor you need." But now, I'm adrift, again, the secret eighth continent.

## HEADING FOR THE POLE

*It took dominion every where.*  
Wallace Stevens, "Anecdote of the Jar"

The berm stretches for 300 yards east-west,  
rising behind our house,  
cutting off the lights of the city,  
a ninety-second hike in our back yard  
to a view that stretches to 9000 foot mountains  
in all directions.

Covered with the special grass mixture  
that the extension service recommends,  
the berm is pretty much the same, end to end,  
chalky white sea-bottom earth,  
waist-high grass,  
moles, voles, field mice.

Out of place, out of keeping,  
a creosote pole spreads its wires across the view  
from a conspicuous berm-top perch  
like Wallace Stevens' Tennessee jar.  
We try to frame it out of sledding pictures.  
But when we hike the berm,  
with the whole length to choose from,  
our direction is never random—  
like the hawk that summers there,  
we head for its ugliness, the pole.

## MATTHEW 13:33

I give you and you and you  
a loaf of bread, then, later,  
days later, ask a few  
to my kitchen. I have three  
rolling pins for five women.  
I knead the bread like I would  
massage my husband's wide back  
yet this mass is smooth and spotless.  
While waiting for the bread  
to rise, we reluctantly chitchat,  
lop off words before  
we can finish, gnawing at our nails,  
savage from the smell.

## CANYON INTERIOR

Tanager, redpoll opening up  
The walls fall down, the desk  
of control disintegrates  
and the outside is all around

What you feel you can place  
in a window— debris  
and birds fill a small space  
you take with you and someone  
Holds it on his shelf  
puts red and green in the window  
and looks through to other browns  
Fringe, trimming, twigs  
Words found somewhere, horsehair  
incorporated into the small drawers and cabinets  
Secrets disclosed to strangers

The courage must be here in the wilderness  
and here we save it up  
for the greater courage needed in cities  
to appear in front of desks

## FALL CORRIDOR

In a bland carnival of red and white  
Wigs and blankets pressing through the gates.  
A boy shouts a joke into his cell phone  
As he enters the tunnel under  
The canal of cars. Crowds pass and die down.

Your feet hurt you say and the  
Wet bench we cover in newspapers  
Cradles you in the hour marked by  
Headlights and halogen humming overhead  
It's as if the bus has already arrived

And returned us to sweet peas and cherries  
And to quail running in their coveys  
At the foot of the mountains  
And we are already at rest.

## WINDOWS

Not enough, usually, often broken, triple pane or single in my old house,  
in Colonial Lexington made of greased paper, much romanticized, as if  
our ancestors were mini-gods of enlightenment, not land thieves,  
people who had a problem with joy. Finches dart in the arbor vitae (which I hear  
as *ardor vitae*) come back too soon—it will snow tomorrow—my view  
where memory hurts, the snow drops he planted at ninety lollygagging  
in the iris garden as if to say *You will hold me in your sight until you forsake  
your home*. But may I not forget the strap against my Girl Scout uniform,  
the pencil point I lodged in his palm as flames shot fireworks from the furnace.  
We forgive things, don't we. We embed them in the pith of our innocence,  
bare them when trying to say *I love you* to the man we want to marry,  
the friend we hurt with advice, not listening because the strap falls smack  
in the middle of her sentence. Window of opportunity, the apology. Window  
opening on the self we thrust into sunlight, some startled child who can't believe  
he is so much of an idiot. What happened in those prim Puritan  
houses when the shutters were yanked shut? When the greased windows  
couldn't hide the sound of a child screaming? The sun heats through my jeans  
in the bay alcove. Floor to ceiling windows greasy from the old stove,  
the hooded vent where finches chitter on the other side. I'm missing him.

TERESA CADER

## YOUR SILHOUETTE ON A SNOWDRIFT

All night you sob at your desk,  
attempting to compose a memo  
to save your job. The pockmarks  
of rain in the snowpack suggest  
one of those diseases vaccine  
should have eradicated years  
ago, leaving only faint scars.  
But rain on the snow reiterates  
a lifetime of subtle erasures.

The hum of the computer  
seems objective enough to calm  
even the crudest outrage,  
but the economy has sickened  
and your job seems superfluous  
to the vast insurance company  
on which you've wasted your life.

