



SUGAR HOUSE REVIEW

VOLUME 3:
SPRING / SUMMER

\$7

SUGAR HOUSE REVIEW



POETRY

Featuring:

Anne Caston

Jeffrey McDaniel

Greg Pape

Joshua Marie Wilkinson

SUGAR HOUSE REVIEW

AN INDEPENDENT POETRY MAGAZINE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

POETRY

SHANGRILA WILLY	
Death Spell	1
ABY KAUPANG	
the river absolute our love so geometric	2
Ceci n'est pas	3
une pipe les femmes	
in the Chambered Nautilus	4
ELIZABETH PRESTON	
After a High-Rise Fire	5
Memoir in Skyscrapers	7
MATTHEW SINEX	
Gabe Puts Dinosaurs in his PowerPoint	8
CHELSEA JENNINGS	
Transmission Loss	9
JEFF HARDIN	
Mind,	10
Find on This Page	11
ROBERT N. WATSON	
My Definition of Is	12
JONTERRI GADSON	
Horizons	13
KATIE JEAN SHINKLE	
Cabbage Palm	14
BRANDI HOMAN	
I Was Gasping for Contact	15
Football Season Is Over	16
JEFFREY MCDANIEL	
Visiting Author Blues, (or how I racked up a thirteen	17
hundred dollar bill at the hotel you were paying for)	
Little Soldier of Love	18
Yard Work	19

MARK JACKLEY	
Grace	20
GREG PAPE	
Dandelions	21
If You Lived Here	22
Big Lost River Breakdown	23
Waking to Rain	26
DAVID STARKEY	
Étude	27
SCOTT M. BADE	
Mosquito	28
DIANE UNTERWEGER	
Houdini at Fifty	29
DAWN LONSINGER	
She Had No Toaster Oven	31
ALISON PELEGRIN	
Hangman	32
Mid City Tours	33
PAUL SCOT AUGUST	
On the Way to the Cemetery in New Auburn, I Stop to Watch a Pair of Ducks	34
CINDY HUNTER MORGAN	
The Pawnbroker	35
The Ringmaster	36
ERIC BURGER	
Sizzle	37
For the Living	38
JASON TANDON	
Reception	39
JOSHUA MARIE WILKINSON	
from Meadow Slasher (I)	40

JULIA LEVERONE	
Driving to Rose Haven	45
JOSEPH MURPHY	
Back on the Island	46
JEFFREY C. ALFIER	
The Language of Spectral Ships	48
How We Remember the Chanteuse	49
JOEL ALLEGRETTI	
The Moon Reconsidered as the Tide's Puppeteer	50
ANNE CASTON	
Salmon Days: Copper River, Alaska, 2009	52
The Life I Might Have Had	53
Spell, For Conceiving a Son	54
Spell, For Conceiving a Daughter	55
MELANIE HENDERSON	
One More Breath for Sylvia Plath	56
Gertrude	58
JEN HAWKINS	
The curse of elbows in birthmothers and other wayward girls	59
STEVEN D. SCHROEDER	
Traveller from an Antique Land	60
JEFF WHITNEY	
[Everyone in Goya's black paintings . . .]	61
[Sometimes the best thing to do . . .]	62
WILLIE JAMES KING	
There Were Others	63
Now Folk Hail	64
SARA WATSON	
Lost & Found	65

ROB COOK	
How I Lost My Driving Gig	66
Morgellons	68
MATTHEW COOPERMAN	
<i>Spool 22</i>	70
BROCK DETHIER	
Chaining for Buffalo in the Henry Mountains	72
ELIJAH BURRELL	
Bones	73
RYAN J. BROWNE	
Theory of Spall	74
BROCK MICHAEL JONES	
Zero Gravity	78
MIKE PETRIK	
The Hollow	79
GRACIE LEAVITT	
Riparian Ephemera in October for Spring	80
CHARLES HARPER WEBB	
Election Night	81
Kid-Pitch	82
ADAM TAVEL	
Blizzard Sweat	83
RAFAEL CAMPO	
Not Untrue	85
JUSTIN HAMM	
Last Year on the Farm	86
To the Folksinger Just Arrived	87
KRISTINE ONG MUSLIM	
A meeting of two assassins	88
Burglars	89

ALAN KING	
W13: Home Bound	90
Exodus	91
BENJAMIN EVANS	
Progeny	92
Season	93
STEVE LANGAN	
A Box of Ornaments	94
The Originals	95
The Midwest	96

BOOK REVIEWS

CHRISTOPHER LEIBOW	
<i>Rookery</i> by Traci Brimhall	97
CAROL HENRIKSON	
<i>Juniper</i> by Nancy Takacs	100
NICK DEPASCAL	
<i>Missing You, Metropolis</i> by Gary Jackson	105
CURTIS JENSEN	
<i>Becoming Weather</i> by Chris Martin	109

BIOGRAPHIES

CONTRIBUTORS A–Z	113
------------------	-----

SUGAR MAKERS

STAFF	121
-------	-----

DEATH SPELL

It is not enough to say,
Dear Stephen Dumouchelle,
I wish you would die.

You have to mean it. Start
to intend with small things,
like blades of grass. Say,

Blade of Grass, I wish
you would die, and yank
it up by the stem.

Shake the dirt away until
like blanched untidy hair
the naked roots are bare

and quivering. It helps
if you imagine screams.
This is why in old books

the young witch begins
by pulling up a mandrake root
whose cry at midnight

could sound like a man
under the knife, whose forked tail
is just like a man

cloven in two.

THE RIVER ABSOLUTE
OUR LOVE SO GEOMETRIC

*the environment is the figure
& the figure is the environment*

sd. DeKooning

it's an ease of incandescence *of waterform*
sd. Weston

the experience—one camera one lens
one kind of film one format

one developer

 one man of many
years honing his skills & seeing

the ability
 to recognize
 to respond
to significant form

to stop and calculate would be to lose most of them

CECI N'EST PAS
UNE PIPE | LES FEMMES

the female observer & the photographer female

are at the mercy & latent
power they are

constellation
constructors

they are sore

boa constrictors

they are changed into mica

it calms them

IN THE CHAMBERED NAUTILUS

opulent & deep divine

{which I did not even turn my mind to}

& physical—

{this angle has surprised me!}

more than the hand of god, Rodin
& eliciting impulsive cursives & fume

my God! what package of speechless
clarity of vision—

such physique the pain & abstract of living erotic

we three spent two hours & you
leaning towards mysticism
clearly

{but Rivera sd. “is he ill? is he very
sensual?}

I had no physical thought—never have.
Others get from them

{sd. Ellie Faure would go wild over these}

what they will bring
to them—evidently they do!

AFTER A HIGH-RISE FIRE

It seems to be raining but
water running in streams down
the outside window glass is only

firehose water, spilling freely
from the charred apartment above.
Through rivulets, I look down

at crowds looking back and
it is like spying on mourners
at my own funeral.

The smell is not
campfire, flame of a woodstove,
ember end of a cigarette.

It is not striking a cardboard match
and accidentally swallowing sulfur.
It is biting, a swarm of insects

drawn to my skin's scent.
I open a window to release it
but gusting winds blow back.

It is an itch in the trachea
in the place where words start.

The people are still below, left alone
by retreating fire trucks and police
but unable to leave. At their feet

a sea of exploded glass lies black
as obsidian. Where are you?
From outside I dialed with shaken hands

and described to you the hole
that gaped from the building's façade
like an amputation, but couldn't

make you see it. I bargained,
approaching the flashing lights,
with heaven: *just this once*.

MEMOIR IN SKYSCRAPERS

On the boat tour a teenager teaches us
their genesis stories: dreamed up
by overcoated entrepreneurs
who squinted into the wind with icy mustaches
while building bones knit together
like brontosauri breathed to life,
they grew then to a forest of giants
impassive in steel but secretly
swaying, sending papers whispering
across desks in upper offices.

We know them from far off,
their postures and profiles,
how they throw back light and wind,
where their phantoms stand in a fog.
Their spines sum to a mountain range:
Your workplace, in granite, crowned
by the faceless woman who was meant to be
taller than anyone. The tower embraced
by blue glass surfaces like riverbends.

Our own rooms are tucked into a honeycomb
of concrete. The courtyard whips winds
into a chronic gale that catches me,
coming home—almost at the door I'm frozen
leaning my weight forward but suspended
like a groaning bridge on the river
or an ancient reptile that has a glimmer
it will live forever.

GABE PUTS DINOSAURS IN HIS POWERPOINT

Between car crash statistics
and photographs so vivid
you could taste, beneath our desks,
the gasoline pooling,

a velociraptor,
a tyrannosaurus,
jawing us
like a flawless sonata
amidst a mangled note.

We're laughing now
at the burn victim
with a stegosaurus at his shoulder,
Ford Explorers beached on guardrails,
and look, one more plesiosaur
before we learn how alcohol
disrupts the prefrontal cortex.

Broken headlights will search
for a culprit, dithered between
piano and violin.
I have to think long about what grade to give him,
this kid who put death in a paper cup.

TRANSMISSION LOSS

The dead speak to us on the radio
in their native voices. Lower and
lower the frequency, we approach
Africa, thin with static.

*

The postcard is not the ocean,
the note on the verso is not the
beloved. Deep in my suitcase,
two teacups are crushed.

