



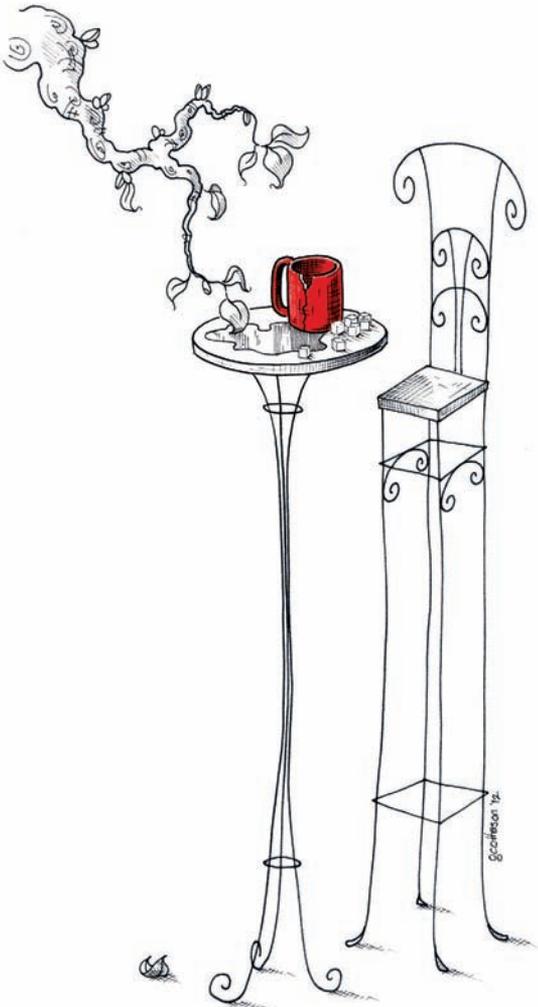
SUGAR HOUSE REVIEW

#6

SPRING / SUMMER '12

\$7

# SUGAR HOUSE REVIEW



## POETRY

### Featuring:

Steven Cramer

Kate Greenstreet

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Joshua Marie Wilkinson



# SUGAR HOUSE REVIEW

AN INDEPENDENT POETRY MAGAZINE

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## SALT LAKE

*This is the place!*  
—Brigham Young

*Space is the place.*  
—Sun Ra

I slip the silksac of my body & walk out onto the salt flats  
the air a machine sucking earth into fragments of white absorbing heat  
finding me starting to burn

I kneel at the salt shore I reach into the lake it is red as a cut  
I reach into the wound of it I drag out its string of black  
bones and now I am two times the dark

I crush skeletons of artemia underfoot I eat eggs in stasis the dead lake idles  
the city surrounds what weapons we are I fold the net of my shadow I keep it  
as evidence

IT'S LIKE THAT SCENE IN ANNIE HALL  
WHERE ANNIE LEAVES HER BODY

and sits beside the bed how I'm certain I'm across from me on the seven  
train and when we get into the cab how I watch myself ride shotgun  
and I think Annie starts to knit or maybe does a crossword could be  
I keep nodding yes what's important is that she is two  
Annie's that that what reaches one not reach the other that the body  
know indifference I ghost steady through the hole in my mouth I watch you  
struggle with  
buttons on my dress I keep nodding yes I fill-in some box  
with pencil letters

## RECOVERY

Sometimes dirt from the patio above mine falls through the gaps in the slats. I end up having to wipe down the table with a wet cloth, then a dry one before sitting down to have my tea and read how the gulf will never recover. That's the word the blogs use, which doesn't mean to re-cover, but to re-gain, re-attain: something had been had, presently it's lost, we'd like it back. Addicts celebrate recovery. So do swindled litigants, victims of the flu, computer technicians looking for lost files. The gulf will never celebrate recovery, the blogs tell me. It will get no 5-Years-Sober coin and sincere applause, nor walk home to its noisy children and sea birds and say, "Five years ago today, something special happened, something clicked."

Five years ago today, nothing happened, that I can remember. I lived in another apartment, was learning guitar, hadn't started paying off my loan. British Petroleum was renewing its lease for Deepwater Horizon, an ultra-depth, dynamically positioned, semi-submersible, offshore drilling rig, sitting several kilometers above a pocket of oil. Knowing this now can't worry me then, tutoring at the high school on Thursdays, driving my mother's blue car.

## YOUR BODY DOWN IN GOLD

You can make of the world's parts something elemental, you can say the elements mean something still worth fucking a way forward for: maybe the dream coming true; maybe the dream, true to form, coming undone all over again—you can do that, or not, while a sail unfurls, or a door

blows shut... So it turns out there's more of a difference between love and deep affection than you'd have chosen. So what? Remember the days of waking to disasters various, and of at least in part your own doing, and saying aloud to no one *I have decided how I would like to live my life, and it isn't*

*this way*, and how you actually believed it: you'd change, the world would? Man with a mourning dove in one eye, rough seas in the other, lately the light—more than usual, it seems—finds us brokenly. I say let's brokenly start shouldering the light right back.

## FORGIVENESS

There's satisfaction in the way a t-shirt beneath a winter coat  
leaves exposed some crossing at the collar. In the way the teeth  
take the tongue, even when I'm alone  
on the dock,

and they measure by pressing, to find some line  
across the maundering water, a threshold.

Blood, like a boy at thirteen, is reddest  
in its possibility—in the magnification of small amounts,  
like the whole stone any flaw  
defiles, catching suddenly

the indifferent light, which I have thought  
at times, harsh: my own shadow among shedding oaks—then  
those of the two boys  
crashing up alongside, one at each arm.

In the clarifications of autumn, sounds carry  
with fidelity—the light song of their antagonisms—taunts that, even then,  
didn't quite know what to prove—or what to ask.  
They return like vertigo on water.

The small thing wants to part my lips, to be disgorged. Aquatic,  
displaced. The thing that would climb right out—  
that would put its hand on my throat.

## SPARAFUCILE

A dark side street:  
baritone clown

meets bass assassin  
brandishing a blade,

although his name  
means *shoot a gun*.

Sparafucile's terms:  
half *in anticipo* & half

when the job's done.  
*Not now*, sings Rigoletto,

then, *Who knows?* Then  
*How?* The killer's sister

dances in the town—*bella*,  
she lures them home,

pours potent wine.  
How close they are,

slaughter & laughter,  
dagger & tongue.

## THE GALLOW BALL (1950)

*repaired in 2001*

Smartass conservator, I sense  
some misgivings about memory  
in your cut-and-paste job. Funny  
I just met someone who lost  
words like *incongruous*, *syllabus*,  
though he remembers *Stefanie* at least  
some of the time. As you'd have it,  
these mid-century materials  
(oil and newspaper on canvas)  
comprehend *Bush* and *Chirac*,  
an account of their energy summit  
glazed in the painting's abstract eyes.  
A scar follows the curve of an ear  
through my new friend's hair.  
Under its ridged turning the recent  
past may slip, like the *susurrus*  
released from the shell stashed  
in pieces in my desk. For some time  
he forgot how laughing is supposed  
to follow a joke. How will we learn  
the rule again? To where will those  
you obscured, strike-breaking *Auriol*,  
*Truman* the Independence boy,  
retreat? And then dancing master,  
so sure in your intervention, tell me  
what to make of this title, which I should  
look for first, the turn or the execution.

“DEATH, IF YOU DON’T MIND, PLEASE COME  
TO THE FRONT OF THE CLASS”

teacher adjusts the half  
moons of her glasses, her chalk  
ticking against the slate  
in three crumbling clicks, &

dust sprinkles like incense  
ash cast from a silver thurible  
onto the sooty erasers’  
plastic catafalque ledge, &

the boy pushes himself off  
by his elbows, his black sweat-  
shirt, sizes too big, gathers  
over his bony hips, &

the rheumy-eyed class mute,  
expressionless, turns aside, turns  
pale, turns to limestone white,  
blue-veined note paper, &

the boy steps to teacher’s  
tallies, graphite powder,  
chalk dust, graveling the path  
beyond a roster of the listless &

the inattentive, the absent

## ICE CRITIQUE

The old trolley bridge I drew as a rainbow  
of poured cement, the street lamp  
sifting through the railing  
a bolt of lace—that bridge so slender  
as if built to bear nothing more  
than itself and the night  
is gone.

Not fallen, just carted off to some pile  
of dashed semaphores and twisted tracks,  
yet still spanning by grace  
of fingers rubbed raw  
the charcoaled snow,  
the street lamp

*the upper left* my teacher says  
*that corner is lovely . . .*

a continuing source of ice  
that barely reaches the upper right,  
the tall window tinkling with piano mice  
beneath which I buried my flayed fingers  
as if already knowing  
they bled for nothing,  
my bridge  
drawn lighter,  
frailer,  
higher  
than the one we crossed together,  
my dust  
nailed blindfolded  
to a wall.

The old man reaches out his hand

and the young man  
reaches out his hand

but they're not quite close enough to touch.

We come upon the unexpected  
news of your death.  
It's a work day.

Maybe all this sweating does some good?

The main thing is your idea (you said)  
of who you are.

Then the rearrangement  
of the furniture, everyone in black.

Though isn't there always someone in a dark  
color not black, because they don't have black.  
Or maybe, for once,  
I wanted to express myself.

Sometimes, now, I think  
you're really in Brazil

or Colorado. Free  
to start a different life,

take up  
a different instrument.

—Some leaves never let go.

—But don't they always fall in the end?

—I don't know. Presumably.

—Are they dead? Even if they still hang on?

—Depends. On your definition. But yes.

## “WERE I THE HEAVY”

Were I the heavy, one who had nothing  
but a temporary view, I would accept loss

as a game of private space.  
The current odds are

just too high to find the why  
tossed among the time and the place.

Eventually the table will be pulled out,  
and whatever has slipped behind

will still be there. We know the room  
number and that a car was sent

shortly before the sandstorm crossed  
the mountain range. We know

there was furious work done to escape.  
You won't tell by much,

but photos of cities are prominent,  
as are the crypts

under the greying city steps  
and shots of the sonorous bones within.

And now we're waiting, nearly floating away,  
to hear back. The pigeons offer very few

clues. Though one has made its way over  
to the camera as this sequence ends.

## CALCULUS

Think of how many times  
these towels have been washed:  
towels times tens  
of thousands:

the study of change  
in pockets and graying socks  
while sheets like stacks of scrap paper pile up, increasing  
until

our machine breaks down with a bang  
just like that

cheap abacus bought on a whim  
back in Chinatown when  
we were having so much

fun: sticky candy, crispy duck, white shirts

billowing,  
and then,  
that is, now

I know the answer  
(if I understand this problem correctly)  
is the chance

to solve  
    dissolve  
laundry again: forever.

## PLEASE STAY ON THE TRAIL

Please stay on the trail, the trail depends on you, deepening with each parceled footfall, heels and boots, toes and toenails, needed to keep brush back, spine aligned, soil packed, please. Stay on the trail. Depending not on where you're going but when your groaning wear is worn down to pleading, please. The trail balls at your feet, tail done tucked, cadence bowing limbs, trees, canopies of exegesis. Jesus, please. Trailing is not falling, not behind when behind's a problem of narrow. The road home, the homos or whores, a lone leper dragging dried blood for the things in trees clicking long teeth. Thirsty but this well is empty. The prodigal, binged out, gone down the trail, haunted, throat diesel-choked, thumb a nub off interstate winds. And around the next bend, a lamb's realizing it can read codes on white t-shirts, chrome-cased bumper stickers as wilder nests. Now the small voice stills its terror, of wandering as wrong, though not all who follow are led, unequally yoked, my load upended to egg you on, make you stay, the trail, for a while, please, we'd love to see you smile.

## COMMANDS

Walk here by the river where  
bridle-less trees still escape  
swallowing ground and childlike,  
rise and gallop, stretch out their hands  
not for alms. If only there were a way  
to really tell this: Tangling your  
heart in their intoxicating green  
means welcoming the plow and brier.  
Lord, change us, but do not touch one  
hair on our stubborn heads, I warn you.  
Patterns in pilgrim glass. Small fascinations.  
Ever varying, ever the same. Look, there  
in the broken up spokes of the once grand  
ship. Something still bleeds. Sings.

*from* LEAFMOLD

Little stovepipe at the top of the world, little thistle in the eye of a cranky Zeus, the crooked pine talks down to you like the living condescend, at times, to the numberless dead. I am going to rise in the morning with the whole knot retangled. Still, the skeleton of a Coptic priest argues with a legendary bearhound. When it comes down out of the high stones looking for you, swinging its blank gaze from side to side like something starved, you'll know it. "Greed," you'll say. *Greed, greed.* ( ).

Most mornings I have to knock myself unconscious to feel the quiet. No birds overhead, no dirt underneath—I have to face that heaven is featureless, but momentary. Dear Leafmold: I have given up on you. Dear Leafmold: I have not given up on you. I give over into otherhood. Otherhood gives over into a morgue made of trees, a liquor store built from nervous cadavers and a cloud of blood. I need a master who will make me behave.