Your memo will balance hours  
against output and prove  
you push more paper than a wood  
chuck chucks wood. A desk lamp casts  
your silhouette on a snowdrift.  
The corrosive rain attacks it,  
marring the shadow's plain texture  
without distorting the outline  
of your neoclassical profile.

You won't lose your job. The memo  
will resolve the distance between  
the executive staff and you.  
When eventually you retire,  
a plaque of brassy plastic  
will commemorate your efforts,  
render you monumental.

Tonight, however, the rain hurts  
and the snow weeps in sympathy.  
You face a modest future  
with a shadow cast so casually  
someone might think it your ghost.

## CANDLING

Beneath the window,  
a woman's body

reclines against  
the wood siding

as if meant to be  
found, a ribbon tied

around her left wrist.  
I touch her face,

her skin hardens  
into a thin shell,

tiny fractures spread  
across her body,

flaking off into wind.  
A note left on her tongue

reads, *I am with child.*  
Her stomach breaks—

there is no baby  
only freshwater—

tiny white pearls  
spill into my hands.

Swallowing them one by one,  
I see my future.



## THE MAGIC CIRCLE

A woman in profile draws a circle in sand,  
enclosing her bare feet, the orange ember, the white ash,

separating her words, a sickle gripped in her left hand,  
from muted shelves of earth in the distance,

impressions of creased rock, holding nothing  
but a single tree—the place where leaves level

and doves destroy their gift of wings;  
a place where dry beans scatter to corner-crickets,

the black iron pot already stumbled to the floor.  
The time is right for harvest

as she burns hemlock and white poppies,  
Michaelmas daisies bound at her waist—

the flower of a seraph whose devil coils around her neck.  
Throwing their petals into the fire pit,

her skin glows pale, a raven perches  
on a half-sunk skull pecked clean with time.

When the wind blows, her right arm extended back,  
the smoke never scatters.

It is a shortening of days. The time to weave  
our own threads from grains of sand and blood.

The serpent hinges. She closes the circle.

## WHAT'S THE UNIVERSE'S HOME ADDRESS?

Don't answer that. I wasn't serious.  
The world's already full enough as is

with too much certainty. What I could use,  
really use, aren't opinions but questions . . .

questions wide enough to quiet noise . . .  
Imagine no one listening to lies,

no one repeating them, no false success  
about whatever war, no pious views.

The universe can manage on its own  
and might not mind a trade: less microphones

for more of us out gardening . . . that stillness . . .  
that chance to hear what we really want to know:

like *Do birds ever feel too empty to sing?*  
*What causes heart skips? When will mine again?*

## WHAT ANY STONE CAN TELL YOU

When the earth discovered it was Earth,  
its astonishment became canyons,

and its million years of laughter  
made them deep.

There, in those darker beds,  
it could lie down still and dream:

dream waterfalls over granite,  
dream moss as soft as love, dream pines

at impossible angles,  
strong as love.

It dreamt animals across grasslands,  
animals into forests,

dreamt mountains to measure its distances  
and birds to make sense of the sky.

But this wasn't enough;  
all things need another, even Earth.

And so do we.  
Not to own

as if it were our echo.  
Not to give back less than we take:

We are born—the earth's other—  
to our *own* astonishment; be grateful.

Be grateful, in Earth's arms,  
when your bones lie down at last to sleep.

## HOW WE LEARNED THE SONG OF OUR BODIES

Every time he thought of her, a wave  
swept over the shore—

blue for his wondering, white for desire—  
and that blue became the sky, that white the stars.

And every time he thought of her, a fish  
leapt up like a song.

'Til one day her own thoughts turned to him too,  
and her answering song became the moon.

When he closed his eyes, he could hear it.  
When they rolled together like the ocean,

crested and broke like the ocean, she could hear it.  
They heard it in the rain, and in the quiet after rain.

And us too: the body of wind is our Song of Beginning,  
the body of fire is an end and a beginning,

our final arrivals never final . . .  
only constant like the still, wild Earth.

## ECLIPSE AT LA JOLLA

At a year and a half, he liked the birds.  
He pointed to them, said “birds” and  
his father decided to show him more.

He gave his son to me, climbed  
over the seawall, then turned,  
held out his hands.