*

The lens can focus from infinity
to a meter; the camera contains
one woman. Her face overwritten
with her own skittish hair.

MIND,

what slant tonight?

What voice-over having sought and found an answer
now returns
to still the stillness otherwise
unresolved?

*

Spring rains beginning,
a little more light in the evening's thin reach—
I step out on the porch,
feel myself shredded, rent,
dispersed in the shadow of a shadow's after-flame.

*

I know so little of desperation,
of the talons dipped down to snatch
at my bones.
Instead, this whimsy, this delight,
this celebratory leap at the world.

*

Mind, even so, so much unscripted comes
to bear, rewriting the script.
So much that can't be rescinded—a mother's choice,
a soldier's next step, one car veering
into oncoming lights.

*

I don't know who tells me to rise, but I come
to the pond and sit for a while.
And some day
I will see some other sky begin to surface,
inside which, soaring, I'll lift up emptied hands.

FIND ON THIS PAGE

Find
on this page
souls;

find *regime;*
find *without,*
refusal, solution;

find *more than*
or less than;

find *in the throes*
of History
a scene unscripted;

find *juge-penitents*
weeping in their hands;

find *the chief prosecutor*
for the republic of beautiful souls;

find *where the souls go;*
find *why;*

find *when ours too*
and anyone listening.

MY DEFINITION OF IS

The plan is to have a secret plan.

The feeling is, it's not going to happen.

The point is to keep gradually improving your house until you die.

The rule is, no more than two months' salary.

The idea is to keep shouting until the echo gives you the last word.

The secret is not to tell anybody.

HORIZONS

I want to say we met like white space
meets blue sky in crayon drawings,
that we made a traceable line

over a chimneyed house with two
windows, stick figures of my mother
and I holding fingerless hands
beneath a tree, the sun in the corner

smiling; but few houses dot
the dirty hills of Albuquerque's
bloodless skyline. Traffic and traffic
lights, stray cats and shattered glass
in guttered streets, you and me

not holding hands at the bottom
of the handicapped access ramp
leading into Long John Silver's.

I'm fourteen. You mispronounce
my name, stress the wrong syllable.

I don't call you dad, can't use your first
name, so I wait to be noticed. Hey you,

let's watch the sky purple and drain
between desert hills; from here,
where we can't tell
if the road ends or rises.

CABBAGE PALM

Out past the house like dentures,
like molars, rotten gums,
pink like dirt and lawns and air.

My dear, I have figured out
when you leave, I follow
and when you follow, I leave
and everything else in-between
is magic.

A house like dead teeth,
black brick.

We stop by a roadside amateur,
she sees good things in the future,
this tea leaf of autumn,
this crystal ball of spring.

I WAS GASPING FOR CONTACT

Let's get granular.
Meet at the ice cream social
utility, all the fantastic blinking.
There's no lonesome, you work hard enough,
and it's time to alleviate the swivel
chair. Pity Mississippi kids chanting,
Stop! Don't touch me there!
This is my no-no square!
What need to rah-rah something, defeat
the intimate yell. I tell myself
what pathetic.
Fallacy, the cuddle parties
in dating documentaries.
The squeezing *is* worth the juice.

Note: Includes phrases by Ed Ruscha, Jessi Lee Gaylord, Annie Proulx, and James Schuyler.

FOOTBALL SEASON IS OVER

All my hipster friends
are gone and even Eric Mahle
doesn't live here anymore.
Last night I dreamt that somebody loved me.
Chicago went something like this:
You're crazy, relax.
Filter coffee long gone, now Pontiac.
Where else to sit in the courtyard
with lunatics? No mas tequila. Tell me
how it all ends. Say, *Holler*
at you later. Even a blind squirrel
finds a nut, and this dragon
needs room to run
(run, run, run)

Note: Includes phrases from Hunter S. Thompson, The Smiths,
Goya, and Destroyer.

VISITING AUTHOR BLUES, (OR HOW I
RACKED UP A THIRTEEN HUNDRED DOLLAR
BILL AT THE HOTEL YOU WERE PAYING FOR)

for Paisley

It's true, I went back to the hotel room, took the complimentary viagra in the mini-bar, flicked on pay-per-view on the plasma, strapped on the 3-D porno binoculars, uncorked the champagne, scribbled haikus in magic marker on the wallpaper, grabbed the receiver, dialed phone sex in Sweden, yanked myself till the sun rose, like it was attached to a rope, and I was manning the pulley, and after six hours of suds, duds, and bloods, I strolled out of that casino of the flesh, wearing nothing but slippers and their monogrammed bathrobe.

LITTLE SOLDIER OF LOVE

March, you were just here.
Now you're gone, vanished,
on permanent hiatus. A month
of rain you were. A month
of me dangling from a chord
in a hotel room, blindfolded,
you snapping pictures of me naked,
then posting them on Craigslist,
asking *who wants her now*. The ticking
of the clock, the chilled steam
from your lung machine, the knock
on the door, the heavy footsteps,
the anonymous canisters
of breath exploding on my shoulder
blades, a sweaty palm on my calf,
a zipper opening so slowly,
each metal notch catching
on the ridges of my spine. March,
think you can just order room service
and leave me bed-tied, a note
taped to my clavicle? Every year
it's the same with you: marching
muddy footprints through people's lives,
little door with rusty hinges
to the forehead opened wide.

YARD WORK

Sixty degrees and sunny, mid-March,
an ambivalent wind coaxing leaves loose
from flowerbeds. I'm at the overgrown hedge,
gripping a limb cutter. Snow-weighted branches
curve down into a dull, monochromatic rainbow.
I'm hacking the branches down to the stem
so the bush can live, so the leaves can flourish
and protect us from the eyes of neighbors.
Stretching up and slashing a defiant bough,
wrapped in the arms of the wisteria, coiled
around a drainpipe, I think of my first girlfriend
and me: two malnourished rootless things
clinging to one another and calling it love.
I wince and hack deeper into the bramble.
A pile of severed branches waist-high. Thorns
tug at my sleeves. The truest version
of love I ever saw was a pair of palm trees,
thirty feet apart, tall and dignified
in the Los Angeles desert sky, their leaves
brushing when wind conspired towards them,
their roots touching like toes underground.

GRACE

When I use the word
I'm not thinking of the way
you discreetly daub
your rose-petal lips
with a linen napkin
in your slender fingers
but how the watermelon,
resembling a misshapen
planet fallen from
the heavens meets the knife
and splits into a dozen
grins and spills its seeds
like black stars.

DANDELIONS

How can you hate them? They are like little suns,
cool yellow flames that don't hurt your eyes.
Tribes of them gather in grass, the unsprayed grass

in public places where the keepers don't care,
or the neglected yards of the working poor,
or the gardens of the celebrants of the sun.

Most are marked for death before they bloom,
death by herbicide, death by mower.
Some few still ferment them into wine, some

harvest the greens for food. Children
and those who remember the small thrills
of childhood notice the delicate white seed-globes

in the grass. They pluck the stems and blow
them into each others' faces, or blow them
into the air and watch the seeds drift down

in the distance like parachutes. The thrill
is the consequence of breath, the soft power
of dissemination, the lightness, the drift.

IF YOU LIVED HERE

Here where the oil-slicked feathers
shine as the bird falls
just off the starboard ramp, holding
in its beak a molten key—

Here where sofas smolder in the slow lane
and bumpers gleam with slogans
bobbing in the ruffles and shallows
of the evening traffic—

Here where the future of flowers,
that waited a hundred million years
to debut in a poem, is in doubt—

Here in bitter laughter, in the loaded
Camaro where the deadline is past,
where shrugs are measured in tonnage,
sighs in board feet like monstrous
mahoganies—

And the weather is brought to you
and brought to you and brought to
you by the networks whose song
and undersong is a constant I-am-number-one—

If you lived here, in Dead Meadows Estates,
or here across the highway in Vista del Humo,
you'd be home by now.

BIG LOST RIVER BREAKDOWN

The truck broke down at Craters of the Moon.
We sit in the asphalt parking lot
paved over the lava, our trip to California
stopped like the flow under the big open
sky of Idaho. A bird snatches a black butterfly
out of the air. Clouds move like a slow caravan
on the southern horizon. Hours pass,
going nowhere. The last volcanic cinders
cool for a thousand years.

In the wrecker headed east to Arco
King Mountain at the south end
of the Lost River Range slowly rises
in the windshield. Closer
we can see the numbered years
painted in white on the face of a cliff,
each in a different hand. Stan,
the young driver, explains the tradition.
Each year a group from the senior class
hikes up the mountain with ropes
then hangs a volunteer down over the cliff
in an old tire to paint their graduation year.
What may look like defacement to a traveler
is a point of pride for the graduates of Arco High.

Arco, Idaho, the first town in the free world
to be lit by the split atom, ten years after
Hiroshima and Nagasaki. July 17, 1955.
Deep as the Grand Canyon this human urge
to stop time, to be free of its burden and shadow.
Atoms For Peace, says the sign in the park
across the road from Grandpa's Southern Bar B-Q.
Sunflowers along the roadside bow
to passing cars.