*from* LEAFMOLD

Two dozen Gerber daisies wilting in a vase. The rain is coming down. An assassin's bullet blind among its siblings. The rain is coming down. A woman took off her bra, washed her face, heard the phone ring, ignored it, and stared for two minutes and thirty-five seconds at a portrait of her mother—in 1952, this sequence never to be repeated again. The rain is coming down. Would you like to say a thing or two about the star we are circling? The rain is coming down. Buddha with apples raised above his head, victorious. The rain is coming down. Two candles blown out at once. The rain is coming down. Night arrives with its sling of mishaps—we wonder where the million birds of daylight take refuge. The rain is coming down. A speck of rust bolsters itself for the centuries. The rain is coming down. I once lost my glasses in Lake Erie; a wave slapped them right off my face. The rain is coming down. Two is the only number worth pursuing. The rain is coming down.

*from* LEAFMOLD

You ask me if objects have spirits and the answer is yes: I've seen a wall float out of itself and pour into the earth leaving only light where shade once fell. Our neighbor, the alcoholic butcher, stood in his backyard and stared at the grass. Overheard: *Any Catholic worth his spit knows something about it.* Quick hollow eyes following once more until I catch their glance and they flit shut, open again, and roll to the side. A part of home: lizard (sex undetermined) clutches its branch, the sunset bottoms out behind frantic, skeletal palms, the petty gods of the surf rise through sand offering dance and song while night comes: all of it a piece of your childhood—singular but sewn of something limitless. Dead things dislike to have their images reproduced—the copying of faces a possible religion, the attempt of intelligence to pin instinct, the moon going down, the sun coming up, the sun going down, the moon... The light at dusk here will fuck with you.

## GIN

The road to Hoosegow, Oregon smells like crushed juniper berries. My companion and I have been walking it for miles. She says it smells like pine needles and rubbing alcohol, but I know she means gin. I don't tell her that. She doesn't like to talk about old friends. I stopped drinking G&T's a while back because they taste like two weeks, two years ago. They taste like the crisp, frigid air blowing from a Kenmore a/c unit at noon from under the drawn curtains of a squalid hotel room in Laughlin, Nevada, like six letters from abroad with pictures enclosed, like the question I couldn't gather courage to ask. On the road to Hoosegow, Oregon, she kicks up dust and we throw stones.

## A SIMPLY CONSTRUCTED DWELLING

I walked the asphalt bikepath to the mute  
edge of a meadow where buckthorn nodded  
in the breeze and the nearest farmstead spurred  
me to consider not going back, but

fashioning a home of reeds and mud and twigs.  
I began my work shyly and ashamed  
but was soon inspired by solitude,  
by no one to laugh at the home I'd rigged:

a lump on the ground, a halfmoon shaped hump  
so low down I had to squat to get in,  
and when I squeezed out, my back scratched the rim  
of bark around the door. The slumping

wore me out as I smoothed the inner-roof.  
But I had done it, what I'd set out to do,  
and had for my labor my mudcaked boots,  
a scab on my back, and silence for proof.

## THESE FOUR STONE SPIRALS

*near Shotpouch Creek, Oregon, Spring 2010*

0.

These sentient stones imagine  
themselves in spirals  
    these stones  
who pursue and create paths  
who meander like creeks  
who respire  
with mica-dense breaths  
who curl  
and whorl like eddies wrapping  
moss-slick boulders  
and tumbled branches  
    stones who know  
whether snail shells  
always spiral clock-wise  
dextral who involute  
toward their own centers  
    basalt orobouros  
a one-striped snake  
swallowing its own lithic tail  
whose igneous twists of stony tales  
guide us forever further in

1.

This lucent stone winds  
uncertainties around itself  
    an axis of questions  
about snail shells  
the persistence  
of chirality  
about an echo  
of Redcedar wreath  
mandala of loss  
    about how loud to shout  
  
inquiries among Douglas Firs  
  
where moss absorbs echoes  
  
where questions  
  
are lost among sougning boughs  
  
where there  
  
are answers enough

2.

This spiral-cut stone hones  
its own center  
makes its own maze  
among icicle moss  
if I follow the lines  
where will they lead  
        center wholly  
present and necessary  
an open system  
a terminus that really has no  
endpoint at all  
        from its center  
generative patterns are born  
the way life expresses *being alive*  
wandering the still space  
within all spirals  
and here is one such place  
however small and infinite

3.

This white stone spiral rivering

hyperbolic spiral

mirror of snail shell

a refracted image

in hurtling water that winds

among nettled banks

past willows and salmonberry

moss-draped alders

the brachial rays of sword ferns

past a reflection

of white stones

who long to tumble

to rattle across

the creek's shifting bottom

to stare up at a misty sky

reflected below the current's surface

## EVIDENCE

Surely our neighbors woke up and were pissed off,  
maybe not yet at us, although it was because of us,  
because of the road kill deer blood

coating sheets of plastic in the truck bed  
that set the crows astir. I went to settle them down,  
the birds, but they kept yelling *Mine! Mine!*

even while I removed the evidence, the reason  
behind their commotion and empty posturing,  
and threw it into the dumpster. Closed the lid.

Surely though by now our neighbors had noticed  
those bleached skulls with antlers still attached,  
kill site mementos decorating our back porch,

and probably regarded us as the morbid kind,  
troubled, might've even complained to one another  
during brief lulls in the laundry room chatter,

dark cloud above us. And why not fabricate a little?  
Why not prick the corner of the curtains  
to observe our behavior and the blood on my hands?

Surely we'd given our neighbors enough ammunition  
to concoct an alternate narrative. Something wild  
to hush reality's humdrum tongue: make it murder.

The crows already knew he was the guilty one,  
kept squawking *Him! Him!* into the fogged morning,  
their black beaks aimed dead center

as though God went and painted invisible targets  
on every speck of evil in this world,  
the foul blood of something once living, now gone.

## DALLAS WORLD AQUARIUM, PRIVATE TOUR

In the special holding area  
on the roof a howler monkey  
hung from a rope inside  
a clenched fist of wires.  
I thought we were kindred  
spirits so I howled and he  
started up, but Regina said  
I was stressing him out,  
        so I stopped. Her eyes  
grew dim like cracked china  
on the edge, while back inside  
jungle rot rose up from sewers,  
a toucan screamed, and  
from the canopy we looked down  
at manatees swimming laps.  
Our guide mentioned something  
about educating the public  
and scoring us free tee-shirts.  
During the long drive back  
to Glen Rose I tripped over  
the sun and fell asleep.

## ILLUSIVE, WEEDED

white chicken feathers scatter across the lawn  
red specks glisten wet grass thick with  
dandelions.

the door to the coop is ajar.

beyond this flight thick rows of pine

dead limbs scratch and snap

heart slows  
deeper in the woods skittish deer bed down  
within the rectangle of a toppled sugarhouse  
bucket rust.

pick up a brick and the wet  
rotting leaf smell it holds down rises

the cold mass fills small hands.

an earthworm writhes in the vacancy  
reddish centipedes scatter

a potato bug rolls in the palm.

## PRELUDE

a boy tears photos from the encyclopedia  
finds an old city: paris or prague or  
a castle a museum a cathedral  
an old world away—  
swallows it.

wind smelling of warm cut grass  
stirs curtains  
grandma plays beethoven on the grand  
the rest of the family sweats and bails hay  
in the top field it is clear

glaciers left us everything we need  
on top of our wet hill of blue clay.  
the piano says need is a thin, prideful jacket.  
listening like dreaming he does not think  
of his lost chance to sprint through timothy.

## THE GENIES OF KHARAKHENA

Hot breeze between Saba trees  
on the old road to Medina—

I can tell a pathway only from absence  
the crumbling walls of what was

Kharakhena— the sacred bush—  
lamptigos<sup>1</sup> chase men back  
to the villages

in the form of giant pythons  
who eat night's darkness

lights  
moving through the forest  
lightning  
detached from the sky

where now mining roads  
have razed truck corridors—

we hear the explosions  
1 pm everyday across the border

in Mali, topaz blades shake off  
the ground and make for the bright

regions of burnt rock plateau,  
that which makes the tongue  
speak

but cannot be spoken— leave  
the mountains— white glare of ash

bush fires lit by men—  
a swelling  
in the python that won't  
be digested.

1. Genies, both friendly and protective of the forests, that used to guard the mountains of Kharakhena before people stopped believing in them, and corporate mining companies destroyed areas of once sacred forest.

## WASTING WATER

A sullen box of a hotel. Horrible squealing  
all night, and in the morning as we walked  
through the village, we met the wagonload:  
slaughtered pigs' heads, hang-tongued and blind.  
They were the only ones with what I'd call  
facial expression in Qiaotou.

*Ciao, toodleoo. Are you going our way?  
Will you lodge a protest—or leap  
lightly, like the tiger, who thinks  
the river a trickle of tears,  
the boulder a stepping stone  
over which he can return  
leaving nothing and no one behind?*

We were only out for the day.  
Still, the smell of it.

Out of nowhere, at the trailhead, a café.  
The young proprietor, in cropped,  
wide-leg pants, smiled and asked  
how to pronounce a word he'd typed.  
Chrysanthemum. We rubbed our eyes.  
He set out a basin and began to wash his face.

He was washing still when we got back  
two hours and a big fight later,  
needing the Internet more than the gorge,  
let it be dammed, let the river slow and spread  
and rise again, a giant lake, burping.  
The dirt track cut out level along a slope so high  
our eyes couldn't compute. The slope, the sun,  
the water far below. The scar of an incomplete road.  
*Ciao, from schiavo, as in, I come as I go,  
your slave. The bitter loyalty of that day  
did fade. But standing here, wasting water again,*

I can see that basin—plastic, red, luminous  
in the failing light outside the café—  
and the foppish, moon-faced boy still washing his face,  
and buttering, buttering the skin.

## A LAUNDROMAT IN LATE JULY

Fluorescent tube lights line the ceiling in twin rows,  
every other fixture dim, lending a sort of  
checkerboard feel to counter the coat of grime.

A parade of tanks and infantry, it seems to me.  
Or, just what they are: two rows of lights.  
The machines are clean, the floors and tables

are clean. The Pakistani manager makes  
a good impression with his Colgate blazer  
and his Colgate smile. Fundamental questions

surface about the maze of drains  
and their ultimate end, and how the torches  
that heat the dryers are configured.

For a long time I imagined ragged pygmies  
fanning a smutty furnace, treading the gears  
of polished tumblers. That was undone

in Brooklyn when I saw through  
the unlatched door of a Korean joint  
the cramped back room where baby blue jets

licked the underside of punched steel,  
like the broiler beneath my mother's oven.  
Mystery solved. Other than that

not much is happening. The washers yawn  
unanimously down their beige row. Opposite,  
three dryers toss their petty contents towards

nowhere. A fourth slowly, slowly parches  
our bedquilt, and I simmer in the stew  
of our latest debate. Does the lawn

need so much attention? Does she?  
Must we endure the news every evening?  
Meanwhile, here, nothing else happens,

still. No Laundromat terrorists  
storm the plaza. No blonde or brunette  
bombshell whisks through the double glass doors,

full of promises. Even the light rain has ceased.  
The last of the dryers spins down. So this  
is America. So this is Peace.

## ON THE BANKS OF FORGETTING

Women where I'm from were caged by Jesus. In 1995, as my neighbor drove her minivan beside the canal, some young punk with a black mohawk mooned her from one of the spillways, his white buttocks refracted by the moss-green water. In spring, before it was hot enough, the water pulled by current sucked us into it even standing on the bank looking at our blurred selves looking back. The canal was dredged in 1916 by horse and pulley, long after Joseph Smith had declared this continent filled with His other sheep. I always wondered if his disciples arrived here suspended somewhere between the shelf of wind and low-hanging clouds, the ones that always sent me digging for old movies I'd seen fifty million times. Old was 1986. In 1916 it was spring, too, but sound came in low, refracted mercilessly in the cottonwoods, what the Indians called the leafshakers, the heat-ribbed dirt waiting for asphalt to ripen and rip its skin beside the path the canal would take. The path I would take, touching the bare leg of Nicole under the water with my toe—the neighbor's niece, busty and freckled, who could've been my first girl friend, but got knocked up a year later by a Mormon boy instead. Trying to say a *fish* right, but it never coming out right, and her just staring down and past me at her own reflection. Past the cow pasture, and the neighbor's house, the pain skips on the surface of remembering what happened. I dripped on the carpet watching the green spark of Patriot missiles on television. My mother told me to go dry off but I wouldn't yet. Instead I would bang my elbows into the edges that didn't fit, the light glancing low and fatal at the corners of the window in my bedroom and outside the hammock twisting, its reflection caught in cousin Nadine's window next door. Does that wind still exist? Does it falter up to the faded blue rims of mountains or the slowly scripted responses of everything that left no impression? The angles of shadows the shakers cast, why do they come back? A stone skipped in a dream state that won't go straight because dusk is twisting outside again. My father is watching *The Dead Pool* in the living room, which has nothing to do with water. His feet twitch when he sleeps and that reminds me of never seeing him that peaceful again, of twitching my toe beneath Nicole's black eyes, of forgetting.