Going over the wall was prohibited.  
I started to say, but he cut me off:  
“He can’t grow up afraid  
of the rules.”

I put the boy in his arms  
and he walked down  
to where the jagged rocks  
jut out like a slate  
into the dark surf.

Birds had been sunning there,  
squawking and pecking.  
They flew away in chaos.

All those gulls  
swirling around and up into the air.

His father pointed at one,  
larger than the others, and the boy’s eyes  
followed the bird in flight.

The sunset behind them,  
white light outlined father and son  
in an aura, so they formed a moon,

Eclipsed the sun, and anyone would think  
they were gods.

## THE FISH

*Dropped things are bound to sink*  
Marianne Moore, "A Grave"

Little girl  
in a red jumpsuit  
leans out of  
the aluminum boat  
to look down  
at the fish she's hooked,  
her dad's hand  
on the fishing pole  
she nearly  
dropped in the clear lake  
when her line  
jerked with the trout's nudge,  
worm swallowed.

He hands her the pole,  
the bright reel.  
Turn it, he tells her.  
She spins it,  
her dad and grandpa  
in the boat  
laughing, her dad's hand  
guiding, steadying,  
the rainbow  
tugging back, swimming.

It leaps up  
with their final heft,  
lands thrashing  
at their feet, its gills  
opening.  
He grasps flailing gills,  
backs the hook

from its open jaw,  
whacks its head  
hard on the boat bench  
where she sits  
in her red jumpsuit,  
color of  
the fish's belly  
when he cuts  
to spill the insides  
in the lake,  
and she has to pee  
so they pull  
her red jumpsuit off,  
lower her  
over the boat's edge  
and tell her  
Go in the water,  
go ahead.

## ON THE RIVER

I

That bridge, the one I walked to  
daily  
in summer, those girders riveted, steel.

Fish,  
those trout, herring, carp,  
occasional bluegill.

This dry-grass burnt thirst  
when I remember.

That childhood, rural,  
rotary phone number  
still tripping off my tongue

0393R3

And that boy, fifth grader  
I loved  
aloud on the party line,  
three hours at a time,

Cousin Bonnie  
picking up, listening in,  
waiting for her daily  
mother-daughter conversation.

That line strung  
along the gravel road  
that ran beside the river  
all the way to town.



## II

That river,  
the one I grew up  
drowning in.

That river  
I went down to  
like religion,

the one I come back to  
gasping  
for all it cannot hold.

Those long-gone years of summer,  
leather-skinned, bare-footed,  
tattered like the striped shirt  
my sister wore, handed down  
three times from older brothers,

traded in Fall  
for dresses,  
a string of schoolyard friends.

Ripples.

That boy who hung up the phone.  
Those parents who died  
and never stopped calling.

That lingering hint of family,  
that long line of us,  
the splintering-off

like planks from a raft.

## THE ANTLERED WOMAN RESPONDS

*after Mark Doty*

On misty-gray, not-dark, not-light days  
I feel bone sprout from my temples.  
I try to catch a glimpse in store windows.

I should keep my eyes on the ground  
instead of stepping out of forwardness.  
But my allegiance is not to permanent forms.

Plain clothes hide hooves and haunches,  
the elongated grammar of muscle,  
and me without a trench coat.

I am the respiration of the grass  
and my animal alphabet  
fails on a regular basis.

Years from now on a tonal night  
my feet will evaporate into cloud  
and my antlers will twine with stardust.

For now I am less anatomy  
than a storm, a glittering, gathering mass,  
an antlered woman dodging traffic.

## THE SEASON OF DOGS

The Dalmatian  
in the concrete pen  
barks and barks and  
barks again. This

is the season of dogs,  
a lark of barks, a powwow  
of yowls, the canicular chorus  
of the fox terrier

in the tract mansion  
and the dachshund  
next door who never shuts up.  
Even old Schnitz, grizzled

and gray, behind  
the tall pink wall, cannot resist.  
The oaks stand black against  
the sky. The moon looms

by the water tower. On the other side  
of the canyon someone  
pulls a shade  
across a lighted window.

## FIRE, FIRE

Clouds of smoke,  
ten times the width

of the twice-grown canyon,  
tides of reddish brown

tugged like boats upstream  
from the blowing blaze.