Days pass, going nowhere. Good ribs
slow-cooked on a split-barrel stove
under the cottonwoods, the smoke

sweetening the summer air dawn to dusk
makes us recall Dreamland

in Jerusalem Heights outside Tuscaloosa,
white bread, slabs and red sauce, beer
in a can, NO DANCIN NO CUSSIN
said the sign on the wall. And Archibald's
drive-in barbecue, the blackened smoker hole
in a pink brick wall, white Styrofoam cups
of magic sauce, Northport, Alabama, and
that place just off Speedway in Tucson
with the signed black-and-white photos
of movie stars on the wall.

Whatever else happens in this mangled world,
Grandpa says, the good cookin goes on.
Everybody know got to feed both body and soul.
Grandpa came out from Kentucky, can't remember
the story, maybe with the military, maybe
his truck broke down in Arco. Weeks passed,
going nowhere. Then the smell of those ribs
cooking cast a spell over the neighborhood,
drifted up the highway past the city limit sign,
enough to make a hungry person sigh.

The radio sitting on the window sill
tells us a visitor from Sydney, Australia
was gored by a bison at Old Faithful Geyser,
and a young man beaten and left for dead
in a creek runs away from the hospital
at 4 a.m. and a month later calls the sheriff
to report what happened. Arrest warrants
have been issued. There was a fire
in a grain elevator, and the drought continues.
This afternoon at one o'clock, in Arco Atomic
Auditorium, the big lava rock building on
Main Street, the doors will open for
the Annual Quilt Show. Admission is free,
donations accepted, and there will be a raffle.

The quilts say peace and bless this home,
the log cabins, the wedding rings, the flowering
fields, the wild goose chase patterns stitched
by hand as the hours pass. Down the street
heat waves rise from a gray metal building,
Lost River Ballistic Technologies.

And at the Lost River Motel they boast
“the best plot of grass in Arco.” A place
to sit and watch the sparse traffic
on Highway 93, listen to cicadas buzzing
in the brush, sparrows cheeping
in the Chinaberry tree.

Across the road a giant green rocking chair
in front of Pickle’s Place, a photo op,
so anyone who climbs up and sits in it
will look like a small child.
In the parking lot a brown dog,
who looks like she’s been dumped,
watches every car that passes
from her patch of shade beneath the sign.
A car pulls in, she trots up anxiously,
looking for her master, runs alongside
until the car stops and the door opens.
She sniffs the air, then turns in disappointment
and goes back to the spot to wait
like a good dog.

The hours pass, going nowhere.
And we wait. Who knows when
we’ll hit the road again? The real moon
rises over Craters of the Moon
and the black sprawl of its lava flows.
Somewhere near Arco
the Big Lost River goes underground.
On the face of King Mountain
the years pass and someone paints them.

WAKING TO RAIN

Waking to the sound of rain on the metal roof,
a soft pattering. Rain, I think, melting the snow
turning the roads to slush and ice.
Then I hear a louder tapping and look up
to see birds on the skylights pecking
at the beaded raindrops, a dozen or more
Bohemian waxwings fluttering, slipping
on the domed plexiglass or standing balanced
on small wirey feet, drinking rain,
peering down at me where I lie, marveling
at this odd new place they've found, like clear ice
over a deep pool. I see cockades of cinnamon
feathers above the black eye-stripes, the brushes
of the tails as though dipped in yellow paint,
the white streaks and red spots on the wings,
and the dark eyes that look down at me.
A wave of joy runs through my body.
I close my eyes, open them, and the birds
are gone. The skylights are empty gray
rectangles, and one of them leaks into a
bucket I've placed beside the bed. Lucky
day, I think, auspicious morning like no other.
Then I remember the lavender balloons
tied to the street signs, marking the way
to the Alvarez home up the road, their
beautiful daughter, Kirsten, killed last week
when her car slid on the ice, how it must be
there this morning waking to rain, rain
that falls on the daughterless room
Mr. Alvarez passes, sliding on ice, turning
the wheel to no avail, on his way to the kitchen.

ÉTUDE

The infrequent storms that retune
Our Western sky make music

In the laundry room—the hole
In the roof leaks through the ceiling

To a plastic bucket atop
The washing machine: each drop

An identical note in a pattern
Unteachable by any other lesson.

MOSQUITO

The dream's courier
dodged waking's deliberate gropes

then sped past revelers
carrying old vine Zin

under traffic lights.
Sky fell to the cars

that stitched slush fringes
to the park's white blanket.

In the supposed uselessness
of his questions, she found an avenue

to stash her thoughts of infidelity,
like a small investment

property, a place in town but out
of walking distance,

which was one kind of warmth
that hides in snow, and it must

if I am to continue
the spreading of integers

across this grid, this screen
wherein no mosquito would ever

consider herself zeppelin.

HOUDINI AT FIFTY

Wrists chained to his father's
empty throat. Talk to me, he whispers.
The dead are easy blame—chronic,

riddling, like the boxes in his head.
When fame was always a river,
that doomed old prophet straddled

every bridge. He knew. How it starts
in the tissue under the tongue—
blood diffuses, skewing the odds,

one last bungled conjuring he'll have
to bargain down. Ghosts are a coward's
distraction—what would it prove? His father's

skin the skin beneath his, how the dead
sing underground? By now he's learned
to breathe water. Luck, his spare key.

BESS HOUDINI: WELSH BROTHERS CIRCUS, 1895

They dosed me twice
with camphor. Thin blood,
the kind that starves a heart.
Even want left us—Punch's
wood tongue, your hand
in my sleeve.
Judy of the smile
guy-wired to a sky
we never touch. Our bodies
break in different places.
We drift, like tinkers,
on a nicked deck.

SHE HAD NO TOASTER OVEN

melting things slowly and evenly
was not an option. the garage ticked
with tools that could not hug one
another. in the middle of the day

it was difficult to bring herself

to want to walk barefoot on
the slate slabs that led to the mail

because inside the mailbox, window

envelopes warped with warmth
toasted her hand as she reached,
reminded her of bagels thick and frozen
beyond her imagination

HANGMAN

Forensics settled on a sneer
for your clay face in the paper asking for a name.

Red clay Choctaw face rebuilt with blue eyes and a snarl,
the gray braid, the speak-no-evil monkey
on your shirt untouched until a four wheeler
and its boy came upon you in spring.

The sheriff's men soon following
staked out a grid and combed the dirt,
uncovered nothing but footprints of their own
and insect hulls in the dust,

nothing but bones and a noose that held
through two hurricanes, the rain dance of decay.

They make you out to be a loner POW/MIA.
No roots, no son or daughter of the earth,

as if you never took a meal in silence,
never handymanned for room and board,
whittling, singing with the radio on a roll-out bed
where sleep came in jolts, like a fall from a horse.

MID CITY TOURS

Marching band in the street, flock
of green parrots wild in the palm trees' fruit,
and only my son looks up, double honks
a bird call on his plastic trumpet.
A tour guide, his job to point,
my father could have moved the crowd
to notice. He befriended random people,
even at red lights where he'd roll down
the window to chitchat and give a peace sign
to jay-walkers who ignored him.
In the hatchback on the way home
after a day of city tours, his hand gestured
out of habit to Bayou St. John, called
by the Indians *Tchoupic* for its muddy water.
No such thing as a day of rest—
we ghost hunted after the good luck of rain,
listening for whispers in cemeteries
and elsewhere, and it's true, the steam rising
from the streets really does seem to call
your name. Bring-your-daughter-to-work-day,
this time a plantation tour, he used
his hobo charm on cooks
with white skin and period dress.
They heaped us with loaves of bread,
bounty enough to share, and so
we took the ground streets home—
Canal St. to Carrollton, our escort
a drumline of grit and dragged feet.

ON THE WAY TO THE CEMETERY IN NEW AUBURN, I STOP TO WATCH A PAIR OF DUCKS

Three miles south of town, I walk along the shoulder
of County Highway SS, pausing at a culvert
where acres of wetland flow beneath the roadway.

It's been five years since you and I last walked
this way, our weekly hike paralleling the railroad tracks
taking us away from our home.

The blackdamp smell of creosoted crossties
baking in the midday sun has stopped me here.
Four miles left to go.

I sit on the guardrail to rest. No cars pass by.
A pair of mallards skates below me in the current,
feasting on minnows.

They speak to each other in hushed tones,
while cattails dance along the water's edge.

Well-fed, they slide away below a trestle bridge
and move from my sight. I rise and move on,
trudging into the silence.

I have forgotten the sound of your voice.

THE PAWNBROKER

On Sunday, the pawnbroker
closes his shop and spends
the morning in the park
feeding ducks, trying to

redistribute the wealth
of this world in ragged
scraps of bread. At noon,
he naps in a tent of spruce boughs,

his sleep addled with unfamiliar
rustlings and wild dreams filled
with peculiar transactions
with woodland creatures:

a squirrel begging to trade
the bones of his mother
for a handful of nuts,
a robin pleading to exchange

her nest for three worms.
Later, he walks through
the park, staring at everyone,
wondering what each person

has bartered for her life,
how much men have traded
for an afternoon of
chess and sunshine.