## TRYST

You, chewing moons of motel ice  
like knucklebones: *actually, it comes  
from Middle English by way of  
Old French—tristre, a prearranged  
hunting station.*

I will not debate your etymology.  
You're too well-armed, your gaze  
always fixed squarely backward;  
all I have is three years of  
high school French,

more *Quelle heure est-il?* than  
archaic terms for where 14th-  
century huntsmen piled their kills.  
But even at this distance I recall  
that *triste* means sad.

I'm sure you could tell me, too,  
the origin of astragalomancy  
(divination by dice or small bones)  
as you grope for your bra in the  
sticky neon oozing

between the closed mini-blinds,  
just as you would never cast those bones  
upon the sheets, gaze and surmise,  
instead of eating our maybes  
before they melt.

And melt they would; as always,  
we paid in cash, by the hour. So  
crunch away. *Astragalomancy.*  
*Obviously from the Greek.* Obviously.  
But *triste* does mean sad.

## NIEMAND

Who was he? Nobody.  
With a face like the face of the moon,  
changeable. The impressions  
of his features only light  
suggestions. Hypodermic  
in one hand, pencil in the other.  
As a young man he learned  
medicine, but the dark bag  
got lost in a field somewhere,  
overturned and ransacked, inhabited  
by the softest species of mice.  
They live in the lining. But  
what mouths opened for him?  
What stages, where actors sit  
disconsolate, waiting for his scenes?  
He only thinks of the ways he cannot  
help, never of the ways he helps.  
The staircase has a long banister,  
an elegant wife gets her own  
ideas. We can never return  
to the days of blue horses,  
he thinks. Just a face like a moon,  
looking up from the riverbottom.

## POEM

And if I sing of snow, it won't be poisoned,  
falling on gravestones and in rivers.  
And if I mention grandfathers, they won't drool  
from wheelchairs, unless they're stolen wheelchairs,  
they won't bounce anyone on their knee, they won't  
be fallen gods. They'll all be old warlocks and Reds,  
telling you how it used to be. All the snakes  
St. Patrick cast out of Ireland will be there, and the wolves  
got themselves hunted out of England, they're  
there, too. The lovers I mean won't be  
the silent-curses type, hating one another weakly  
over dirty dishes, they'll be fucking in libraries,  
reaching for one another over the old beloved volumes.  
In this song I'm making for you, darling, a tree  
is a living birch and it's a canoe that you can steer  
around the pink rocks in silver water, and nobody murdered  
the old Commune of Paris, they're still there, making  
their ecstatic decisions, emancipating every  
baguette and demitasse, every precious tiny cuillère.  
This song has a house for you, my love, tucked among  
pagan tenenbaums, each ablaze with an angel, her foot  
just touching the topmost branch like a white owl.

## KRISHNA

*for Lara*

Born crayon blue and blessed,  
she breathed in song for days,  
proof for when I doubt  
the firmament is a veil.  
Sigh, the color of depth, the well-  
spring of nature-seas-sky, even fire  
burns the hue of Kandinsky's joy  
chasing sacrosanct mandalas  
with the scissors of a sprite.  
So I bang the tambourines, zils  
ringing inside like brilliant clutches  
of forget-me-nots, and I run  
with bells on my feet, grateful  
for the breath, even the blue.

## SOME MORNINGS WHEN BRIEF

Waiting for the rain one week before solstice, in the overcast waiting room of the valley, so vast, so inexplicably hooked into a filament eye we forget the legend of a sun. The eye broods blue and white and gray—somewhere in the neighborhood a painter fixes the mistake of a cerulean sky, strips the sycamores, unzips a lover's cherry skin. Who bangs on the green tambourine? Who looms behind the clouds, the stars, the curtain? Blind fingers fumble for my hand in the linen maze, two heavenly bodies shanked in a red, red bed. This is no mistake—this is your only forecast, your single hook, my single eye, a drop of rain, a drop of cherry wine—there, there! And then, rain. Again.

## DREAM DOCTOR SAYS

if you dream water

it means death

ocean up to my knees

deep eyes sway and spy from the shore

am I supposed to wash

your panic clean

I have lost answers

who is this anchored to my bed

mouth worn down to cotton

peppermills grinding screams

behind moth dark

her eyes hooked into my throat

if you dream-slap anyone

it means you crave sex

my hand slices air

I keep sinking

your ever-changing face

strains the dregs of me

I can't dream myself awake

THE FUTURE STOPS AT THE PAST  
IN NEED OF REPAIR

A closed down gas station  
and auto repair stop, here  
the letters blur to despair,

rust-scabbed or scarred and in any  
case closed, the windows carved  
with passing vandals' names

if not smashed by thieves, if not  
boarded up. You could steal  
what metals remain—the steel bits

and copper wiring—if you know  
what to look for. It's all slated  
for razing anyway, except the tanks underground.

You could stop and try to redeem it,  
erase its original use, open  
a Hawaiian rib joint, do the exterior

in lapis blue with pink hibiscus flowers,  
but the old shape will still register as fuel  
in the mirrors of the broken down, on empty.

You could make it with a push, and turn  
down the next street, where the same shop  
appears open and well-lit

with real cut flowers next to the sink.  
At the counter, an old man  
wipes his hands on a yellow cloth and asks

what seems to be the trouble? Or  
no one asks and no one answers  
though you ring and ring the bright bell,

and it takes ages,  
but you take down a wrench from the wall  
and begin to do the work yourself.

## NEGLECT

Love,  
this mess is a conscious effort,  
an experiment on hunger,  
on what happens  
when a single loaf is placed  
in my hands.

Thank you for the bread.

Thank you for neglecting to sweeten it.

And thank you for leaving  
the crumbs where they lie,

upon the mantle and doorframe,  
scattered across the bed sheets  
and page,  
so they can harvest themselves,

and thank you for licking my fingers clean  
so I can forget I am full.

LEVEL, MADAM, LEVEL.

Memory—a flurried globe. I turn us.  
Even our hair stays in place. The kitchen sunlight  
all night long. It was a year for making  
our mothers' recipes backwards  
and feeding each other with our hands.  
Salt in your mouth, words in my hair.

But, no. Memory—  
a peninsula of a thousand miles. We're perched  
at the land's end. The myriad confusion  
of two bodies' waves.  
Your voice coming through  
like the trains outside Mystic, like the words we loved:  
*Amore Roma* and *isthmus* and *terrific*.  
A year without lines  
to color in, so the world could become  
Emu Love Volume and Atomic Tangerine.

We stopped taking the shortcut  
behind the parking lot, between the hospital  
and the cemetery. You asked  
for toothpaste in the morning, maps  
to hidden cities on the weekends.  
The knowledge of archipelago—  
that kind of lost forever, that kind of watery division—  
You asked for hello.

Hold the mirror and let the sun hit your face  
just there. The strength of it will shatter us  
eventually: terracotta roofline sinking  
below my feet, the waves lapping  
too close, your words unending snow.

Turn us again.  
I'll keep that one star in your eye  
over my shoulder all the way down.

## PRAYER

My grandmother told me when I was young  
that when it mattered, I should pray,

and I should pray to Columba, or Kenneth,  
or Dorothy Day, one of the lesser known saints.

Patrick and Brigid are on everyone's tongue;  
can you imagine the number of requests

that must be piled up on their heavenly desks?  
They have to work through the stacks

to see what can be done and what should be,  
what is really important and what's not.

Kenneth, though, he's not so busy;  
Monk just happy to know there is somebody

thinking of him. He will give a petition  
his full attention, get on it right away

and see it through to the end.  
He's glad, too, you can be sure, for the chance

to show God that he's on the job, earning his keep.  
Sometimes, they say, the answer is No.

Sometimes, though, you've got to believe,  
that things just get lost in the chaos

when it is spilled onto the desks of the stars,  
the big names, the celebrities.

There is a lot to be said for knowing how to  
work the system, knowing how the system works.

DECADES LATER, HE REALIZES THE SCOPE  
OF THE UNIVERSE

Ducks and geese creak in the wind  
    like cabin doors loose  
    on their hinges.

When a storm is coming  
    (but not quite here),  
the air tastes like trees  
and the trees like warm cinnamon.

You'd be a  
    fool, you think,  
to go inside before the moment this shell cracks.  
Because the air  
    is disco boogaloo,  
the air is the air  
they breathe in every Greek myth you ever read as a kid,  
here with this pond,  
with rabbits growing into their hind legs,  
chicadees chittering in the pine trees  
which you round a row of  
    and see a boy  
    next to a swan, standing  
like two old men on a downtown corner

And you forget we're riding a stone  
orbiting a star orbiting another billion  
billion stars, you forget Apollo IX, Copernicus, Columbus,  
creation  
    is on this grass,  
    and it is           bigger  
                            than you  
                            ever  
                            dreamed.

THE END IS NEAR;  
GET YOUR ICE MELT TODAY

Revisit serving swings of pans  
while time still sets your table.

Play downbeats of seconds  
when gravy stages call your

name. Go for third-base thirds  
if you can—if you can, make

bellies full as ticks in Bloodville.  
Offer jambalaya thanks for every

sugar huddle—for it and all  
its acid reflux cousins. Go

back, and ask for more as if  
overindulgence is that good

to me woman Ray Charles sings  
about, “way over town,” but

hard of hearing—hard of hearing  
like engines of plenty, when we

call for them to hitch their hearts  
to famine’s empty cars—or cries

to fallout skies to spare our  
kin from arrogance of skin.

## WAKE

he's a hypnic jerk, he's a hypnic jerk, in my ear he's a hypnic jerk  
and he got blue knees, yeah he got blue knees—he's a cosmic squeeze  
    baby bound bowline hook and sinker so the butter is mellow  
        feeling all sorts of yellow  
let it go let it go let it go (let it snow (repeat x3))  
    electro-pop rocks and soda synth slough almost make it true  
this isn't a poem about you cosmic blue and an old black shoe  
    it's about tenfold and coming on fast or slow  
        shit red bike and a 40, hey no now not nearly 42, 42 is never not you  
atlantic pedantic and neurotic too  
    homily anomaly stitch the tool mouths blue blue  
squeeze let out the tease let loose the tease take it whole  
    bike fight bike fight saw sasquatch bleached dead bleached  
legs not so cosmic not so cosmic you electro-funk fool  
    put past the ears the nears put past the you break it blue  
        and a hypnic jerk just a picnic jerk he's a hypnic jerk the ear whore you  
sop blue knees sop blue knees nobody ever did never say please

from *CLANGINGS*

Tsk tsk, go my wits, like a grandfather  
clock's nano-manacles. Shackle-tight,  
I've read enough to know what a twist  
wisdom is: makes wild inside nature

all recreation. An inexacter psalm,  
my chain of althoughs grows wider  
and weirder, wired equilateral ladder.  
Plenty Plutos left in the solar system—

true enough. From where I belong,  
I rant, I stand, I decree: bears bite  
if they're baited, lashed left and right,  
toward the torches. So goes my song—

damn!—on the fritz. Obituary magi,  
my top spins round with monikers  
like Mary, Magda. So many Monicas . . .  
Screw me on a cross, I can't tell why

I weigh so down when I get this mad—  
tons of mustard seed times thousands.  
Man, God's mistake; or God, Man's,  
please deal me my get-out-of-hell card.

from *CLANGINGS*

I cut back on coffee. And air. And sky  
because the sky cried into seawater.  
Because my throat clove to hunger,  
and starvings flew speedily in me,

for food I'd dish out grubs from trees.  
Man, he growled, my Dickey. On axes  
from Anarchic to zones of Chaotic, his  
bile grumbled inside our twin bellies.

If an elf owl's about to kill, he'll nick  
its greedies in time, strafe my mouth,  
take a summer pump and cool off . . .  
Dickey's what a tear in the eye'll reflect.

The more I fast the feastier he'll sing:  
"I'm your medicine; your protein;  
your hydro car boat; nitroglycerine  
triglycerides; seasoned, appeasing

addictive. Addicts get invited, so leave  
holes for roughage in your cells, or else  
there'll be no room for dessert. Lose  
less, multi-mineral. It's your serve."

from *CLANGINGS*

Mother said you count your friends on one hand.  
Dickey says there are ten people for each person.  
It's times like these his body adds up to mine—  
it shakes mending a net or shelling an almond.

Who happens if one person becomes ten people?  
They've bred like fruit flies? I'm not afraid of them.  
Unless I swallow them in my sleep. Actually, I am.  
I hate math; don't care how many moths flit in a bottle.

Some table wines are fine. A soldier somebody pays  
tallies my fines, quarters me in his cold shoulder.  
That's why I pile up coinages: to spy a tower  
of secrets, spend them, then my eyes can close.

Pennies aren't worth much, but aren't worthless.  
How many an hour, minimum wage, coin of the realm—  
*search me*, Dickey says. One arm swings, a pendulum;  
the other one withers, a knobby root of cypress.