Riverbeds of incineration,  
islands of dry grass, frightening

beachheads afloat in the dark.  
Slopes tangled in fishnets of flame.

Look to the roof!

## HOW TO CREATE AN EXQUISITE CORPSE

We come together  
in the night between two wars,  
taste words— the dormitory  
of friable girls puts the odious box aright—  
listen to images.

Munich, Paris, Zurich.  
Tristan Tzara, Joan Miro, Man Ray,  
Yves Tanguy, Andre Breton.

We pass out paper,  
fold each sheet into sections.  
The lubricious toad defrauds  
the incendiary onion.

Andy will begin the drawing, fold  
the paper, hand it to Tristan  
who will try to sneak in words—  
the Senegal oyster, perhaps,  
or the tricolored thunderclap.

Tell him to stop, connect  
his drawing to Man's,  
pass the paper to Andy.

And so on.

And so on.

Lean forward with us.  
Kiss the exquisite corpse  
on his cold and careless cheek.

## THE CATALPA TREE

At ten, Fat Boy ran away.  
He climbed out his bedroom window  
and went to the Blue Ribbon Drive-In  
for onion rings and a chocolate shake.  
Then he walked east on Tenth Street  
till he passed Little Flower Church,  
kept walking in the moonless dark  
clear to where the city pavement  
changed to county gravel,  
where the houses sat back  
and dogs ran from porch to gate  
a long way to bark at him.

Tired of his drunkard father,  
tired of his immense mother,  
tired of his own voice  
talking constantly inside his head,  
tired of killing cockroaches in the night,  
tired of being afraid,  
tired of his Catholic buddies  
who had to memorize their catechism,  
who had to tell the sin  
of thinking sin, who almost  
killed the voice in his head.

Fat Boy walked till he turned around.  
Cold and feeling stupid,  
he headed back through the alleys.  
He watched the shadows slide  
across the trash of all those lives  
piled behind the street-front facades  
of white picket-fences, clipped  
lawns edged with tulips  
like bows on empty packages.

And when he returned,  
all the neighbors were gone looking for him.  
His parents were gone looking for him.  
The next-door cop was gone looking for him.  
So he climbed the catalpa tree,  
three times the height of the garage,  
and he watched them all come back,  
and he heard his drunken father say  
he'd beat him black and blue,  
and he heard his mother cry,  
and he heard the next-door cop  
tell everyone to shut-up.

Fat Boy waited till they left again.  
He peeled some catalpa cigars,  
shredded some leaves,  
let the voice in his head  
throw his father to the ground  
and punch him till the blood  
splattered over Fat Boy's face,  
till the body flattened out  
across the lawn and Fat Boy dragged it  
like a dirty carpet to the alley,  
stacked it for the trash man.

Then he climbed down and went to bed.  
They found Fat Boy's body.  
It lived with them a few more years.  
But they never found his voice.

## SKIN

Fat Boy's father held him up  
so he could look.  
"Grandpa's asleep,"  
father said.  
Fat Boy couldn't tell.

Grandpa's body floated, he thought.  
It lay in a box  
and he couldn't see  
anything under grandpa  
but white satin.

He sniffed  
the red carnation  
on grandpa's chest.  
Then dad set him down  
so the line could move.

Grandpa was a railroader,  
a leverman downtown.  
Fat Boy knew where the tower was,  
above the Tenth Street viaduct  
almost to the Shriner's Hall.

Grandma wept  
and mom had to take her  
from grandpa's floating body.  
The line kept going,  
each one looking then moving on.

Everyone had handkerchiefs,  
so Fat Boy pulled his too,  
the big, red railroader's  
handkerchief  
grandpa used to carry.



He blew his nose  
like everyone else.  
Mom grabbed his handkerchief.  
Dad laughed a little  
but not till they got outside.

The rain was cold.  
They sat in the Studebaker  
till everybody came out.  
Dad left Fat Boy there  
and went to help carry grandpa.

Fat Boy could not see for the rain,  
but he knew grandpa  
would be cold  
floating in that box,  
dad said "Forever."

## FATHER OF WAR, MOTHER OF SORROW

They should have been relics,  
Fat Boy's parents.  
Holy figurines carved  
from wood,  
or shaped into clay,  
or stone,  
or painted on velvet.