THE RINGMASTER

He wanted a marching band
to follow the street sweeper,
a barrel organ in every bank lobby,
a shooting gallery at the public library,
a trained bear to deliver mail,
booths of sweets on every street corner.
He thought, with all of this, he might
come to crave silence,
to appreciate bird song and green tea,
pleasures which had always eluded him.
Excess was the only path to simplicity
he could imagine, though he searched
every day for what he expected
the entrance to tranquility might look like:
a narrow trail tiled with tarot cards,
lined with flickering candles,
leading to a glade in Sri Lanka
where elephants roll in wild grass,
and a boy from the tea factory
sits quietly, eating cotton candy
and listening to stars.

SIZZLE

In a past I swear I had, I visited an ex-, a circus freak named Annie, who gave the horses their otherworldly shine. She wore red garters and her massive belly—tattooed with images of her as a young woman with a slightly lesser belly—was propped up on a stool. She looked like a sage. It was afternoon. The tent smelled of manure and cigarettes. In a corner sat the man who blasted from the cannon. Judging from the way he lifted himself off an upside-down crate and opened his mouth wide, he was visualizing that night's launch, seeing himself again and again in the seconds just after blast off. Annie looked up at me. "It's been so long," she said, "since you ran off toward that tornado." I apologized with my eyes. Apologized for real. I felt like a dumb kid, shamed. "It was a dreadful mistake," I said. I remembered the ripping sound of the twister and something that might have been a hairdryer tumbling past my face. "Debris everywhere," I said. "These tents burn so fast," she said, dropping her cigarette in the hay. "You'll have to lead the horses out that way. And him," she said, pointing to the cannonball man, "there's a lot he can teach you."

FOR THE LIVING

My eyes have a system for sparkling: tint
that varies according to the sky's munitions.

Her eyes are mildly defiant, like pinwheels
that refuse to spin in the wind's push.

I look at her. I look into her
and—this time—do not flinch
at the tatters churning in the breaches.

She peels the strings off a cold pot roast,
piles them on a bright yellow saucer.
I laugh, tell her my brain, weirdly,
feels spongy and good.

Oncoming darkness unifies,
then erases the pines out the window.
We linger under the widening stars, eating Concord grapes.

Give us time, dear world.

RECEPTION

The moon like a sickle's blade
clatters across the lake.

On the far shore the music resumes.
Glasses clink and splash

spilling starlight along their stems.
Seated among white linens

my love catches drops on her tongue,
blinds me with the quick eclipse

of two yellow crescents
in the umber of her eyes.

from MEADOW SLASHER (I)

Do your friends know you well enough to pull you through your pasts?

I cut my face in looking.

Dogs on a hunt for what may come.

I am a looked-through garage window where a dead cat furred an oil
stain.

A bright April dashing us to the curb.

A gash is how big. A lesion. A slice, say, on the chin.

One of those bruise cuts that boxers get.

I want somebody to come over here & punch me in the neck.

Am I on the phone because I can't end this near a bed or a desk or
anything stable enough to fuck on?

Whiteout. Cold coffee.

Room temperature room.
& my old fall-backs sucked into air
like so many phantoms, drizzled up.
What if what
won't come back
to you is calling?
How much more conversation
will it take to sever me?
I'm here on the ground.
Rained, gleaming retaining wall above the freeway interstate
keeping the college lot from lanes of traffic.

Up at Olive & Clark with a tea but
Silver Soul is on & I'm back to it,
covering my face with a book, scaring some strangers.
I don't yield out for pity,
just a question of what we look like to ourselves
from the bit of future we're lucky enough to endure.
Heartbreak is having the prepositions pulse with slashers too.
So it's night.
The shore's lapping.
The young poets lever ghosts into their poems, but
they've slackened out & caption the air I breathe.

But can't you gash open a little bit?
A brownout citywide hurricane-grade wind,
& I fell in with the chapbook set.
Kassandra's bracketed screams, the ruin
in a so-called net. Well, it claps off
& I don't want to be here with me either.
What's to learn from what we thought we wanted?
We didn't think we wanted it.
So you've been into the photographs?
What's not desire's aperture.
If the road could stretch out like a blank path of ghostly willows alive.

Or cacti, cactuses, say it wrong with a 'w'
I say, low & behold. Crawl up
into the black dank earth.
What's waiting for us outside?
Some stalled junky in the evening summer
alight under the factory lamp blossoms?
It's the West Andersonville neighborhood gardens
& the thieves get a respite. The trains get a respite.
The rain, no breaker. No turn, no volta, no nothing.

DRIVING TO ROSE HAVEN

These red-painted barns have no age.
Where they are red, they are red,
on vertical boards seen through
to the other side—that light
more vivid in slit shapes—
and weathered, weathered down
to gray dead wood beneath.
This is Sansbury Road.
I know it from my childhood.

There are sheep over on the next
farm, the only sign of yield
on the slope that leads
right up to the lip of pavement.
There, a black vulture waits
for something inland, one eye watching.
I am the interference I have made
myself to be. I am on my way
to places that have stayed without me.

Now, the facile coastal rural trend
breaks and sidles up with bay—
blue and tall behind the trees
and down the hill—like how one wave
jarred from the smack of a seawall
reverberates back out, meets another
from the open water, strong and paced,
and they raise each other high
and draw their weight away.

BACK ON THE ISLAND

The crowd, the glare, the clatter:
Those first hard, fine moments;
A sharpening of loss.

Ashore, heat and clamor. Flushed,
Fumbling, I must pause
To find a light.

Oh, just keep on; walk, head up; just breathe.

Soon enough, I'd soften, slow.

So much the same: eave and gable; hot
Pavement; souvenir shops
Crammed with goods.

Not all the oaks still stood, though, along Penacook Avenue.

Near the wharf, I leaned upon a railing
Where a young man had leaned,
That day he judged
Time had come to leave.

Passers-by saw an older man looking toward the sea.

I tried to retrace
That track I followed west,
The one I had thought
So well marked.

Much I believed would matter hadn't,
Though some lines held.

Noon on the island: breezy, cloudless;
I would sunbathe and swim
Until the evening boat arrived.

Heading to the beach,
I noticed a boy
Struggling with his downed kite.

I showed him one way to get it back in the air.

THE LANGUAGE OF SPECTRAL SHIPS

Seems mariners from my mother's kinfolk
believed only the past could enlighten
the present day, some recursive portent
restoring itself in the here and now.

So as boys kicking over beached starfish
to find what the stranded arms hid from light,
a great-uncle would wrestle through his mind
how a harbor warehouse burned at midnight,

or why a dockworker was crushed by freight
as if he should have heard the cable fray
in the wreck some ancient helmsman omened
himself just by having women aboard.

So I learned to perceive the world at large
as language I would surely understand,
but only through its early rendering
in signs first elapsed, then bled together.

HOW WE REMEMBER THE CHANTEUSE

On the bowed pavement of a back alley,
light streams from the threshold of a deli,

where someone scoops rice into a kettle,
the boiling water seduced into steam.

Along the pier, where a storm drags itself
against the dry docks of Cabrillo Bay

as the heavy clouds have split brokenly
the light of a full moon flaring toward us,

rain folds her in a draft of briny wind,
her voice like a breaker about to crest,

night's footfalls clear as ice that never comes,
the sea wind now surging deep in her lungs.

THE MOON RECONSIDERED AS
THE TIDE'S PUPPETEER

The arid Moon
Ties its strings
To the sea—

Celestial Geppetto
In perpetual routine:
A pull on the wires,

And the tide
Sculpts the sand
Into a bas relief

Of conch and clam
Fragments. Three
Tugs—the wind stirs,

The waves wing
Into the rocks with
Glistening fracture.

Now, the Moon
Contemplates
Its own seas,

All stillborn—
Parched spaces
Astronomers misnamed.

Mare Imbrium
Mare Marginis
Mare Nubium

Mare Humorum
Mare Nectaris
Mare Vaporum

Does it dream
 Of parenting
 A real sea?

Dazzled by
 The diamond glitter
 Its beams cast

Down on what
 10,000,000 eons
 Have denied it,

The Moon reflects
 On the history
 Of trade routes,

Marvels at
 The majesty
 Of the whale.

SALMON DAYS: COPPER RIVER, ALASKA, 2009

At the farthest-flung point of all traveling-away
where the current bends back on itself,
her swim toward the beginning begins.
Back through the Pleiades and Orion.
Back through the cold waters.
Back through the black sea.
Gravid.
Heaving upstream again to where
there are no constellations, no stars
whose names she knows, nothing to steer by,
nothing to keep her straining forward now but the small
lights in her own blood and the fatal boatman blackly rowing there also.

THE LIFE I MIGHT HAVE HAD

Maybe it would be in a mining town, in an unpainted shack set deep in deciduous hills, some place so removed and forgotten that only the rain comes to visit, like some awkward city cousin who, having arrived, is eager to leave again. Some place where even nature would set its green hand to obliterating the evidence of what happens—or doesn't—there.