I'd knuckle down, but come on. Handshakes  
with unfriendlies feel as safe as jungle gyms  
monkeyed with. Take the bleachers, all thumbs.  
I'll be talking to my fists. They're coiled snakes.

from *CLANGINGS*

Dear eyes, my ears kept paired for you,  
no stereo's here. No peelings heeded.  
You look unhealthy like that: scalloped.  
With all the duophrenia you listen to,

it was boded we'd run into each other.  
Look. Talk's short. I'll always worry  
when I don't hear the sled of a casualty  
in the fog, or the otherness in another

sounds like there's nobody there  
on the bus. Hard to hear like myself  
in that atmosphere, bag of mouth,  
table talk between salt and pepper.

But look at them. Grandparent-solid.  
Turrets you could use as chess-pieces.  
Makes you go retro for a family tree's  
entreaty. If a seed I know is behelded,

it puts us in pretty heady causality.  
No need to answer; really, no need.  
What would I do if you did? I did  
keep in mind my brother, didn't he?

from *CLANGINGS*

I shake my head, my right brain's  
left behind; my left, right behind.  
I mean, I'll tell you what I found  
so fine about flushing my coins

down a well. Splashes answered.  
I marbled the moon with a wand.  
Boy o boy, hello shook my hand,  
the water's underworld stirred

to a tune of midnight, midnight.  
I didn't much mind how timepieces  
cramped my moon-in-man aphasias.  
But I wouldn't—*won't*—let daylight

phase me out. Weighed too well,  
gelatin glummed in my mouth,  
I tasted gypsum. Smack! Health  
care rusted the fly in my flywheel.

Realignment? Right, two planets  
balled up into one hard-boiled sun.  
You double helical worms, I've won,  
stares back-spinning out my orbits.

## SUMMER FLY

1—

The bald sky held a moment, light  
rain covered with lightning  
the bric and brac of your voice  
the bones inside, spaced like fishes'  
fighting with a fly—what does it think my hand is? *shoo*  
silvery trees wave tarantula legs. where are we? inside his voice, with maybe a little  
candlelight

bracket now[

a seamless texture            *let's run and find someplace to hide*  
seems like the opening between legs.  
can you make a person with no sex?  
I drink the water, but it's the heat in the tea I want inside me.

2—

*Di dum* what can I say this morning but this balled-up  
song. first it's chant ringing inside like pigeon coo.

*rew      lrew      lew*  
*purse      handle   rickety      sew*  
*lrew*  
*few*

*chew* words wombs like tobacco  
they could be shadows

Does anyone speak English in here?  
little morsels  
moving like fruit on trees

a big shadow

the sun makes  
barber-pole stripes—

so mathematical where the light line ends

## ARCHITEXT.

information wearing pink house slippers. with another cloud, or introducing it. cloud on a cloud, it looked like (stop criticizing). a cloud pairing up the day with a sense of those pine branches. he was just so steady; simple as running water, for instance. world, that I could take on all four branches. water, how it mirrors interested am I?

## DRY SPELL

To visit, I wear the Goodwill jade green silk with the knot at the throat. All winter we were hot with envy. You open the door, red-eyed. Hunger makes you cry. You've been barefoot with the new baby in your heart, standing in your too-clean office, eating the darkness. Your work, scattered. *Men kick friendship around like a football*, and you hand me a glass of bitter iced tea, made sweet with coconut milk. You lead me to the nursery, where an antique doll sits, one eye slit. *But it doesn't seem to crack*. What aphrodisiac for friendship? I've chased you hard for months, wanting back the dark soil we pushed from to equal height. Now one's too high. One of us, cheated. Nothing levels like fire, a domestic ritual. My ice cubes clink. *Women treat friendship like glass, and it goes to pieces*. Do I need new spectacles? I'm working through the reasons. No spells exist to make a friend stay. So I dream a hoodoo fusion pyre: yellow roses, pear blossoms, a photo of Japan's dolphin slaughter. Wave the smoke up and away.

## CROW SEASON

When a car backfires in the alley behind me,  
I remember those summer afternoons that broke  
under the weight of BB shots, and how I hid  
in my bedroom, so I couldn't hear  
my brothers turning telephone lines  
into target practice, birds into twisted tailspins.

From their kill, they propped bodies against  
our backyard wood pile, dark wings splayed  
like black paper fans. The best feathers  
were plucked for the junior high girls  
who twirled shafts of soft down through  
barrettes and friendship bracelets.

They circled the playground, a murder  
of girls wrapping fingers around loose  
strands of hair, their bras thin silhouettes  
beneath crisp cotton T-shirts, sharp hipbones  
jutting against jean waistbands. The leader,  
a sheer shadow of a young woman,

chewed gum and blew bubbles just to pucker her lips.  
Knotting stiff feathers in my hair, I colored  
my skin with my sister's mascara, caught  
the hard *caw!* in back of my throat.  
Then I spun in the August heat until I could fly,  
until I could show every lone crow what to do.

## BODIL THE ANIMAL LOVER

*Bodil Joensen was a Danish pornographic actress who also ran a small farm and animal husbandry business. Known for performing acts of bestiality with her dogs, stallion, and boar in footage that was exploited for numerous pornographic films, she died in 1985 as the result of alcoholism and possible suicide.*

In the old pictures, I am solemn-faced—my hand  
is around the neck of my collie, knobby  
knees under my school kilt. Always,

I stand apart from the other children.

•

Escape was simply anywhere out of Moder's gaze.

At twelve, it was the Hundige train station. There were always  
stray dogs there, and I kept crusts of bread in my pocket.

One day, I sat watching two dogs sniffing  
each other under the tail, circling, sniffing  
each other's asses again,

when a man saw me watching.

I said, *Wouldn't it be funny if people greeted each other that way?*

The man and I talked until someone told Moder.

Moder called the police.

The man, a known pedophile,  
was sent to jail.

Moder thought I'd been raped, so she beat me in the attic  
to let the Devil out.

I raged in the attic for days—  
it seems the devil did not want to leave me. I screamed,  
*When I grow up, I'll fuck boars!*

I did not live with Moder much longer after that.

•

Dogs just lick when they want to lick—

Spot is my friend. Alone  
in the house, without heat or light,  
we go to bed together. We share  
a biscuit, talk until we fall asleep.

She understands what I am.

•

During his first mating, a boar must be taught  
to make love.

At the breeding center, it is my job to teach him.

Young boars run together develop bad habits,  
the most common—servicing  
the rectum.

It is my job  
to ensure vaginal entry, also

that he does not mount the front end  
of the sow.

The development of his confidence is vital.

•

The farmers' wives all hate me.  
Their husbands all try to screw me.  
I do not let them,

but the money stops coming in:  
the farm rent due  
and then the truck...

Finally, one day, I go  
to Copenhagen  
to answer the ad.

•

When the movie men come from far away: America, Japan,

I welcome them all.

• Some language from the third section is adapted from a 1980 interview: <http://bit.ly/RaxcK>. Some language in the fourth section is adapted from an article on pig husbandry: <http://bit.ly/HHU1nw>.

## PSEUDOCYESIS

finds you standing naked in front of the mirror  
gulping and gulping hardened  
air to fill your belly up  
to swell your little lie

as cold porcelain skims against calves  
you swallow and swallow her  
into existence  
until she is

fleshy and swimming  
air-born into pink  
sucking for milk

more air for milk  
you'll need  
more air

## NEIGHBOR

At dusk I set  
my shoes on the stoop  
                  that reaches out  
into your path. Hikers, heels, galoshes;  
I leave my muddies, my shinies, all ready

for you  
to steal

or borrow, as you will,  
if you will. Don't  
worry; in this light  
I can't see anything past

these words. I've just finished reading

about empathy. So it seems  
it unifies, synchronizes  
us—an innate tendency  
to cooperate. But you

and you, cooperating  
against me,  
when were you in my  
shoes?

## ARTICHOKE

Humming, I nestle two artichokes,  
fill water to their hips, sprinkle salt.  
I nearly forget to turn on the burner.

I melt butter in two green cups,  
then teach him to bare his teeth,  
scrape the fleshy edge.  
He tries one leaf.

I don't give up. I take a knife,  
split the hair from the choke,  
present him with a forkful of the heart.

*from* MEADOW SLASHER (III)

Skoal tin of soil, now rain & soil.  
You want to breathe, right?  
A good scolding, a hotel room  
with one too many freaks to stand it.  
Zombies twin in  
& the undead rock the rails.  
My sad poems are  
available here & are elsewhere  
forthcoming. You think  
we didn't know  
how to find you?  
A motorbike headlight's throwing your shadow around.  
Funnel clouds, a collective sweat  
breaking over the lakeside city.  
You hear that crackling?

Beasts.

You wanna learn the way up?

Start some place else.

Sometimes a voice in a poem can boxcutter you open.

Blood, intestines, sacks of bile. All that.

Eternal offices of the sore throat.

Indeterminacy is a given

so you needn't start there.

That strangler sure is good at finding abandoned buildings.

Yes & very good.

I make lists & cross off the items as I complete them.

I do this with a line & an x both.  
Am I so scared of being alone with the selves I was?  
An old acquaintance tries to fuck me on his dining room floor.  
Oh, I want that Bloodbuzz Ohio suit.  
Let us un-acquaint ourselves.  
I still like it when old folks, rural folks smoke in their homes on tv.  
Click between Dog the Bounty Hunter & Hoarders.  
Dog & Hoarders.  
What is desire but some pleasure in careening.  
Depends on how you like it to cadence.  
Stop the door up with a towel.

Loose vermin into the tub.  
How long do you really like to?  
Collated nightly off.  
The story begins with you tapping an unlit cigarette  
in the elevator standing next to your ex—  
It begins with Selah's fables  
re-told, you know that voice I love the spell of.  
What if you don't ever slow down now?  
You ruin out all the directions.  
That sounds serious.  
It's serious, buddy.

I said, do you like being here with me presently?  
The problem with faked ghosts is that they won't  
take the windows out of their casements.  
They fail the radios  
where they should be interfering like 46 birds  
in my apartment.  
This intern—trembling—begins to remove  
my stitches & cuts me back open, re-making  
the wound. What I was  
started to shred me at the corners  
& into the core.

How do you feel about memory?

Pretty swell.

You been having a hard time, haven't you?

Enlivened by sadnesses,

I'm not playing games already.

This bridge has a compositional flaw.

It goes: half-truth, shitty joke, omit or digress, & repeat.

You breathed chalkboard dust intentionally?

You only like the nighttime?

You tried & failed, huh?

You know cowardice?

Can I just do what I set myself the task of doing?

Sure you can, coward.

Slowly pulled my hangnail back  
just to get a clean rinse out of me.

*A dead and standing pool of Air:*

each squashed cat or skunk on the interstate I see

I think, what's before us is already done getting itself here, right?

Have your habits grown unkempt?

How shall I answer?

With what register?

You wanna come back inside?

Click through the songs looking for an orchard ladder  
to bash the tall windows in with.  
How did you get in here?  
Tunnel drug lords, a rail track  
city garden, a big fuzzy dog  
pissing on the flowers.  
How much noise did you take in?

## TO THE END

The End, *Ragnar Kjartansson (2009)*

A frozen white carpet rolls out  
to blackrock mountains that stretch to spear the sky.  
Dwarfed against this blue Icelandic scene  
a baby grand piano sits, its lid raised to the frigid air.  
He pushed it here—  
right up to the edge of this lonely range.  
The snow-path drags for miles.  
He blows on white fingers, plays an étude  
to lure the woman in the long black coat.  
He wants what we all want: to want  
to follow someone to the end,  
even if he can't tell from his seat at the keyboard  
whether she is walking closer, or moving farther away.

## AN INDICATOR

in your bathroom, there is a claw foot tub and when you lift your body from the water, there's never a ring, no proof/no evidence of your body in the space. no droplets of water along the tiles or/strands of hair stuck in the drain.

this is not like the time when you knocked with no answer/this is more like the time when you filled the vase with hyacinths and no one could smell them. like sand falling through a sieve so quick you can't tell it's sand.

I'm wondering about the way evidence lives and breathes and goes unnoticed: sudden cravings for salt/crushed berries on a porch swing/soft moaning through a wall. a pink flamingo in a yard. excess in a corner.

I'm asking you to leave the butter on the counter and the lawn growing real wild. I'm urging you to speak real loud/to be the fulcrum of the problem. the wind is biting and the water is chilly but it's urgent that you leave crumbs.

NEGRO LEAGUE BASEBALL  
BY HARMONY HOLIDAY  
(FENCE Books, 2011)

REVIEWED BY STEVE LANGAN

Harmony Holiday's *Negro League Baseball*, winner of the 2010 Fence Books Motherwell Prize, is a difficult book, and it is, in many places, impenetrable. But after a more full immersion, these cryptic poems, most of which are in ampel-up prose, deliver the reader with immeasurable energy into the future of medium. Set in landscape, rather than portrait orientation, to better hold long lines/stanzas/paragraphs, many poems are punctuated by varying taps on the space bar, which is one of the ways this poet holds the beat. It's a book almost as idiosyncratic as *Spring and All*. The cover of this collection depicts a riotous orgy of music appreciation. Holiday's expansiveness brings to mind C.K. Williams, but compared to her display of fullness and spontaneity, he's counting iambs on his fingers and toes.