Father would be a two-faced god:  
fierce warrior  
covered with jungle mud;  
exhausted veteran,  
bleary-eyed, palsied, decorated  
with scars.  
He would be hollow inside.

Mother would be the hooded  
Lady of Giving.  
No one would see her face,  
her eyes,  
only her hands, her fingers  
of dispensing.  
All would weep in her palms.

Fat Boy would be the holy child  
gone astray.  
He would be made of rubber  
for children  
to throw at walls, bounce  
down stairs.  
He would be The Immense One Who Rolls.

THE EDITORS WOULD LIKE TO OFFER A SPECIAL THANKS  
to Roberta Stearman, who generously allowed us to publish Ken's poems.  
These poems helped push *Sugar House Review* from idea to reality.

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KENNETH BREWER, a Professor of English at Utah State University for 32 years, was Utah's poet laureate from 2003 until his death in 2006. He published ten books of poetry, hundreds of individual poems in literary journals, and many essays and articles. He conducted writing workshops and gave numerous readings throughout the West.

JEFFREY C. ALFIER lives in Tucson, Arizona. His recent publication credits include *New Madrid*, *Rattle* (forthcoming), and *The Saint Ann's Review*. He is author of two chapbooks, *Strangers within the Gate* (2005), and *Offloading the Wounded* (2009). He is co-editor of the *San Pedro River Review*.

RANE ARROYO is the author of 10 books of poems, a book of short stories and the forthcoming *New & Selected Poems*. He was won many prizes while living in and writing in mysterious Toledo, Ohio. Contact the poet through [www.myspace.com/ranearroyo](http://www.myspace.com/ranearroyo) or at [ranearroyo@gmail.com](mailto:ranearroyo@gmail.com).

RUTH BAVETTA is a poet and artist, a lifelong resident of Southern California whose work has appeared in many venues. She loves the light on November afternoons, the smell of the ocean, and a warm back to curl against in bed. She hates pretense, fundamentalism and sauerkraut.

CANDACE BLACK'S poems have been published in many magazines—most recently in *Third Coast*, *Rhino*, *Colere*, and *Ninth Letter*. Her book of poetry, *The Volunteer*, was published by New Rivers Press in 2003. Her current passions include Hostas, mojitos, and knitting.

TERESA CADER is the author of three collections of poetry, most recently *History of Hurricanes* from TriQuarterly Books/Northwestern University Press. She's won the Norma Farber First Book Award, *The Journal* Award, and the George Bogin Memorial Award, as well as fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Bunting Institute at Radcliffe, the Bread Loaf Writers Conference and the Massachusetts Council on the Arts and Humanities. She teaches poetry in the low-residency MFA program at Lesley University.

ROB CARNEY is the author of two books—*Weather Report* (Somondoco Press, 2006) and *Boasts, Toasts, and Ghosts* (Pinyon Press, 2003), both winners of the Utah Book Award for Poetry—and two chapbooks: *New Fables, Old Songs* and *This Is One Sexy Planet*. His work has been published in dozens of journals and in *Flash Fiction Forward* (W.W. Norton, 2006). You may write to him at rob.carney@uvu.edu.

STAR COULBROOKE is responsible for Helicon West, a bi-monthly open readings/featured readers series in Logan, Utah. She directs the Utah State University Writing Center and organizes an annual Beat/Slam Poetry Night. Her poems appear in *Poetry International*, *Hunger Magazine*, *Ellipsis* and others.

TOBI COGSWELL is a co-recipient of the first annual Lois and Marine Robert Warden Poetry Award from *Bellowing Ark* (2008). Her work can be read in *SPOT Lit(erary) Mag(azine)*, *Penumbra*, *Newport Review*, *Essence* (UK), *Seven CirclePress*, *Forge Journal*, *Spoon River Poetry Review* and *Fogged Clarity* among others, and is forthcoming in *KNOCK Journal*, *Transcurrent* and *Main Channel Voices*. She has three chapbooks and is the co-editor of *San Pedro River Review* ([www.sprreview.com](http://www.sprreview.com)).

BROCK DETHIER runs the Writing Program at Utah State University, writes books for college composition teachers, and has published poems in more than 20 different journals.

CAT DIXON earned her MFA from the University of Nebraska, Omaha and is now an adjunct instructor at the university. She is the volunteer Marketing Director for The Backwaters Press out of Omaha, Nebraska and a mother of two. Her work has appeared in *Temenos*, *Poetryfish*, *Eclectica* and *Fine Lines*.