My man would work the mines and—as my people are wont to say—we'd be “without.” He'd have dust in his hair, his nail-beds, his lungs, and his back would be bent toward brokenness. Mine too, from stooping all day over a house that's always filthy with want, a house

that's never wholly-purged of anything: spiders, mice, ice-rimmed windows in winter, despair. He'd not have drink, that man, for consolation, nor God, nor even his breath most days. He'd not have the luxury of even *thoughts* of suicide. What he'd have is his one dream: the damp, dank ark of the mine

and the gauzy silence of that moment before stone and timbers give way. I'd know his dream; he'd tell it to me, shuddering awake night after night. *That ain't the worst of it*, he'd say and he'd hesitate, a pool of gray sweat seeping into the sheet under him—the last threadbare sheet I'll take to the cold creek and scrub

to tatters in first light—*it ain't the cave-in I'm afeared of or the dying; it's the being buried and alive*. And I would understand his terror, lying there next to him, I who'd have been there too each moon-bitten midnight, every tattered sock or deer-ravaged garden or rusted utensil pushing me into it: the slow suffocation, that being buried and alive, the weight of it all bearing down.

SPELL, FOR CONCEIVING A SON

No need for candles, nor cauldron,
nor the scatter-shot
stars of the sky.

Midnight will father
the boy: one darkness
is good as the next.

Step on a crack, break
your mother's back—
and he'll be good at games,

that boy. He'll be normal
as rain, remorseless,
and vain. Each morning

he'll smile and sing to you;
by nightfall, he'll spit
in your soup.

At the river, he'll fill his pockets
with minnows; he'll fill all your
pockets with stones.

Darkness has a door.
And a welcome mat.
Once you name him, you're his.

SPELL, FOR CONCEIVING A DAUGHTER

Start with hunger, in lieu of
a heart; add a locust, a shrew, one
silver thimble of salt. Or two.

Your man? You won't need him.
Not for a daughter like her.

Already she is heading your way,
riding in on the sickling
frost, some twilight's

gray sleight-of-hand. There'll be
no stopping her now.

She will rock the cradle of your unbelief
and a curious rapture will
shake you. She'll take you

by storm, by hook or by crook,
and you'll have no say in the matter.

Then one day you'll see how,
in pigtails and lace, she's the tide
coming in, going out.

And you are her
harbor, her storm-battered coast

where she leaves what she's shattered:
an offering there at your feet, sweet
insides picked clean, shells

emptied and scattered. Such hunger!
And even the littlest owls must hunt.

ONE MORE BREATH FOR SYLVIA PLATH

Don't think we're okay just because I'm here.

– Duffy, *Rockferry*, “Warwick Avenue”

unyielding fierceness
in those first hours,
the bond more confusing
than definite, more promise
than truth, more strange
than familiar, the baby
is waiting for you
with wet eyes & unused lips,
your right arm is not yet
strong with weeks of holding
his weight, your waist
is as undefined as the rest
of your woman life, you're not
sure how your nipples
with color or break under

the agitation of his tongue;

you hold him anyway,

wait for the blood

to return to your body

and never say a word.

GERTRUDE

I'm thinking of rooms,

A large resemblance of rooms,
All the hours spent in rooms.
Someone has been downstairs

In the kitchen soaking chicken flesh
And skin in a steamy bath,
Vegetable oil seeping into napkins

Thin squares, cubed, six of them
Make another room in which
A baby is sleeping, his skin is full

Of soft, repetitive leaks, licks,
The orange cat is cleaning its fur,
Violent, mechanical head throws

To catch all sides of its coat,
Raspy cartilage of its tongue,
Housed in the dark room of its mouth,

A box of moving images buzzes
So steadily it hums, in a room
With no occupants or time worth record.

THE CURSE OF ELBOWS IN BIRTHMOTHERS
AND OTHER WAYWARD GIRLS

There's a crook
in my arm
He steals away
 leaves a crook
in my arm

I am always
not holding

 him

TRAVELLER FROM AN ANTIQUE LAND

A hogback. Another false summit.
A brother's voice in gravel and landslide.

Language of caught on the Continental
Divide, South Platte River headwaters reach

For mouths never achieved. Our mother floats
Away as vapor. Our windpipes overflow
Elevenmile Reservoir with words like *slope*

But steeper. Scree-bearded, our father, who art
An artificial cliff-face gone underground so long
We forget his name or that we met him, wakes—

Here in our Rocky Mountains, *wake* means valley,
Sediment and travel. *Listen*, they say, *Home is range*,
Not coming closer. You can't prevent this ragdoll fall.

Note: Title taken from "Ozymandias" by Percy Shelley

[EVERYONE IN GOYA'S BLACK PAINTINGS...]

Everyone in Goya's black paintings was mad. It's true; they grazed in fields like cows, slept at night using chickens for pillows. In the mornings they'd wake thirsty. If rivers are a sign of something bigger farther on, their wide eyes were surely rivers though I can't say to where.

Things have a way of disappearing that pleases the gods. You'd be mad to try and stay.

[SOMETIMES THE BEST THING TO DO...]

Sometimes the best thing to do is sell your land and move to a country where slaughtered animals hang by their bowels in public squares. Naturally you'll need a good pair of boots. Take out a small flat just above a bakery. Convince yourself the clatter of stork beaks in the low light of evening is for you. Trace the moon in its six-hour plunge. Learn the local expression for win some, lose some. Then lose some.

THERE WERE OTHERS

Huge green walnuts were beaten in a sack
then thrown in a dammed part of the creek.
Fish floated to the top as if asleep
still alive, but minnows, frogs, snakes thrown back.

We didn't know our green concoction killed cows
until Mr. Sheperd lost half his herd
and a few of those stout hogs he called sows
had also drunk from that muddy oeuvre.

Of course we couldn't share what we had done
and would have been hung if he had found out
black boys also played in his pasture pond
I would not be here to share this, no doubt.

But, this was just one bad experiment
there were others and most with good intent.

NOW FOLK HAIL

The abalone shell's still on the shelf
between the cracked, blue bowl of hard candy,
and the squat bust of Christ who seems bereft
as hope lost inside an empty pantry.

She brought the mollusk shell from Florida,
but the bust of Christ was put there by me,
that was back when I fawned all over her.
She'd say, "*The sky is black;*" and I'd agree.

Yet, even the best of friends have to part
sometime, when trust becomes brass, love, its dross.
That shell holds the sea; Christ, his broken heart.
The crack in the bowl resembles a cross.

Now, folk hail, "*You'll feel better tomorrow.*"
Can feelings fill that part which is hollow?

LOST & FOUND

Mom says all she learned in rehab
was new places to hide her beer.

An entire 6-pack, for example,
keeps cool in the toilet tank;
blue and white cans bob like apples.

Twelve ounces of Busch
snuggle between the clean towels.

In the pocket of her bathrobe,
an open can, half full.
(How artfully she swings it around her!)

And this morning, when she wakes me
to get ready for school,
she pokes her arm under my mattress.
“You’re no princess,” she grins.

HOW I LOST MY DRIVING GIG

I walked from the doctor's crumpled Buick
On my two good legs.
The woman whose car I hit, she
Wanted to yell, her mouth hung open
Like a missing, then angry stop light.

At twenty miles per hour the last mountain range—
Circuit City, Borders, Boston Market—
Swerved down the Mill Road overpass,

And as my insides were bleeding, I thought:
I will never again make fifteen dollars an hour driving
The doctor and his parents to the Atlantic Ocean.

I plotted the call to Dr. Typeri's bungalow:
At eleven thirty-six, while I was busy turning
The car back for meatloaf, mashed potatoes,
I failed you, your engine, and my life. Sorry.

Traffic crushed a million desperate stones to get here
And screamed at the wreckage trying to rise.

Are your eyes under your feet, the woman huffed, tall as a blood clot now.

The handsome cop took my license and told me
Not to hide until he finished checking my numbers.

A tow truck pulled up, swept
The broken glass, hauled me and the Buick
To a fried chicken drive-thru.

Movie theaters flickered around us like Indians
Planting fires in deep space.

I looked out the window and saw kids rolling
Telephone booths filled with last night's herons
Into the bloodflats of the Raritan.

I ordered a Coke and called my father.
It was the fourth job I'd lose that autumn.
A disappointed silence, then background television noise, hesitant:
At least you're still my son, he said, and somewhere else,
Someone hung up the phone.

MORGELLONS

1.

The planted intercoms failed to sing today.

Everyone with intercoms
planted to the ends of their bodies.

It tells them their names no longer mean
Carlos or Amanda or a place
that can be remembered for the color of its storms.

It tells them the location of a freeholder's auction.
A community college that is now a slaughterhouse.

Disguised as flowers, they wilt
with announcements from Caucasian Taliban
and drift through eroding websites in 1995
with only the leftover syntax of wind
to shelter them.

2.

Food and water condemned as a communication weakness,

the eyes loom like control towers
where the lobbyists of right thinking
plan their invasions of the kidneys
and liver, entire towns
where intercoms are manufactured
by populations of intercom children.

This world's one announcement:
*The turnpikes whispering with premature
promises of collision towns
will be closed indefinitely.*

Please follow the connections of restroom lights instead.

Microphone static can be seen
gathering in thickets of approaching pigeons,

the sun like a heart cringing where the land is missing again.

3.

The consumers kept alive
for their suffering
and plastic cravings
tear down their bodies,
the ones they no longer own,

to stop the advertising scouts
who hate them
from rooms hidden behind
their pancreatic theaters and skylines.

It is treason to not say “yes.”
It is too late for anger.

It is too late for even a crayon violence.

The children, who can be followed
into their thoughts, work
inside cough-sized cubicles
where they force smiles from their
lacerated wrists.