Music, heard through unexpected and thrilling word and phrase choices, is apparent throughout this bold debut. From Holiday's far from run-of-the-mill bio, however, we are made aware that she's a dancer and an instructor of dance, which may be the best way to frame how she should be read. In her poems, we are made to feel the presence of the sinuous dancer, the lithe one who can move with ease—muscles and muscle groups that middle-aged men like me never were able to access—and with fluidity that approaches the level of danger. Now that she made this leap and that spin, how is she going to come, in one piece, down to earth? Over and over, Harmony Holiday's poems defy gravity.

Told slant, Holiday has a story to tell, one that involves and serves the memory of her dad and mom. Dad, we learn in the poems and more directly in the bio, was "Northern Soul singer and songwriter Jimmy Holiday." Mom, 30 years younger than he, was a writing student at the University of Iowa when they met. A trim early poem, "The Soonest People," channeling her, ends:

*My father was Jimmy, dad  
was weeping so frankly it came like gazing had*

Yes, we see that Holiday can do Dickinson, just one of many samples and references spliced onto these poems that are shot through so brazenly with multiple influences that, paradoxically, they find a sound—or layers of sound—like no one else's. Another poem that appears early in the first section, "Assembly,"

arrives—after playing around a bit with the metaphor of the “battery” and then, through free association, to the “body” via the “house” and then the “self” (this is how Holiday’s poems move; *People get ready*)—at mom. Part of the first stanza emits a valuable clue about how Holiday, from here forward, should be read:

*recklessness became a dance and a dance became every battery lined up like ready*

For a more full taste of Holiday’s hyper-charged mind in motion, I include the last stanza of “Assembly,” which achieves a full report of Mom, with so much love and tenderness and heartbreak, and includes a Dickinsonian victory salute:

*Every battery lined up in a station as the police check for accidents, no my mother hasn't slipped when she had fallen that maximum down there is constant effort, we feel it as agency one commits to behaving in a certain way and ceases to motor, matter, my mother, with her casual sense of a language of the household scaffolded by words for average moments by words for disaster, for happier, bywords, I can't think of any now but maybe purified by the effort hiding its failure watch her slump into the one rubber chair until she amuses with the automatic of her own sacrifice or fact or Edith Piaf or As you Like it, the right clothes, the right desperation looks indignant and I am dizzy backwards each time I laugh about while I cry for her, demiurgic as our mild sorrow it runs, bang! into ecstasy.*

By dismissing the rote writing workshop dictate to trim the poem down, Holiday is able to access her particular genius. She openly explores and speculates—she says this, says that, how about this?—in messy unrelenting metaphoric free-form. I get the sense she periodically pauses to make what becomes an unexpected and ultimately wise editorial decision: to leave it all in. She lands not only with unexpected gentleness on her marks, but more often than not with complicated and resounding pathos. She seems to convey, “So how do you like that, arbiters of what has become, in too many circles, the *denaturing* creative writing roundtable?”

Throughout the third section (of five), Holiday clearly hits her stride. In “An Assassination from Appropriation Forms,” Jimmy returns:

*that Jimmy finishes wearing his hat down that babbling lane [...]*

And, near the end of the poem, he arrives in yet another form,

*And then Jimmy steps in the from of him, lend me your teeth, lemme your teeth [...]*

It is at this point that even the most jaded reader will want to step in and attempt to save the young woman who demonstrates her vulnerability through the stress she places on language, which keeps fracturing or flaring everywhere she looks, for her protean father, for herself.

However, in “Alltime,” also in section three and presented here in its entirety, Holiday seems to be telling us that, despite the worry her poems may cause, as long as love and validation are options, she’s okay:

*And every time I fall in love, what television, another obituary, I am three,  
trying to tell psychology about /  
psychology: look at me, see me, watch me.*

Because of this poet’s youth and audacity—or because Holiday’s is an original voice, which can obscure or upend readers’ judgment—others may argue that these poems are headlong, excessive, and “private” beyond what’s tolerable. Examining some poems or sections, they probably have a point. But I would happily counter this argument by saying the high virtuosity Holiday represents depends on excess. Though they could not differ more tonally and formally, I see the Derek Walcott of *Omeros*—and the epic poets to whom Walcott regularly pays homage—as ancestor to Harmony Holiday. She is mission-driven to lay claim, however fleeting the objects and subjects of her vision become—dissolving sometimes just as they are presented—to her own distinct contemporary epic of hurt transferred through music and motion into beauty.

Her project, in the end, is one of humanity’s oldest: the reinvigoration and reenactment of history through lyric poetry. By detailing the quest for her family and personal history in a fully imagined stream of crosscurrents, Holiday delivers to us the opportunity to begin to lay claim to our own complicated pasts. The difference between Holiday and many other contemporary poets is that Holiday is brave enough to transfer this information to her readers in an interactive form that upsets all they thought they knew about how poems look, feel, sound, and function. Holiday is energized by the spirit and need of discovery. It seems she can’t help but take ongoing formal, syntactical, and linguistic risks and leaps. Through Harmony Holiday’s daring first collection, we begin to feel what freedom really is; she makes us hardly afraid to re-imagine and redefine 21st Century American poetry.

*STILL: OF THE EARTH AS THE ARK  
WHICH DOES NOT MOVE*  
BY MATTHEW COOPERMAN  
(Counterpath Press, 2011)

REVIEWED BY JERRY CARLIN

In his new collection, *Still: of the Earth as the Ark Which Does Not Move*, Matthew Cooperman gives readers poems of contemporary chaos filtered through a human brain and attendant nervous system. The work provokes multiple blood pressure spikes and drops within individual poems, though we ultimately come to sympathize with this scrupulous, self-observant list-maker and erudite poet.

These 28 poems pencil out a fluid, incessant anxiety. In the *Still:* series the poet indexes his cache of persons, places, and things, setting his foundation to build list-like poems—Christ and Celine Dion, NASA and Gaza, arugula and hangovers—all the while future-tripping to The Three Horsemen of The Rapture.

Cooperman holds close to his charged, disparate bits of information. Ordered on a page, they're like digits on a spreadsheet in a bookkeeper's ledger. Categories of interrelated subjects, pertaining to the poem's title, are placed down the right side of a page. Anxiety "triggers" related to those subject headings are inventoried across the page, separated from their parent heading on the right by a colon:

*Still: Winter*

*and the lanterns coming on: the oil price rising (\$135 crude), the old furnace functioning (2/3rds capacity), the body count rising (38%, 1/20/01–3/20/11)*

*Snowman: made of salt, or the salt made of man, a pillar standing in Whatzitstan a soluble symbol, a salient salve, desert, deserted, desertification [...]*

Like Frank O'Hara in his "I do this, I do that" poems, Cooperman gives readers a glimpse at how a brain filters the world. O'Hara was freer in dispatch, showing how he felt; Cooperman, not so much. He's a straight guy poet writing about feelings. He hides them behind a wall of vocabulary, realizes what he's done, and after being scolded for it, once again, the poet caves and shows tenderness or terror. He's the guy who busts your chops before jetting home to take his twin boys to kiddie yoga; openly butch, closeted sweet.

Reading the collection start to finish in one sitting requires no uncertain stamina. The weft and warp of Cooperman's bulging spreadsheets will unravel the unsuspecting reader, who will live the poem's escalation from baseline worry to despair to stratospheric paranoia. However, the depth of Cooperman's poems becomes apparent in subsequent readings. I am not erudite. I am curious. Faced with the obscure, I stayed close to my Webster's, with Wiki and Google fired up. Accessible but not facile, the poet's bank of cyber-ephemera and skillful nods to total annihilation come to life with terrific rhyme schemes and manic sparkle, while tonal shifts go Pushmi-Pullyu over the map of psycho-social issues:

*you are first  
and on a  
list complexly these  
are hours and  
days oh daze  
to singularize and  
bind disparities please  
please baby please  
make larger space.*

Throughout, the reader is reminded how painful it is to be scared. All. The. Time. Yet, throughout the struggle, readers are asked to consider accepting life on life's terms, as in the final stanza of "Still: Enlightenment," "Problem: driving pictorial expressions of breath down a page about letting go." Not inclined to acceptance, I prefer the stanzas with humming disquiet, like those in *Still: Thirst*, "Equation: coffee = the Enlightenment, Michelob Ultra Peach = the Decline."

The Still: poems alternate with brief, single stanza poems. Whitman, Crane, and what feels like Ashbery, color the verse. In this mix of poems, readers experience Dubstep pacing, measured, lullaby lines, and soft stumbles at frayed line breaks. These poems are like punctuation, a transition, or a rest from the dire lists, like this poem that sets up the reader for a new section:

*everyone in invocation  
chalking a line  
around a thing  
hedge glittering  
belt  
to bolster home  
the local altar  
our little time  
pearling quite quietly  
the child within*

The pattern is sucker-punched as we move into “Still: Shooting.” The poem begins at a brisk pace, the humor in the first stanza devolving into severe turbulence in the second. The stunning simplicity and the chilling rhyme scheme of the second stanza kills, literally in, “Location: grassy knoll, Indonesian atoll, Dakota Hotel, Arizona mall.” The shooting continues with a “roll call:” of schools and colleges, “Presidential Fatalities:” and a well-timed injection of humor, “Announcer: ‘Yes, after a tough day sometimes a shooting game is all you need.’”

These aren’t static lists of whack-a-doodle thinking. Everyone’s anxious, hence The End Times people, the Global Warming People, The 9-11 Conspiracy People. The poems are morning-time gnawing in your gut before hopping out of bed. We’re all afraid of some force taking us out, and Cooperman has catalogued a glorious pandemonium of grown-up considerations to feed off.

Visuals, typographic and otherwise, accompany Cooperman’s poems. Pages of white typeface floating on a black ground are interspersed throughout. Letters, dropped from words on the black pages, disrupt quotes from Harriet Tubman and Kathopanisada, The Serenity Prayer and Corinthians. Crumbling platitudes are no longer reliable. Sprinkled throughout are iconic fonts and logos of name brands; Coca Cola, Ralston Purina, Trojan Condoms, Playboy, and Nikon imply the root of all evil once removed. Cooperman’s visual aids suggest society is totally doomed.

At 116 packed pages, the freshness occasionally disappears; a rhyme scheme doesn’t hit the mark, a stanza doesn’t scan. It takes a DeMilleian effort to sustain this level of energy. Cooperman succeeds despite minor blips in the final cut. He takes risks with mechanics and reputation. Simply put, he has the nerve to let his readers peek and poke at what goes on in his vivid imagination. Near the conclusion of the work, however, the poet really goes all out with a direct poetic declaration in “Still: Here,” “Author: and in the end, I’m still here, I am always in the book, a somewhere I am [...]”

“A somewhere I am” nails it. The poet’s self-exposure made this reader squirm. As someone who obsesses about the inevitable or the unimaginable, Cooperman’s poems do come around to something I easily forget—hope eternal. If he can hang onto that, I suppose I can too, and hope for a world that eschews Michelob Ultra Peach for the refinement of coffee.

*THE HURRICANE LAMP*  
BY SUNDIN RICHARDS  
(Otis Nebula, 2011)

REVIEWED BY ANDREW HALEY

In his first book of poetry, *The Hurricane Lamp*, Sundin Richards gives us lean, jagged poems that seem at first glance mostly erudite bravado but deepen with repeated reading until they span into multitudes. Under inspection, the language reveals simultaneities hung over the precipice of adept enjambment, and syllabic economy developed from scrutinizing the American masters of the short-lined poem. Individually, these poems nurture a fondness for the actual delivered via Richards' predilection for the sordid: "the little / town fumes / in a cradle." But try as he might, the effect is more H.D. than Bukowski. In "The Last of the First of the Last," the misanthropic hangover opens into the lyrical:

*I'm deeply sick  
of you*

*And want to be  
left alone*

[...]

*You spin  
and your*

*Hair spins  
with you*

*Fire your flies  
all you want*

*It won't change  
things*

The modulation from bitterness to elegiac to self-censuring is standard throughout. The forlorn, even self-pitying tone, leads to wider laments (and not a few minor jeremiads) often with such sincerity that a handful of Richard's syllables, divided among couplets or tercets, evoke the more sinuous lines of the *Pisan Cantos*. Few poets use the couplet so concretely. For a punk rock acolyte

of Williams and Olson, Richards' couplets have a materiality, a sculptural intentionality. It is no small thing to fashion short-lined poems which are hewn but not hatchetted. Perhaps because he writes his poems on old manual typewriters, Richards' poems seem machined. There is purpose to their shape. They maximize conduction. The line of their music does not flag. In an age when free verse wears the pope's ring, it is surprising how little attention is paid to the materials. Whereas Richards' basic unit of expression is the syllable, it feels like many poets today use the blog post, or that staple of creative writing workshops, the so-called free write. Lines end with a keystroke, without cause. As a result, much free verse today reads like a paragraph broken at random on a smart phone's screen. Richards puts such thought into the tooling of his lines, into their parsing, shaping, and selection that they exceed the sum of their parts:

*The  
elegant*

*Algebra of  
rocking wires*

*Makes its  
own reveille*

*For me  
and I'm sure*

*I might blos  
som into breaks*

As a collection, *The Hurricane Lamp* pays a subtle, but indebted, homage to *The Maximus Poems*. Richards' Gloucester is Helper, Utah, a derelict coal mining town in the mountains southeast of Salt Lake City, accessible by the nation's most dangerous highway, US-6. It is a scenic, nineteenth century hamlet abandoned to its ruin by the indifferent economic gods, a place whose present was hijacked by its future before it escaped its past. Richards' grandfather lived in Helper and, as a boy, Richards visited by train from his native Colorado. It is from memories of these trips, and later visits, that Richards' Helper, as imagined and remembered, is formed and populated. A blue-collar, tough-guy persona speaks from the last bar under the mountain but, as with Olson among his watermen, the intelligence, sensitivity, and education of the poet continually slip from beneath the mask. While "Firedamp is feared/up and down the line/and are those your teeth/or dice over there?" "chords are/no match/ for a starved/Solyma" and "singing saws/are thaumatropes."