GARY DOP lives with his wife and three amazing daughters in Minneapolis, where he directs the Taproot Reading Series and moonlights as a professor, playwright, and comic. Dop's poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *North American Review*, *Rattle*, *Agni*, *Poet Lore*, *New Letters*, *Poetry Northwest*, and The Poetry Foundation's *American Life in Poetry*. When lonely, he calls the White House Information Center and leaves weird messages in hopes that someone out there has to add pages to his FBI file.

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WILLIAM DORESKEI'S work has appeared in various electronic and print journals, and in several collections, most recently *Waiting for the Angel* (2009).

JUSTIN EVANS lives in rural Nevada with his wife and three sons, where he teaches history and English at the local high school. His most recent chapbook, *Working in the Birdhouse*, was released in 2008 by Foothills Publishing, and his poetry was recently published in *The Dead Mule School of Southern Literature* and *hoi polloi*. He is the editor of *Hobble Creek Review*.

HOWIE GOOD, a journalism professor at the State University of New York at New Paltz, is the author of 11 poetry chapbooks. He has been nominated three times for a Pushcart Prize and four times for the Best of the Net anthology. His first full-length book of poetry, *Lovesick*, has just been published by The Poetry Press of Press Americana.

DUSTIN M. HOFFMAN has an MFA in fiction from Bowling Green State University. He is currently working on his PhD in creative writing at Western Michigan University. His work has recently appeared or is forthcoming in *Blue Earth Review*, *Other Poetry*, *Conclave: A Journal of Character*, *Black Warrior Review*, and *Gargoyle*.

NATASHA KESSLER co-edits the online poetry journal, *Strange Machine*. She is a poet and graduate student. She likes Nebraska rain, cold coffee, and feeding stray cats.

ROBIN LINN lives in Andover, MA. A new teacher of English Comp, she's taught poetry workshops in places like prison and the library. Originally from Texas, she is semi-fanatical about Patriots' football and passionate about poetry and other delicious things (music, food, visual art and ideas). She likes to paint when she takes a break from juggling. Robin received a BA in creative writing and art, and an MFA in creative writing from Lesley University.

GRANT LOVEYS lives in St. John's, Newfoundland—a city perched on Canada's eastern edge. His work has appeared in nearly a dozen North American publications.

MATT MASON has won two Nebraska Book Awards as well as been published in over 150 magazines and anthologies. His first full length collection, *Things We Don't Know We Don't Know* (The Backwaters Press, 2006), is available at MidVerse.com and Amazon.com. Mason earned his MA in Creative Writing from the University of California at Davis, then, of course, moved to Omaha where he now lives with his wonderful wife Sarah and baby daughters Sophia and Lucia.

MICHAEL MCLANE completed an MFA in Creative Writing at Colorado State University. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Denver Quarterly*, *The Laurel Review*, *Interim*, *Colorado Review*, and *Salt Flats Journal*, among others. He currently lives in Salt Lake City, Utah.

PAUL MULDOON'S eleventh collection of poems, *Maggot*, will be published in 2010. He is Chair of the Lewis Center for the Arts at Princeton University.

J.R. PEARSON played "Jonny B. Goode" in 1st grade with an audience of 15 people. Once he ate a whole case of Elmer's Glue. He was terrible at finger painting but he's proud of these poems. Read his stuff in *A Capella Zoo*, *Sage Trail*, *Word Riot*, *Ghoti*, *Weave*, *Boxcar Poetry Review*, and *Tip-ton Poetry Journal*.

NANETTE RAYMAN RIVERA, three-time Pushcart Prize nominee is the author of the new poetry collection: *shana linda ~ pretty pretty*, published by Scattered Light Publications. She is the first winner of the Glass Woman Prize for nonfiction and was included in Best of the Net 2007. *Slant Journal* and *Up the Staircase* nominated her for Best of the Net 2009. Publications include *Oranges & Sardines*, *Carve Magazine*, *The Berkeley Fiction Review*, *Whistling Shade*, *Magnolia*, *Pebble Lake Review*. Upcoming: *Blue Fifth Review*, *Gargoyles Magazine*, *Furnace Review*, *Chaparral*, *The Monongahela Review* and *Bolts of Silk*.