They learn that each season is only a word.

Pastels of uranium gardens continue forever
on every unguarded wall,

and in all of them, the same child—
its mouth a memory card,
its eyes kept open with insect fallout—

walking in the direction of the only tree
that seems to move.

SPOOL 22

what's sayings truth
in cultural ears
that repetition recounts
sincerity makes peace
with attempts as
fulsome gestures so
much human voice
making effort rise
to recognition hello
I know I've
met you some
where or time
it's space and
days that sits
you saying yes
it is true
I've said it
now you see
and seen you
take it forward
next life think
and there it
is so familiar

§

kind of crown
to wear away
my ablative unmaking
more and more
the day makes
clear the day
is separate being
I must enter
at all costs
the very thing
like linden moved
a tree for
all my wandering
and a marker
king of leaves
that actual thoughts
are things quite
real but separate
from the world
these lemon rinds
upon material tart
and tart again
my ego loosing

CHAINING FOR BUFFALO IN THE HENRY MOUNTAINS

Blunt beard below broken semicircle of horn,
the silhouette freezes against rouged cobalt
long enough to tease our shutter fingers.
Only huntable free-roaming herd,
the BLM brochure says,
their ancestors trucked here in 1940
from Yellowstone.

When bison were history's most successful bovine
they stayed clear of this desert,
but for survivors
even sand can seem like home.
Seeing six, we imagine millions,
waving seas of brown,
tongueless carcasses rotting on the plains.

Speckled among the juniper and scrub oak,
vivid wildflower sparks feed the eyes, not
the shaggy legends fading into the dusk.
The herd relies on swaths of grass
that circle the mountains,
feed in green scars
cut in a '63 blitzkrieg
when the foothills' woody stubble
was shaved by two bulldozers
pulling a strong chain.

BONES

I.

At school, my daughter made a skeleton:
She cut little swabs of ribs, toes, and eyes,
broken Q-Tips held down by slick-smooth pearls
of glue against matte black construction paper.

II.

Flipping channels from the couch, we see a show
about Africa. Perhaps we'll learn about lions.
As corpses appear, I quickly cover her eyes.
I click off the TV, amazed at my lapse.
Quiet seconds pass. Then, "Daddy, what
was that?"

III.

Sixty-five thousand fled the church, stampeded
to the school, the grave of masses. Armed with dirt
clods and rocks, fingernails and teeth, no match
for the Hutus. Then they watched each other die.
There's a place called Murambi, where the walls are lined
with the bones of babies. Eggshell skulls are cracked.
Shivers of femurs. Fractured ulnae.

IV.

Saying grace, I feel the bones in my daughter's hand.
The Q-Tip skeleton stares from the fridge.

THEORY OF SPALL

Ft. Carson, Colorado

i.

It's your job now. Creep
beneath them with a gun.
Blunt the dumb and serrate

work of time and sand.
Douse those Hummers
parked in rows

like ornamental gourds
set out to dry, spray them down
with the pink Product.

There's vats of the stuff
in the white truck, and it sloshes
like a filling piggy

bank when tanks cross you up
and you have to unkink
the hose to your air gun.

You get Product in your mouth—
and taste gristle—because
you've removed the mask

you're supposed to wear.
A song kept getting caught
in it and steaming up the goggles

you're supposed to wear
but have also taken off.
You get Product in your eyes.

It biodegrades. You're safe.
You're on a military base
where the sun bleaches and dyes

you when you're up top
blasting each line
of rivets, every hinge,

swinging grille, seam
or possible seam, bolt, nut,
washer, mirror joint, antenna.

Underneath, another anatomy.
Spine, scapulae, ribs, hips, coccyx,
hunks of grease and mud, a whole steel ruck

you let your air gun joyride across.
Shoot from the hip.
And those holes punched through into the cab

you first thought were from bullets or shrapnel,
dreaming up and immediately dismissing the carnage
boxed in above you, they blow like a jug

keeping irregular time
for the hissing refrain of pressurized air.
You're thorough enough.

But if you miss one bolt on one Hummer
you miss it on them all.
But that one bolt, well, it may not matter.

ii.

This morning you sweat booze,
and the whole damn thing seems worse.
Your skull is a soft warhead

you wish to squash
against a tank's armor,
but the tanks are off-limits.

Though their cannons are named
do not speak their names
above a whisper.

DARTH VADER
DONKEY PUNCH
DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITY

They've been tearing through
the prairie like flat havoc
riding heaves of friction,

their treads looping infinity,
their engines jet,
their camo cryptic,

you lose them
in a dust cloud,
their camo dazzling,

some still forest
green, brown, mustard,
and they scramble

what sobriety pools
in the shade of other ordnance
you break beside.

One is in for repair, the turbine
hauled out by another Abrams
that's equipped like a Hercules

beetle. The process is laborious
and loud. You press a stiff finger
into that plush where your neck

meets your head and hear
the insane hum of planets
and feel as though you have

a way to position your body
so that it may hurt
appropriately, like when a leg

injury forces your arms
into right angles
and your back to a stretcher.

Each bite of the warm
cold cut sandwich drops into your gutless
stomach like a bolide.

The engine's returned and smears
sound and air behind, almost blows
the decal off the side of the Product truck.

Jesus, this Cyclops has another eye!
And when both open
throttle the world dilates.

ZERO GRAVITY

The exhausted crew was not surprised
when the humvee lifted off around midnight out of earth's atmosphere;
minutes later, no longer sagging with gravity,
they undid their seat belts and bumped around the cab, laughing.
They hadn't known how much they'd been craving weightlessness
until they'd twisted out of their body armor, let go of their rifles.

They knew orbit was not the place for anyone
so acquainted with dirt and water.
They squirmed back into the vests and helmets,
grasped familiar contours of the weapons
and belted themselves into place to await the coming freefall
back to earth's endless weathering and erosion
of both stone and soldier, back to the blood that settles in dead men's feet,
back to the compression of Kevlar and metal,
to the heavy truth that gravity is all there really is.

THE HOLLOW

It feels good to move downhill;
to drop below sea level, into the forest;
to be out without a moon,
under the raining light of the Pleiades;
to be searching for the pale blue of St. Elmo's Fire,
over some old treasure.

Sisyphus never had it this good—
no sky to rest under, even if he had the time,
and no hope, for an end.

Every time, close to the top,
there must have been a glimmer, a flit, a shard,
of the kind of hope that breaks a heart.
When he thought of the sky, the sky no matter how he tried to banish it,
the idea must have found its way in:
Maybe, *this* would be the last time.

It feels good to be out, without a moon, searching.

RIPARIAN EPHEMERA IN OCTOBER FOR SPRING

I. A rush of ink in the tall grasses—his heft of marginalia in my hands.

II. His hand in her hair on his knee by the bed; her hands in the grass later on—how quick the soup came off.

III. She was a honey with a hand with a balloon on a string on a day when milt mixed with her roe in the weed, vanishing.

IV. Never to have picked apart the rock, to have sunk the thumb in marrow deep—in alb, in milky mud—as she rowed by.

V. At first blush the fetid crab apples were his in my hands—later those crushed upon the walk, later these held up to our radiator as it bled.

ELECTION NIGHT

Does the candidate toss and turn? Does he slurp
hot chocolate, and gobble turkey for the tryptophane?
Does he take a long, hot shower, or have sex
to soften thought-cudgels that bash his sleepless brain?
Does he hold his mind shut like a cabin door attacked
by grizzlies? Crazed by losing's harsh cicada-drone,
does he squirm in the dark, self-soothing with images
of boats on sunlit ponds, soft wind-swells rocking?

Let him rest easy as a farmer, fields plowed and planted,
all he can do, done. Let the scaly "If I'd Only"
not crush him in its coils. Let the dark box he climbs
into when he shuts his eyes, prove to be a cake
he'll leap out of, to cheers, as the morning's tickertape
streams down.

KID-PITCH

After years of coach-lobbed powderpuffs,
an under-nine Goliath glares down
from the mound while batters quail.

The best result: four balls; a happy trot to first.
The worst: collision with some body part,
pain dyeing a heart yellow for all time.

I feel like a draft board shipping my own son
off to war as I adjust the helmet meant
to keep his brain intact. My *You can do it!*

cracks as a pitch hums over his head.
The next one streaks behind his back.
The third bisects the plate, his swing unwinding

as the ball knocks off the cringing catcher's
glove. Goliath rears back again.
Whack! The ball canons off my boy's shin.

Coaches converge as he falls, writhing
like a crushed possum in the street.
May's poached-egg sun simmers in wax-

paper heat. Traffic roars like rapids.
Mockingbirds trill, just as they did at Bull Run,
Some boys will live; some boys will die.

When mine gets up, the bird doesn't fly
into "Ode to Joy." The sun's gold horn doesn't
rhapsodize "Tiger Rag." Still, I swear

the backstop wire, dusty field, and hazy air
keep time as Erik limps toward first, then runs,
then skips, hands raised, triumphant as the sun.