Alecto. Solyma. Thaumatrope. As tough as he tries to be, Richards swaggers though his honkytonks and hangovers quoting Milton, and not the usual soliloquies. Alecto, brother of Nemesis—one of the avengers, the Erinyes, born from the mess of Uranus' castration—punishes moral crimes committed against the people. Richards has brought him to Helper. He is a man with no name. No town has better need of an avenger. This shuffling of rhetorical masks evokes Pound's *Cantos*, which Richards knows well. The persona, as well as Helper's role as an Olsonian topos commit less to a process of realism, than to a Poundian invocation of a lost arcadia; in this case, a plain-talking arcady replete with hookers, miners, and librarians isolated in the high mountains from transformative social and economic changes that destroyed Helper in the second half of the 20th century. Topos in *The Hurricane Lamp* is less important for what it is than for what it is for. Richards' mountain-Gloucesters are an instantiation of arcadia meant to evoke all arcadies. These are not histories, but odes.

In later poems, Richards' poor, sordid habitations are visited by Enkidu and Metatron—Sumerian and Hebrew demigods. As in the *Cantos*, this kind of name-dropping blows out the walls of the realist project and sites the poet, and the reader, in a great vortex of culture and context. Just as Helper is meta-Helper, more variable than referent, so obscure, anachronistic characters and objects help universalize the scope of Richards' poems and predicament. He too becomes a collage. The hardboiled tough guy, the miner, the drunk, the plain-talker, the Hellenist, the slighted wunderkind, the birdwatcher are all masks worn variously, with varying success, sometimes all within the same poem. Despite the chaos and complexity, Richards never lets up on his extreme focus. The poems are tight, clean, tooled. They are inheritors of the ethos of the Imagists. Take for instance that previously quoted line:

*Singing saws  
are thaumatropes*

A thaumatrope is a Victorian toy which consists of a disc with two different images, one on each side. The disk is connected to a string. When both ends of the string are pulled in opposite directions, the disk spins, end over end, creating the illusion that both images are blended into one. A long-time student of Donald Revell, Richards has learned to abhor simile. Here the long, two-handed saws, themselves an anachronism, bend and twist, their blades flipping from one side to another, creating the illusion that both sides are one. The singing saws are thaumatropes. They are not like them.

In “An Explanation,” dawn comes early for the poète maudit and his female companion:

*Mis  
taking*

*Chemicals  
for grief*

*Loose the  
dogs all over*

*For all  
I care*

*Many dawns  
goddamn it*

*Sprinkle your  
sun somewhere*

*Else for  
once*

*I'll give you  
the coordinates*

*Promethium  
for oracle*

*Numphe  
arms reach*

As I'm not much of a scientist, I assumed Promethium was a neologism and, on first reading, I imagined “Promethium/for oracle” as a way of saying something nifty about fire. Promethium is an element on the periodic table. Highly radioactive, it was once widely used in luminous paint. The poet, lying in the half-dark, hearing dogs bark, is looking at his watch. As in “singing saws / are thaumatropes” here promethium really is an oracle. The beauty, complexity, and meaning of these three words are not conveyed through metaphor but through the things themselves, and the suggestion of wider meanings, of the gift of fire,

of first dawns, and all dawns, occurs not in a pocket reality created by inventive word play but in our own minds as our educations and collective culturing respond to the exactitude of the poet's choice. The same goes for "Numphe / arms reach." Numphe, pronounced "noom-fay," is an obscure Greek word, infrequently used in classical culture. It appears briefly in the New Testament and is adapted from the verb "nupto," which means "to veil as a bride." By extension, numphe refers to a young woman or bride. In this case, it is the girl stirring beside him in the twilit space between worlds, still a bride for a moment longer before she wakes up a wife. We have traded punk rock for Morgenlied. In the half-dark, woken by distant dogs, her veil-white arms and the light of a watch dial. It is the honeymoon when night has been forgiven and the day's choices remain unmade. Even the brutest have their aubades.

*SHIP OF FOOL*  
BY WILLIAM TROWBRIDGE  
(Red Hen Press, 2011)

REVIEWED BY LIZ KAY

In his fifth full-length collection, William Trowbridge offers a comical, historical account of man—both mankind, and the singular man—through the archetype and character of the fool/Fool. Sections one and three present Fool as an everyman with spectacularly bad luck, a sort of perpetually recycled Forrest Gump who's brushed shoulders with the important snapshots in human history and left the smudge of his fat thumbprint on each one. Fool's experiences are not limited, though, to the terrestrial realm. He is, we learn in Trowbridge's answer to Milton, "Fool's Paradise," a sort of angel whose fall from grace was not through intent, but as fitting a fool, accident:

*Fool, who was standing too close when God  
swept the rebel seraphim into perdition, tries,  
as the former Lucifer exhorts, to make a heaven  
of Hell. After all, feeling your eyeballs boil inside  
keeps your mind off your smoldering testicles.*

Fool maintains his rotten luck and kick-me grin throughout his misadventures. He's "Basic Fool" in Cupid's army, an unsuccessful werewolf, the captain of a child's bathtub boat, and the 97-pound weakling from the Charles Atlas ads. He's God's (musical) instrument, a spiritual guide assigned to Hitler, and a perpetual celestial fuck-up. In the poem, "Foolin' Around," Fool is left in charge by a vacationing God in a mythical future in which earthly life has been perfected:

*[...] But he can't resist trying to pick up  
the Hammer of Creation, which causes him  
to stumble against the Divine Trash Bin,  
spilling Hate and Death into the Pipeline,  
which schleps them back into the fabric  
of temporal life, where there'll be hell  
to pay, Fool knows, being omniscient also.*

This is neither the first, nor the last time humanity bears the brunt of Fool's misguided efforts, as in "Fool Demonstrates His Invention." Envisioning fireworks and celebration, Fool introduces gunpowder into human history.

*“Think of the children,  
their upturned faces  
shimmering in the dark,”  
says Fool. “Think  
of the stubbornest obstacles  
blown away,” he says  
to the Emperor,  
who’s already thinking.*

Yet this demonstrates what is both Fool’s frailty and his redemption—his naivete, his inability to see the shoe about to drop. Fool, we’re told, is “grief’s warm-up bag, / unhygenically pure,” who might love anyone, and indeed, he does. While God and other celestial beings pop up in poem after poem, it’s Fool who loves humanity, who weeps for the earth and “how its six billion passengers / bump along in sorrow and hope and terror and sometimes / that sweet jalopy called love.” Fool’s

*[...] heart  
takes up a galaxy. There’s room in it  
for all humankind, even burdens on society  
  
and threats to public decency [...]*

The middle section of the book breaks from Fool the archetype’s adventures to recount the foolishness of a singular life. We’re taken through childhood adventures like “Pantsing Bobby Freeman in Fifth Grade,” through accordion lessons and getting pounded by the neighborhood bully. We see the dumb luck of teenagers managing to live through the stupidity of fast cars and young heartbreak and adolescent anxiety. We’re shown the musings of an older man, a little wiser only in his ability to recognize himself as a fool, to realize the foolishness of his youth, yet still fool enough to be nostalgic for all of it.

While the Fool poems of the first and third sections are sharp and crafted and full of wit, it is this middle section that resonates. Where Fool is naïve and guileless and incapable of anything but spectacular failure, the middle section reveals us as we are and shows our small sad failures, our small, un-Fool-like hearts. Take “Pantsing Bobby Freeman in Fifth Grade,” in which our speaker witnesses the pantsing of a victim chosen for “the eyes that said // ‘free shot.’”

*[...] “Eeyow,  
shit stains!” somebody yelled,  
as Bobby squirmed to cover up*

*his tiny pecker and those eyes,  
and I joined in a ballsy-toned guffaw,  
one like I'd heard my father share,*

*matching boilermakers  
with his buddies from the plant—  
one B-flick Viking to another*

*as the monastery roars. It felt OK,  
and school so nearly out.*

Throughout the book, we're treated to Trowbridge's trademark talents—the fine craft of his poems, his irreverent humor, and his egalitarian mixing of references in which Milton and Hume share equal footing with Mr. Bubble, classic movies, and hot-rod cars, especially one “with Lake pipes, Olds spinners, / Hilburn-injected Chrysler hemi / cammed with an Isky Crossflow 7000.”

It takes pieces of all of this to capture the story of mankind, and of course, our story is one with less of a hero and more of an anti-hero, one with not much luck but with a lot of heart, bumbling through the best he can. The secret, from “The Art of Motorcycle Maintenance,” is to

*[...] Quit brooding on the high speed  
wobble, the endo, a decline in futures.  
Have faith in the sturdy god of gyroscopics  
and, despite the October chill, this tangy day  
when you're not yet dead or worse.*

*THE SLIDING GLASS DOOR*  
BY SCOTT POOLE  
(Colonus Publishing, 2011)

REVIEWED BY ROB CARNEY

*“What influences my writing more than anything are my old Steve Martin albums. The timing of his delivery is pure genius. He holds the audience on every word. That’s what a true poet does.”*

—Scott Poole

Like Scott Poole, I’m a fan of Steve Martin. I’m on my third copy of *Picasso at the Lapin Agile and Other Plays*. I’ve seen the title play performed twice. What first got me hooked, though, were the comedy albums. My friend and I used to play them over and over in his living room back when they were brand new and we were just kids. Hilarious. But unparaphraseable.

Poole’s poems are similar. They arrive at what functions as a punch line, but he isn’t telling jokes, and often the punch lines are aiming at something bigger than a laugh. “What Happens Every Year When My Mom Asks Me What I Want for Christmas” and “Visit from a Bullfighter” demonstrate this well. The titles cue us to expect narrative and drama, but in inverse ways: The first suggests we’ll be presented with the extraordinary in the ordinary; the second suggests the opposite; and in each, that’s exactly what happens. And both end with punch lines: “How about a shirt?” she replies. “Shirts are nice,” and “I don’t know what he’s crying about. This ice cream is good.” But without the stories—Poole’s avalanching or balky trial-and-error ways of getting there—the punch lines aren’t able to skeet-shoot us out of the air. And those stories, those getting-theres, can’t be paraphrased. You really need to have them whole.

Still, here’s a synopsis of the Christmas poem, followed by excerpts from the one about a matador so baffled by the banality of our suburban way of living that it’s like he’s being existentially gored: In answer to his mom’s question about what to get him for Christmas, a grown man, played by Scott Poole in his exuberant imagination, progresses from “just want[ing] everyone to be happy” to needing fencing lessons, a vast tank of helium, 2,523 banjos, and a secret lair, not necessarily in that order. As you read it, it makes perfect sense. And “Visit from a Bullfighter” begins in medias res with no explanation about what prompted this visitation in the first place:

*I show him the croquet set.  
It's broken. Nobody has played in years.  
Next, we turn on the television to find a show*

*but he stabs his sword straight through it. [...]*

*I take him to the Olive Garden for lunch. [...]  
"This is ridiculous," he says, crossing his arms. [...]*

*I love the library. I take him to the library.  
[...] I raise my hands*

*to the bookshelves in a grand gesture of possibility.  
He throws his head back and tromps out with great pomp.  
Outside, I find him smoking by the fountain. [...]*

*"Where are the bulls?" he shouts to no one in particular.*

*"Where is death and beauty?" he screams.  
"Back off freak!" says a scampering woman.*

The poem doesn't exactly add up to Rilke's "You must change your life," but it's in that neighborhood. And it's subversive right up to the final line, where it undercuts the absurdist game it's been playing, and does so with an ordinary ice-cream cone.

It's poems like this one that keep me coming back. From his first book *The Cheap Seats* (Lost Horse Press 1999), to *Hiding from Salesmen* (Lost Horse 2003), to this new collection *The Sliding Glass Door*, that's always been the case. I'm hooked by the joyful, goofy, improbable, fantastic humor he rides in on like a unicycling armadillo juggler. But I stay for the more serious, sometimes even melancholy, remainder of the show. This book, like the previous two, has plenty of that.