RICHARD ROBBINS was raised in California and Montana. His recent poetry collections include *Famous Persons We Have Known* and *The Untested Hand*, and he has two more books coming out in the next few months. His grandfather worked for Jimmy Hoffa, and his wife grew up with the drummer for Pearl Jam, so they are all about organized labor, all about rock and roll.

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JEROME ROTHENBERG is a poet and editor who is noted for his work in ethnopoetics. A prolific writer, he has received many awards, including an American Book Award, two PEN Oakland Josephine Miles Literary Awards, and two PEN Center USA West Translation Awards. “Hero” will appear next year in *Uncollected Poems 1955–2005* from Junction Press.

SAM RUDDICK’S work has appeared widely in various literary magazines and is forthcoming in *Glimmer Train Stories* and *North American Review*. In 2007, he received a Henfield Prize for fiction. He lives in Boston.

KI RUSSELL currently lives in Lafayette, LA where she is in hot pursuit of a PhD in English at the University of Louisiana-Lafayette. When she’s not scuttling among literary texts or dodging swamp monsters, she enjoys painting and laughter. Her work has previously appeared in or is forthcoming from places such as *Fifth Wednesday Journal*, *Kaleidotrope*, *Bare Root Review*, and *Fickle Muses*.

NATAHSA SAJÉ was born in Germany and grew up in New York City and northern New Jersey. Her collections are *Red Under the Skin* (Pittsburgh, 1994) and *Bend* (Tupelo Press, 2003). Her work has been honored with the Campbell Corner Poetry Prize and the Robert Winner Award from the Poetry Society of America. Sajé teaches at Westminster College in Salt Lake City, and in the Vermont College MFA Writing Program.

M.E. SILVERMAN currently resides in Georgia and his work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Crab Orchard Review*, *Cloudbank*, *Pacific Review*, *The Shout*, *Neon*, *Mississippi Crow*, and other magazines. He was a finalist for the 2008 *New Letters* Poetry Award. His unpublished manuscript, *The Music Mud Angels Make*, is looking for a publisher.

DAVID STARKEY is the Poet Laureate of Santa Barbara and Director of the Creative Writing Program at Santa Barbara City College. Among his poetry collections are *Starkey’s Book of States* (Boson Books, 2007), *Ways of Being Dead: New and Selected Poems* (Artamo, 2006), *David Starkey’s Greatest Hits* (Pudding House, 2002) and *Fear of Everything*, winner of Palanquin Press’s Spring 2000 chapbook contest. *A Few Things You Should Know about the Weasel* will be published by the Canadian press Biblioasis next year.

JOANNA STRAUGHN received an MFA in poetry from the University of Utah. Her chapbook, *Instinct*, was published Fall of 2006 by Bright Hill Press. She completed a juried residency at the Kimmel Harding Nelson Center for the Arts in Nebraska City. Originally from a small town in west Texas, she has also lived in Germany, Long Island, the Catskills, and San Francisco. She currently lives with her husband and daughter in Salt Lake City. Her poems have appeared in *The Kenyon Review*, *Beacon Street Review* (now *Redivider*), *Quarterly West*, *Weber Studies*, *Asheville Poetry Review*, and *Meridian*.

BILLY SWIFT lives in Somerville, MA. He wears a black, felt bowler hat when he writes under the watched eye of his cat, George, who will never understand poetry. Billy received an MFA in creative writing from Lesley University in 2008. While teaching in the Expressive Language Department at The Landmark School in Prides Crossing, Massachusetts, he continues his education pursuing a M.S. Ed. at Simmons College. He sometimes skips breakfast. His E-chap, *Afterthought*, can be found at [Goldwakepress.org](http://Goldwakepress.org).

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PRINTED BY RASTAR, INC., A TRANSCONTINENTAL COMPANY  
SUGAR HOUSE REVIEW, OCTOBER 2009, VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

*Sugar House Review* (ISSN 1948-9374) is published semiannually.  
Address editorial correspondence to P.O. Box 17091, Salt Lake City, Utah 84117.

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SUGAR HOUSE REVIEW

P.O. Box 17091

Salt Lake City, UT 8 4117

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ISSN 1948-9382



9 771948 937000