BLIZZARD SWEAT

for William Hathaway

With two balls #26 is dangerous
the commentator warns, a favorable count
to get wood on his favorite fastball
streaking through the zone thigh-high,
something he can really drive

but like every other Blue Jay flashing
in grainy low-def across my screen
he's anonymous as an express lane
bachelor. By now all nine are dead
or bald, trotting the bases of their twilight

coaching little leaguers in Toronto's
placid suburbs. On ESPN Classic
the network runs forever home
movies of muttonchoppers stretching
shoulders in the on-deck circle,

their starched periwinkle bruising
with pit-sweat, July 1982, summer
of my hot arrival. Outside their box and mine
there's a foot of snow climbing
closer to two every hour. We've lost

the wheels to our wagon, half its doors
and the wind like a flustered Casey
flails just to feel the angry air.
It's an air I learn to breathe
by the garden spade-full, by hoist

and fling, by the parade of fucks
I gripe aloud for lack
of a snow shovel's wide bottom jaw.
Three jays form a flock
on the sort of branch young poets

pounce to call a dappled bough
and I imagine them placing bets of seed
to see how long it takes this blizzard sweat
to overwork my booze-battered
heart, that hound I kicked for years

for the audacity to slink
its thin ribs closer to the wood stove.
I've limped my first week without
so much as the sweet dribble of a tear
down a frosted pint glass,

meditating on my wife's ankles
so swollen in her ninth month now
she can hardly waddle to the can.
At night I rouse to the gentle rhythm
of her snoring to gawk water-eyed

at the mound our son enormous
under three blankets and a comforter.
You bastard you bastard her nose whistles,
though it's really the angel
on my shoulder whose employer

sees fit to dump inch after fat-flake inch
on our tiny plot. Listen, I plead the jays,
tell the boss I'm drying out,
I'll clear this drive past sundown
as long as he doesn't make us

white-knuckle our camel to Bethlehem
on a road unfit for tanks. *Prove it*
they seem to squawk, ascending
into the blur, my spade's gravelly scrape
against the stones the only sound for miles.

NOT UNTRUE

Midnight, and he was asking for the score.
He was at a ball game, alive again—
not alone in the hospital, not scared
of dying like this with his mind half-gone.

I watched the clock, which sometimes could seem not
indifferent—sometimes, its face could seem kind—
but the second hand twitched like an insect,
reminding me that there's never more time.

His oxygen hissed, as if it could tell
secrets. The window previewed what was next:
nothing I could see, a perpetual
black emptiness. The nurse quietly knocked;

she grimaced wanly as she smoothed his sheets,
adjusted his IV, and left. He glared
at me, confused again. His voice was weak:
“Your goddamn mother never really cared.”

Midnight still, the clock relentlessly read,
beneath which he seemed even smaller now.
“It's 3 to 1, bottom of the ninth, Dad.”
Though I didn't know his name, it somehow

seemed forgivable to hold his chapped hand.
“She loved you, Dad. You know she always did.”
I'm still not sure if he could understand,
but none can fault me, even if I lied.

LAST YEAR ON THE FARM

You found your grandfather, remember,
staring through two rheumy eyes
and two panes of clouded glass
at an ancient International Harvester,
rusted beyond orange, a fragile,
a fossil-like thing half-swallowed
by the unruly bluestem and Indian grass
bearding the rough face of the prairie.

The way he sat, head cocked,
studying this long-useless artifact as
closely as one might an aging reflection
year and year again in alarmed confusion
first suggested dementia, the thieving
disease that would eventually cause inability
to use a fork, certain words, the toilet,
but no, this was not that, not yet.

There was still a wisdom audible in his sigh
when you sidled up next to his chair,
pressing pillowy cheek to sagging cheek,
enclosing in your fingers his twisted ones,
and straining against the obstinacy of time
to see the same thing he was seeing.

TO THE FOLKSINGER JUST ARRIVED

Whisper salutations to your irises
and tie those strange ornaments
into your hair. Crawl from your
Volkswagen into the sweltering city
and pluck something evangelical
from your book of songs. Strum
your dulcimer and enunciate as if
to blow life back into fried chicken
or restore the red to petrified roses.
Give them mystery, ancestry.
Give them not too much skin.
Yours, never forget, is the music
of freight trains and holyghosts.
You need only the lungs to drown
out the daily discord, the ambulances,
the ring tones and the burglar alarms,
and the city will place its heart
on the steaming asphalt and ascend.

A MEETING OF TWO ASSASSINS

Both notice the resemblance to each other:
the crooked nose, a birthmark on the left hand,

the good teeth, and a limp on the right leg.
They try to believe that it is only coincidence

that they have been paid
to kill each other.

Nobody wants to
make the first move.

BURGLARS

With their ski masks on,
they came inside our house

and drank from our water glass
and sat on our rockers

and switched on our TV
and devoured the leftovers in the fridge.

They had stayed for two months now,
still unable to decide what to steal.

W13: HOME BOUND

A guy enters the bus.
A Black&Mild between earlobe
and scalp, where you might've

had a pen when you were young
enough to still see inspiration as
the butterflies you chased,

tripping over what hid in
the tall grass of imagination. Looking
around the bus, his smile sticks out

the way sunlight pokes through
a patch of clouds. His smile says
his destination is a garden,

where Promise and Possibility
blossom like orchids, and everyday
is sunny. You will walk through

a similar garden when you cross
the threshold, and what's waited
will overtake you in her gust.

Something inside you will open
like morning glories when she descends
on you like dew. He looks up to see

you watching him. He nods
as if your smile acknowledged
what he already knew.

EXODUS

They might be as weary
as the Israelites camping around

the Tabernacle, having wandered
into the unknown. The night as blind
as the cripple that sat outside

the gates of a temple called Beautiful.
A whisky-ripened man could be Moses

mumbling what could pass for
speaking in tongues. The wind works
a Christmas display of bells

like tambourines.
Dave says the true sermon

happens every twilight
on Saturdays, after he gets off
from busing tables at a diner,

when he joins the line
outside Tick Tock Liquors.

They could all be souls
at the gates of paradise,
anticipating the other side.

PROGENY

Only now

questioning the original's burden, the original's necessity—

the daughter, 55, instant

coffee in her hands, having risen

to psoriasis clouds, still masts in the Van Gogh dawn—

how did her mother

become clinical living alone on the lake

Burden and necessity: in the hands.

How will I enter the language that is not a language;

tarot cards, Alzheimers, a seagull-flickered Jesus?

Edelweiss, Edelweiss

continuance hums a splintered hymn.

SEASON

On Jesus' birthday I ate ecstasy for the first time and became a tango doll
who touched
himself in church as my mother sang "What Child is This?"

I am young.

These movements—scored by a drunken cellist—are quaint in their sexuality.

Two days before, as they stormed my porch, an ambulance was phoned.

I can no longer track my changes.

Strolling through disbelief.

Pausing at belief.

A BOX OF ORNAMENTS

We placed the box of ornaments in the corner,
out of the way, and we started to heap
the other boxes on top of the box of ornaments.
I understand this is common, in the suburbs.

One day we caught a disease. It was fatal.
Reluctantly, we attended the support group.
It is where we learned to say “we”
with little irony. “We are going to die,”

for instance, we said, and, “Let’s meet later
at Red Lobster,” which we learned to say—
“Red Lobster,” thinking of the weight
of the enormous plastic menu—with no detectable irony.

“Sustenance is our evolution and an affront,”
one of us blurted out, and no one at Red Lobster
judged him for it. We had our own booth.
Generally only four could sit comfortably,

but we were pretty thin. We turned different
shades, including gray and yellow. Most of us
had terrific memories, even for details.
We could hardly believe how expendable we were.

(No one said this directly.) We were emotional
only so much as the situation allowed.
The waitress is beautiful, for instance,
and: the waitress’s child has leukemia.

Describing our symptoms was poetic, symphonic.
Some of us were in remission, and, others,
well, their refusal to update us on their condition
became a sore subject. We had to ask

their spouses and lovers and older sisters
on the sly and sometimes even they couldn’t
tell us, which we marked as a kind of bravery
for which we all shared obvious envy.

THE ORIGINALS

His trying all of a sudden so hard
to clearly mimic the lofty new originals
as a way to demonstrate he was truly
paying attention to the culture the last
thirty years made our little group wince.
I winced—and I haven't winced,
really eyes-and-teeth winced, in a decade.
I think I blushed. I know I sighed.
I paced, frantically, and I looked out
the kitchen window, though I couldn't
tell you the first thing I saw out there.
I hollered at Eileen. "Eileen," I hollered,
"Come out here and look at this bullshit."
But she was at work. At the hospital.
She's always liked kids, even sick ones.
She knows how to talk to them.
Eileen doesn't need to stick to the text
like I do, the little onesie-twosie questions
such as school (which), subject (favorite).
She knows how to listen, too. Thank God
I have Eileen in my life. But I need her now,
or someone who understands you don't
just wake up one morning, walk outside
to grab the paper, and get shot in the head.
Only those who commit entirely
to the life die in the sudden gunfire
they wait their whole lives for.
And even when we realize the love/hate
on our knuckles never varnishes off—
even when we've almost forgotten
the name of the cause we are going out
to fight for—even if they slaughter
our babies and cut off their earlobes as
a symbol—we never turn or run away.
Anything else, I tell Eileen, is child's play.