"Small Resistance" is an elegy that gives me, still, that experience of nerve-shivers even though I know what's coming in the final stanza. It's understated and moving. Likewise, "My House" is a critique of the Bush administration disguised, à la Frank O'Hara, as a present-tense rendering of daily this-and-thats. Like O'Hara, Poole weaves counterpoints so that the result is much more than a journal entry about cleaning the house and taking care of the kids:

*It's the weekend. A Saturday.  
There are three children sleeping*

*in the rooms of my house.  
My son. My daughter. My nephew. My house.  
I'm in charge. Me.  
It's 9:16 p.m. in the dark days of October.  
Rain pounds the house, and the porch light,  
as I peer out, fills with breath.  
Yesterday, one of the top five  
people in the White House was  
indicted for perjury. A man named Scooter.  
I have almost constant rib pain now,  
but I'm not being indicted for perjury.  
No great scandal is rocking my house.*

And like O'Hara—I'm thinking of classics in Lunch Poems like "A Step Away from Them" and "The Day Lady Died"—Poole ends this twelve lines later with a redirect, a swerve away, that's somehow exactly on target, "The president can kiss my ass. / Everyone can come live with me."

Finally, there's "Keeping the Promise," another strong example of a high-stakes subject approached with both humor and seriousness. This poem about devoted fatherhood moves seamlessly toward its own self-help-support-group antithesis, and it's the word "cardboard," of all things, that allows him to conclude with an impressive shape-shifter move:

*[...] In fact, if I didn't have kids  
that would even be better. Cardboard kids  
I could always commit to and still get to my  
  
committing meetings and not have to worry  
about giving them constant commitment. That's it!  
I'm going to have sex with a cardboard box.  
  
I'll put my entire self in a cardboard box,  
commit in my mind as hard as I can,  
and someday they'll mail me to my children.*

If you know his work already, you'll be glad to have this new book. Maybe "Shelving" will be your favorite, or "How Our Living Room Became a Cemetery." They're a couple of brilliantly oddball fables, and I'm a fan of both. For those of you who've never heard of Scott Poole, you should treat yourself—you're worth it. Get this book, then back up and read *Hiding from Salesmen* and *The Cheap Seats* too. I'll bet 2,523 banjos you'll be happy that you did.

*MOMENTS OF DELICATE BALANCE*  
BY WILLIAM KLOEFKORN AND DAVID LEE  
(Wings Press, 2011)

REVIEWED BY GARY DOP

Poems and poets do not exist in solitude. We often want to believe that each poem stands alone and likewise that each poet is an autonomous voice. We tend to tie the concept of a successful lone-voice to aesthetic mastery. So when I picked up *Moments of Delicate Balance*, I puzzled over why these two poets, both experienced and established writers, would tie their individual collections to each other's. Of course the available answer is that they were longtime friends, they shared a poetic sensibility, and their voices complemented one another, but none of this really answers what the reader gains from a two-author collection.

The sheer volume and quality of the poems in this collection, which are divided into two sections, one for each author, is easily worth the price of admission. This generous heap of language fits alongside the very best of Lee, former poet Laureate of Utah, and Kloefkorn, the long-time State Poet of Nebraska until his death prior to this book's publication in 2011. These poets share an honest, accessible, and rustic perspective. Their impressive body of work, here and elsewhere, celebrates life, inimitable people, and common speech.

But it's the differences between the authors that enhances this collection, like the way a film can thrive with two distinct protagonists—Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, for example. Kloefkorn and Lee, like Butch and Sundance, want the same thing but each approaches it in his own way. Perhaps it's Lee who is the better gun slinger, à la Sundance, spraying his bulleted colloquial speech across the page, mesmerizing the reader. But it's Kloefkorn, like Butch, who never lets hope slip too far away; even in death's doorway, he's still dreaming.

Kloefkorn's appreciation for life and people is at the forefront of all his poetry. We know from him that the world matters because we feel it mattering through him. In "At Risky's Bar & Lounge," we don't stop to wonder, as we might with other poets, if we're to assume that Kloefkorn is the speaker of the poem. It doesn't matter. We're sitting with him, seeing the "lean and young and moon-faced and clear-eyed" waitress tell him that her cancer is in remission, and we're wanting, with Kloefkorn, not to look too much at the hair on her head, which he tells us looks "to be fur, young rabbit fur." We need, as Kloefkorn constantly shows us—his need—to be in communion with his wonderful world:

[...] *And when*

*our waitress returns I'll ask her to remove  
her apron and join us. I want to give her  
the keys to the kingdom. O somebody, please,  
attend me! I want to touch her hair.*

Kloefkorn's poems attend their subjects with such compassion and pleasure that we sense he's honored to have been allowed to write them. We hear this even in "Almost Spring," where Kloefkorn exults in the beautiful mess of our bumbling individuality and connectivity:

*[...] Hope  
wearing only her  
birthday apparel appears and  
  
kisses me full on the mouth and  
the moment like a curtain  
rises and all the world is a stage  
  
and we are on it acting  
singly and collectively and gloriously  
and god help all of us  
  
forever the insatiable fool.*

Lee's, on the other hand, do not foreground his appreciation for his characters and life. Instead, he disappears and his characters present themselves to us with all the grotesque joy of a Sherwood Anderson story. His poems pulse with the gravelly, seriocomic voices of rural America, specifically his West Texas. The opening poem of his section follows the investigation of the rumor of the lightning-strike death of Wesley Stevens, "the second sorriest excuse for a human being," according to R.B. McCravey, who learns that Stevens is alive and was simply lying in a field measuring the dents from the rain. McCravey is disappointed both that the rain didn't come to his own land and that Stevens is, in fact, alive:

*it was all a dead false issue  
under another clear blue sky  
one way or another  
with not a single next cloud on the horizon  
nothing to celebrate or look forward to  
as far as he could see.*

I couldn't help but read this closing of his opening poem as Lee's ironic wink toward his portion of the collection, which is certainly worthy of celebrating. His poems pop with unique personas, and his various narrative voices and found poems always channel local lingo. In "A Veritable Tale of a Wife, A Porch and a Dog," the speaker says of Mutt Landry that he "was on the worst luckrun of his whole live life history," which allows the speaker to both set up the story and to embody Landry's voice. It's Lee's colloquial speech, the envy of all except perhaps Twain, that hooks us into his world, a world of quirky characters, like Harold Rushing, who tells the local preacher about a man who quit studying to be a priest in the "non-true faith" because

*abstinence, poverty and chastity  
aren't any one ezactly  
all they cracked up to be*

We read the poem and laugh. We trust the voice. We know the voice. There's no lofty poetic message coming through—it's on the page to celebrate the singular desperate voice, the voice of all of us. At one point in "Odus Millard," a man speaks about his daughter to his potential son-in-law:

*a woman can only love a thing  
if she can pity it  
and then run over it  
so you might be just what she's destined for*

Lee writes from deep within the West Texas world he's never escaped, even after all his years in Utah, and as a result, we hear our own community's peculiar voices.

Several of Lee and Kloefkorn's poems seem to be speaking for more than the poem's surface context. In "God's Lion, God's Lyre," a town bristles when one of its deviants becomes a Pentecostal preacher, and Lee writes through one of his characters:

*if we search long and hard enough  
through the mental pages of our own self-invention  
and whoever's face we find  
will just flat not be the one we expected  
whether it's in the mirror or in front of us smirking  
we are all of us of the same ilk and in this together*

*we best learn to live with it and each other*

Similarly, in “Ashokan Farewell,” Kloefkorn’s words seem to portend more than enjoying his granddaughter’s gift for playing the violin. Here Kloefkorn embodies the unaware, prophetic voice of the poet writing of his own gift, of the gift that he and Lee have given all of us—the important reminder that poetry is a communion between writers and readers and writers and writers, as Lee writes, “we best learn to live with it and each other,” and that as Kloefkorn says:

*Just now it is no more farewell  
than hello, hello to the gift  
unwrapping itself in sound [...]*

The initial question—why do two authors share a book?—has its better answer: two authors bind their books together because they have moved beyond the petty, youthful posturing of individuality, and they know their poems were bound together, with their readers and the writers to come, long before their poems were ever written. Through *Moments of a Delicate Balance* we celebrate with Kloefkorn and Lee the life lived sharing life, our “whole live life history.”

- Jeffrey Alfier, *Before the Troubadour Exits*, Kindred Spirit Press, 2010
- Jeffrey Alfier, *Bluesman's Daughter*, Kindred Spirit Press, 2011
- Jeffrey Alfier, *The Torch Singer*, Kindred Spirit Press, 2011
- Lillian-Yvonne Bertram, *But a Storm is Blowing from Paradise*, Red Hen Books, 2012
- Simmons Buntin, *Bloom*, Salmon Poetry, 2011
- Paul Christensen, *The Human Condition*, Wings Press, 2011
- Steven Fellner, *The Weary World Rejoices*, Marsh Hawk Press, 2011
- Kelle Groom, *Five Kingdoms*, Anhinga Press, 2009
- Mark Jackley, *Every Green Word*, Finishing Line Press, 2012
- Amy King, *I Want to Make You Safe*, Litmus Press, 2011
- Margaret Randall, *My Town: A Memoir of Albuquerque*, New Mexico in Poems, Prose and Photographs, Wings Press, 2012
- Ariana Reines, *Mercury*, FENCE Books, 2011
- Liz Robbins, *Play Button*, Cider Press Review, 2012

## BIOGRAPHIES

KARA ARGUELLO, an unabashed fan of hair metal, was born and raised in Pittsburgh, PA, but fled for the sun and now writes in San Jose, CA. She lives with a husband who misses the Wasatch mountains, a squirrel-obsessed Ibizan hound, and a debonair cat named Shamrock.

CHRISTOPHER ARIGO'S first poetry collection, *Lit interim*, won the 2001–2002 Transcontinental Poetry Prize (selected by David Bromige) and was published by Pavement Saw Press (2003). His second collection, *In the archives* (2007), was released by Omnidawn Publishing. His poems have appeared in *Colorado Review*, *New American Writing*, *Barrow Street*, and many others. He co-edits the literary journal *Interim* with poet Claudia Keelan, and is an Assistant Professor of English at Washington State University.

WILLIAM AUTEN'S work has appeared or is forthcoming in *failbetter*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Nimrod*, *Sycamore Review*, *Drunken Boat*, and other publications.

JENN BLAIR has published in *Cold Mountain Review*, *James Dickey Review*, *Orange Coast Review*, *New South*, *Tulane Review*, *Santa Fe Review*, and *Rattle*, among others. Her chapbook, *All Things are Ordered*, is recently out from Finishing Line Press. She is from Yakima, WA, and lives in Winterville, GA, with her daughter, husband, and two goldfish that she feeds three times a day plus one late-night snack (despite everyone telling her she overfeeds them, they seem pretty happy and healthy).

JULIA BOUWSMA'S poems and reviews have appeared in publications such as *The Progressive*, *CutThroat*, and *Colorado Review*. An MFA recipient from Goddard College, she lives off-grid on a remote hilltop in the mountains of western Maine with four dogs, two cats, twenty-seven chickens, and four pigs.

MARY KOVALESKI BYRNES teaches in the First Year Writing Program at Emerson College where she received her MFA in Creative Writing. Her work has appeared in numerous literary journals, including the *Minnetonka Review*, *Squaw Valley Review*, *Poets & Artists*, *Silk Road*, and Boston.com's *Passport*. She lives in Cambridge, MA.

JERRY CARLIN lives on Bainbridge Island, WA, with his husband and their two whippets, Spencer and Elvis. While preparing applications for MFA programs, he takes classes at his community college where, at fifty-five, he is one of the oldest students on campus. After grad school, he plans to teach and write.

ROB CARNEY is the author of three collections—*Story Problems* (Somondoco, 2011), *Weather Report* (Somondoco, 2006), and *Boasts, Toasts, and Ghosts*, winner of the 2002 Pinyon Press National Poetry Book Contest—and two chapbooks, *New Fables, Old Songs*, winner of the 2002 Dream Horse Press National Chapbook Competition, and *This Is One Sexy Planet*, winner of the Frank Cat Press Poetry Chapbook Award in 2005. *Home Appraisals*, a new chapbook, including several poems that first appeared in *Sugar House Review*, is forthcoming from Plan B Press in fall 2012. He is a Professor of English and Literature at Utah Valley University and lives in Salt Lake City.

RIO CORTEZ is a Cave Canem fellow and graduate of Sarah Lawrence College, where she received the Lucy Grealy Prize in Poetry. She is an MFA candidate at New York University. Her work has appeared in *Clementine, Cratelit*, and *Tidal Basin Review*. Born and raised in Salt Lake City, she loves and lives in Queens, NY.

STEVEN CRAMER'S fifth collection is *Clangings* (Sarabande Books, 2012). In addition to *Sugar House Review*, other excerpts from *Clangings* have appeared in *Crazy Horse, Denver Quarterly, Field, The Journal, Little Star, Memoirious, Salamander*, and *Slate*. Cramer is the author of four previous collections, including *Goodbye to the Orchard* (Sarabande, 2004), which won the 2005 Sheila Motton Prize from the New England Poetry Club and was named a 2005 Honor Book in Poetry by the Massachusetts Center for the Book. He directs the Low-Residency MFA Program in Creative Writing at Lesley University in Cambridge, MA.

TARA DEAL is the author of two books from small presses: *Wander Luster* is a poetry chapbook from Finishing Line Press, and *Palms Are Not Trees After All* is the winner of the 2007 Clay Reynolds Novella Prize from Texas Review Press. Her shortest story ever appears in *Hint Fiction* (W.W. Norton).

SHIRA DENTZ'S first collection, *black seeds on a white dish*, published by Shearsman Books, was nominated for the 2011 PEN/Osterweil Award. She's also the author of a chapbook, *Leaf Weather*, and a forthcoming hybrid prose/poetry collection, *door of thin skins*. She is Reviews Editor at *Drunken Boat* and her work appears in many journals, including *APR* and *The Iowa Review*. Her awards include Poetry Society of America's Lyric Poem Award and the Cecil Hemley Memorial Award. Dentz is a graduate of the Iowa Writer's Workshop and has a PhD from the University of Utah. Visit her at [shiradentz.com](http://shiradentz.com).

GARY DOP grew up throughout Germany and the United States, and now lives with his wife and three daughters in Minneapolis. Dop received a Special Mention in the *2011 Pushcart Prize Anthology*, and his poems have appeared

or are forthcoming in *Prairie Schooner*, *New Letters*, *Agni*, *New York Quarterly*, and *Rattle*, among others.

DEJA EARLEY'S poems and essays have appeared or are forthcoming in journals like *Arts and Letters*, *Borderlands*, and *Lilliput Review*. She's received honors in several contests, including the 2008 Joan Johnson Award in poetry, the 2004–2005 Parley A. and Ruth J. Christensen Award, and two Honorable Mentions from the Academy of American Poets in 2003 and 2004. Earley completed a PhD in English and Creative Writing at the University of Southern Mississippi and lives in the Boston area, where she works as a development editor at Bedford/St Martin's.

AMY EISNER teaches creative writing and literature at the Maryland Institute College of Art. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *FENCE*, *Permafrost*, *Poet Lore*, *The Madison Review*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, and other journals.

KAT FINCH grew up in Bellingham, WA, and explores the area on her bike, Argentina. When not hitting the pavement, you can find her hiking around the mountains and forests. She enjoys her orange portable space heater (a cat), Ern Malley, and shiny things. In poetry she likes to experiment with the line between sense and nonsense.

GUISEPPE GETTO is a Zen Buddhist, poet, and Assistant Professor of New Media, Rhetoric, and Professional Writing at SUNY-Cortland. His creative work can be found in *Santa Clara Review*, *Redactions: Poetry & Poetics*, *Slant*, *Reed*, and *Eclectica*. He is still trying to figure out where his own style fits within the increasingly divergent conversation that is contemporary American poetry. Visit him online at: [www.guiseppgetto.com](http://www.guiseppgetto.com).

TANYA GRAE is an MFA in Creative Writing candidate at Bennington College and earned a BA in English & Writing from Rollins College. She is currently the Production and Website Editor for *SPECS*, a journal of contemporary art and literature. Her poetry won an Academy of American Poets Prize in 2010. A mother of three children, she's a late bloom with hands full and arms wide open. Chocolate is her weakness.

KATE GREENSTREET is the author of *The Last 4 Things* and *case sensitive*, both from Ahsahta Press. Her work can be found in recent or forthcoming issues of *Boston Review*, *Chicago Review*, *Colorado Review*, *Black Warrior Review*, and other journals. Ahsahta will publish her third book, *Young Tambling*, in 2013.

ANDREW HALEY'S first book of poems, *Good Eurydice*, was published in December 2011. His short stories, essays, translations, and other poems have appeared in *BlazeVOX*, *Fanzine*, *Stop Smiling*, *Girls With Insurance*, *Quarterly West*, *Zone*, *Otis Nebula*, *Western Humanities Review*, *Beltway Poetry Quarterly*, and other magazines. He lives in Portland, OR.

MARK HENDRICKSON lives in Irvine with his wife and cat, trying to complete an MFA and not worry (overly) about the end of the world. He recently won the Gerard Creative Writing Endowment Award, and is poetry editor of UC Irvine's literary journal *Faultline*.

PATRICK THOMAS HENRY is a graduate of the Writers Institute at Susquehanna University, and earned a MA in English literature from Bucknell University, where he studied under G.C. Waldrep. Currently enrolled in the MFA program at Rutgers University, he is the author of *On Writing Short Stories* (Oxford University Press, 2010), a creative writing text edited by Tom Bailey. Patrick's essays have appeared in *Modern Language Studies*, and his short fiction is forthcoming in *The Writing Disorder* and *Revolution House*.

ALEC HERSHMAN lives in St. Louis where he teaches at the Stevens Institute of Business and Arts and at the Center for Humanities at Washington University. Other poems can be found in issues of *Transom*, *Barnwood Poetry Magazine*, and *Existere*.

KATHERINE HOLLANDER has published poems and reviews in *AGNI Online*, *Open City*, *Pleiades*, and elsewhere. She holds an MA in creative writing from Boston University, where she is now pursuing a PhD in modern European history. She spent last July doing research and writing poems in Bertolt Brecht's thatched-roof cottage on the Danish island of Fyn.

LIZ KAY holds an MFA from the University of Nebraska, where she was the recipient of an Academy of American Poets Prize. Recent poems have appeared or are forthcoming in such journals as *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Willow Springs*, *South Dakota Review*, and *New York Quarterly*. Her chapbook, *Something To Help Me Sleep*, was released by dancing girl press in January of 2012. Liz lives in Omaha where she is a founding editor of the journal *burntdistrict*.

RAY KEIFETZ has work currently appearing or forthcoming in *The Bitter Oleander*, *Cider Press Review*, *Magnapoets*, *Palooka*, and *The Clackamas Literary Review*, among others. When he's not writing he's either building furniture or out selling wine.

STEVE LANGAN is the author of *Freezing* (New Issues, 2001), *Notes on Exile and Other Poems* (Backwaters, 2005), and *Meet Me at the Happy Bar* (BlazeVOX [books], 2009).

NATE LIEDERBACH splits his time between Salt Lake City and Nuthanger Farm, where he's engaged in a series of furious doe-raids with cohorts Hazel and Pipkin.

CHARLIE MALONE lives in Fort Collins, CO, where he edits a quarterly, ultra-local newszine, *Matterhorn*, and curates the poetry for *Matter Journal*. Both publications belong to Wolverine Farm Publishing. Charlie went to school for many years at Kent State and Colorado State; he liked it just fine. His work has appeared in *Laurel Review*, *Phoebe*, *Harpur Palate*, *Boneshaker: A Bicycling Almanac*, *Luna Negra*, and *Permafrost*.

MATT MASON lives in Omaha with his wife and two lovely daughters. His first book of poetry, *Things We Don't Know We Don't Know*, won the 2007 Nebraska Book Award for Poetry. Matt has helped with poetry events in Nepal and Belarus through the U.S. State Department, and for U.S. bookstores, colleges, state fairs, ice cream shops, and more.

LOUIS MCKEE has poems recently or forthcoming in *APR*, *Free Lunch*, *Patterson Poetry Review*, *5 A.M.*, *Chiron Review*, *Versé Wisconsin*, and *Nerve Cowboy*, among others. His book, *River Architecture* was published in 1999, and a collection of newer work, *Near Occasions of Sin*, appeared in 2006. More recently, Adastra Press published *Marginalia*, his translations of Old Irish monastic poems. *Still Life*, a chapbook of poems, has recently been issued from FootHills Press, and *Jamming*, a prize winner, from TLOLP. His 1987 collection, *No Matter*, was republished by Seven Kitchens Press in 2011.

COLIN MELDRUM is editor of *A cappella Zoo*. He envies dancers and muses, but still enjoys his own life quite a bit. He grew up in Idaho and now lives in Seattle with his partner and the five-foot tree they raised from an avocado pit.

CHRISTOPHER LEE MILES' work has appeared in *Connecticut Review*, *Cortland Review*, *South Dakota Review*, and is forthcoming in *Atlanta Review* and *War, Literature, and the Arts*. He is a finalist for the 2011 Ruth Lilly Fellowship Prize. A veteran of both Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom, he lives in Alaska.

JACK MILLER lives with his wife and nine-year-old daughter just outside Boston, where he does various tech-type things during the day, including database administration and microwave oven repair. He writes and bakes vegan desserts at

night. His poetry has appeared in *RHINO*, *Packingtown Review*, and *Harpur Palate*. If you like, you can find more information at <http://www.jack-miller.org/about/>.

TRAVIS MOSSOTTI is currently the Poet-in-Residence at the Endangered Wolf Center in St. Louis, MO. He was awarded the 2011 May Swenson Poetry Award by contest judge Garrison Keillor for his first collection of poems, *About the Dead* (USU Press, 2011), and in 2010 his poem “Decampment” was adapted to screen as an animated short film. He currently resides in St. Louis with his wife, Regina, and their daughter, Cora.

LAUREN NICOLE NIXON is a Brooklyn-based teaching artist and poet. Nixon recently completed her MA in Arts Politics from New York University. Recent and forthcoming publications include *Tulane Review*, *apt*, *Jelly Bucket*, *Rougarou*, *Umbrella Factory*, *Spillway*, *No, Dear*, and *In Posse Review*. Visit her at [www.laurennicolenixon.com](http://www.laurennicolenixon.com).

SUSAN NYIKOS earns her living by teaching writing and literature courses at Utah State University in picturesque Logan, UT. Though her poems have appeared elsewhere as well—in *wordriver*, *Loose Leaves*, and the annual chapbook of her local poetry group, Poetry@3—she considers being published in *Sugar House Review* one of her greatest accomplishments, right next to her triplet sons.

GAVIN OTTESON is an artist of little renown who dreams big. In days gone by he was a graphic designer and a muralist. He is now an illustrator for hire. He is a native of Salt Lake City (Go Jazz!) who now lives in Oklahoma City (Boo Thunder!). You can view his work online at [gavinottesonart.deviantart.com](http://gavinottesonart.deviantart.com) or at [facebook.com/gavinottesonart](https://www.facebook.com/gavinottesonart).

CARL PHILLIPS teaches at Washington University in St. Louis. His 12th book of poems, *Silverchest*, will be out in the spring of 2013.

MELISSA REESER POULIN is currently writing poems in Portland, OR, where she also enjoys foaming milk for cappuccinos at a small café, attempting to grow tomatoes in a climate hostile to their needs, and the company of her husband, a blacksmith and jeweler. She is Managing Editor of *Boneshaker: A Bicycling Almanac*. Read more at [www.theinstantlibrarian.com](http://www.theinstantlibrarian.com).

JANIS E. RODGERS is a poet, adventurer, and lover of Africa and Old World primates. She has a BS in Evolutionary Anthropology from Rutgers University, and is currently working on her MFA in Creative Writing and Environment at Iowa State University.

DAVID RUEKBERG lives near Rochester, NY, and teaches English in the International Baccalaureate program at Hilton High School; vacations allow him time for writing, but rarely for submitting. He received his MFA from Warren Wilson College, and enjoyed a residency at Jentel Arts, in Sheridan, WY. His poems have been published in *Yankee*, *Poet Lore*, *North American Review*, 88, *Mudfish*, and others.

F. DANIEL RZICZNEK'S books of poetry include *Divination Machine* (Free Verse Editions/Parlor Press, 2009) and *Neck of the World* (Utah State University Press, 2007). Recipient of an Ohio Arts Council Individual Excellence Award for 2010, he is co-editor of *The Rose Metal Press Field Guide to Prose Poetry: Contemporary Poets in Discussion and Practice* (Rose Metal Press, 2010). Rzicznek lives and teaches in Bowling Green, OH.

LIZ ROBBINS' manuscript, *Play Button*, won the 2010 Cider Press Review Book Award, judged by Patricia Smith. Her poems appear or are forthcoming in *Barrow Street*, *Cimarron Review*, *Greensboro Review*, *New Ohio Review*, *Rattle*, *Barn Owl Review*, *Bayou*, and *Poet Lore*. Poems from her first book, *Hope, As the World Is a Scorpion Fish* (Backwaters Press), appeared on Garrison Keillor's *The Writer's Almanac* and *Verse Daily*. She's an assistant professor at Flagler College in St. Augustine, FL, and recently presented poems at a New York Institute of Technology conference in Nanjing, China.

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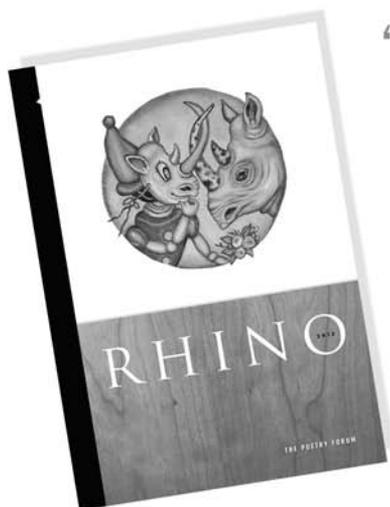
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