THE MIDWEST

I remember this old guy at the bar
where I worked gestured toward a girl
seated with friends at a round table
and said, You really need to learn to pause,
study the small of a woman's back,
the parallel lines subtly curving upward—
are her shoulders little shouts or whispers?—
and her neck, slightly untuned, does it plead?—
to know how best to begin to pursue her.
But I was mainly interested in scoring then,
in showing you how many bottles I could
hold aloft in the dim light, and getting
and staying loaded for days at a time.

It's rude to talk too much about yourself.
That's what we learn here in the Midwest.
Days are numbered, we ask you to contribute
to the bottom line, to catch one another
in your sullen reproaches, crashing swoons,
make it look easy these next squalid hours.
Some little nitpickers claim we're improving.
But we can't all be angels of mercy or pain,
hunting and gathering, failing and building,
saving nothing for later, sleeping it all off.

ROOKERY
BY TRACI BRIMHALL
(Southern Illinois University Press, 2010)

REVIEWED BY CHRISTOPHER LEIBOW

Traci Brimhall's first book, *Rookery*, winner of the Crab Orchard 2009 First Book Award, is a book embodied with flesh, blood, and soul. There is a static of truly being alive, vulnerable, aware; a rawness that courses through its pages. This is a visceral book of betrayal, injustice, faith and shades of redemption.

The poem that brought me eagerly to Ms. Brimhall's book was "Aubade In Which I Untangle Her Hair." The first few stanzas grab the reader by the lapels,

*Bring me fistfuls of your hair if you want to say
you're sorry.*

I will send my curls one envelope at a time. Your mailbox
will be full of stamps and maple dark hair and apologies.

And

Are you sorry?

After he left I planted milkweed thistle in the birdbath,
After he left I carved "summer" into the tree and above it,
"summer" and below it, "summer." And I made my axe
kiss all three summers, and they became firewood.
When I burned them, the stump outside began singing,

These poems have movement and a present power that comes from their embodiment. They are poems felt in the body, not in the intellect.

The first series of poems in this collection is about betrayal. Brimhall expresses pain with such bitter beauty that with each succeeding poem there is the trepidation of one who is viewing something so intimate that the first response is to turn away. Yet these poems do not have the feel of confessional poems, though Brimhall's speaker explores personal details without meekness, modesty, or discretion. There is no "look at me and my suffering" that many confessional poets succumb to. See "Aubade with a Fox and a Birthmark."

*You crawl into bed, apologies and insect wings
in your hair. I forgive the way you touched her knees,
your amber memory of her body. I make you tell me*

*how her pleasure sounded— a fox with its paw
in a trap's jaw, blood on her thigh. I want to hear
how freckles on her stomach made constellations*

of unlucky numbers...

or “Dueling Sonnets on the Railroad Tracks”

*Don't admit anything. Don't ask your question.
I tasted her sweat on your knuckles, her whispers
in your mouth like second hand smoke. I've wandered
north to the railroad tracks, throwing gravel at the cars.*

The small violence comforts me...

In all of the poems, there is a fearless gaze from which we discover the surreal, and the transcendent in the quotidian. Her surrealist elements work because her juxtapositions are concrete, everyday images, moments, feelings. There are beautiful conversations with self and others: “Prayer for Deeper Water” and “Restoration of the Saints.” Poems that reveal that the tender and brutal sometimes coexist in the feral like in “Requiem with Coal, Butterflies and Terrible Angels.” Brimhall’s language is always precise, as in “The Summer After They Crashed and Drown”

*Hold them so tightly the inside of their bodies
escape out of their mouths. And we don't say
their names. We lure wary schools of sunfish
with dead horseflies*

*And net them. Necks broken, bellies split.
We palm their hearts and watch to see
which stops beating first. When thy slow, we toss
the limp muscle into the lake.*

The second half of the collection moves towards a species of piety with mediations on God and faith. Brimhall’s influences are seen here. These are conversations of faith and what faith means. The speaker of these po-

ems is in the midst of a family that has embraced religion and the speaker clearly relates. But again, Ms. Brimhall embodies these poems, or roots them into the earth. These are not poems about the spirit per se, but about the body as illustrated by passages such as

*You say it is not the animal in us that loves the struggle,
But the spirit that wants to be locked in the crucible
Of flesh until the soul burns clean...*

and

*...Children who'd grow up with a river
that resembled their God—beautiful, brutal and prone to flooding.*

Throughout this collection poems break through the thin veneer of the narratives we carry around with us to make us feel in control. They ache with an intimacy and immediacy, even when darker, that is lacking in most poetry (see “Fourteen Years Later and Fiat Lux”). Like the poignantly dark, “To The Tall Stranger Who Kept His Hands in His Pockets”, with its slightly ominous title and its more ominous birds, and then,

You touched my knee. I let you. *I could kidnap you
if I wanted.* How many park benches
have you sat on alone, trying to spot the same scabbed
knee and braids? How many times have you said
my name to yourself, its taste like pennies,
the warm metal of a child's sweat? Do you wish
you'd pressed your thumb to the hollow of my throat?

This is a lyrical, surreal and palpable first collection. Brimhall is a poet whose brilliant execution and understanding of her craft will make her voice important in coming years.

JUNIPER
BY NANCY TAKACS
(Limberlost Press, 2010)

REVIEWED BY CAROL HENRIKSON

“They open to you and open to you.”

What is true of the yellow trees, the cottonwoods, black walnuts and poplars that Utah poet Nancy Takacs describes as all along the desert horizon—with their *cadmium, / ochre, / pumpkin, / saffron, / hardly any green now, / in stands and circles that spray yellow-blossom*—further, *how they shine in the dark*—is true of all the poems in this, her third book, *Juniper*: they emanate the same *huge translucence*. Sensuous imagery is everywhere, imagery she draws from a deep connection to the natural world, her desert landscape and home, from earth’s resonance within her.

In this collection of thirteen poems, recently published in a beautiful letterpress edition by Limberlost Press (featuring cover art created by Takacs’ son, Ian), Takacs invites us in. These are poems we can enter, trust and, like the poet, *feel* our way along. Right from the start, the title poem tells us

*Juniper’s the word I chose,
I love, the tree that makes me feel
I’m less on Mars than Utah.*

In her characteristically straightforward way, Takacs gives us, so to speak, the keys to her heart, to the poems and to the almost-alien but beloved high desert near the San Rafael Swell where she and her husband (poet Jan Minich) made their home many years ago.

The tactile world, and her own inner truths, are equally her home, leaving no room for the dictates or dogma of imposed, inherited beliefs, namely religion—I *gave up religion / years ago, but still believe / in junipers*, she states. Nor is there room any longer for the fear-inducing tyranny of her Hungarian grandmother’s superstitions: *No hats on the bed, / shoes on the table, / open umbrellas in the house. / No kissing a man who wears a hat*. It’s a wonderful moment, at the end of the poem, when Takacs describes this deeply serious, seemingly trivial, act of defiance, *I take the hat from my husband’s head / and throw it on the bed* and more wonderful, and profound, when she then proceeds to describe what she does choose,

what she does draw nourishment and poetic inspiration from. She tastes the bitter *pungent juniper berry*,

*Which takes me away from its cousin narcissus
And back to the tree itself with its ancient
Shaggy-body universes of dark-blue berries
That know in each green center
How to pine the air, how to
Curry the tongue.*

From such an earthy connection arises a voice that is grounded, courageous and compassionate.

It is a voice felt throughout this collection of poems. In “Twentieth Anniversary,” which begins by tenderly conveying the lasting love in their long marriage through everyday detail—*Last night we had a feast of halibut / he cooked with fennel, / and I sliced tomatoes from our garden*—and setting the scene, showing herself looking at her husband’s *Old Spice and Everafter* cologne bottles in their medicine chest. Takacs continues, reflecting on a time of doubt and suspicion, of how she came to feel, to understand, to trust her husband’s ways, though different from hers.

*I found he has integrity
though he doesn’t reveal much.
Which I do. I always do.*

In fact, to look back at Takacs’ other books (*Pale Blue Wings*, *Preserves*) is to see that this has been true of her work from the start, that she reveals, though her earlier collections are darker and more confessional, their material often the pain of memory, family history, violence, or, as the poem “I Should Feel Pain More” calls them, *truths and abandonments*. Here Takacs reflects, with some irony and distance, that these abandonments *have to come out sometime*, that she has been afraid to let go, but now even as the shasta daisies bloom in her desert yard, she participates in this new healing. As the yellow trees shine in their translucence, as the juniper tree offers its *shaggy-body universes of dark blue berries*, from *deep in each green center*, so the more domestic shasta daisies in her own yard offer sustenance, even approval, though

*They look so fragile,
whiter than any teeth or stars, so white*

*I can go out at night and still see them
along the fence all the way up to my front porch,
laughing.*

Yet these poems do worry. *No one knows how long they have*, Takacs says of the yellow trees—because of drought, the desert, and changes wrought by man. She sees that the animals too, in Springsteen's words, have "hungry hearts." In the poem "The Deer," these hungry creatures and humans are shown competing, in conflict for the same land, or, in this case, *the only five trees (they) have planted* in their yard, as the neighborhood deer come at night and eat them. Takacs sees, and seeing, must say, though acknowledging disquiet, and lamenting the loss of the trees, she praises:

*At first we find
Their coffee-bean-dark stools, then their deep
Hoof prints, double trails through the snow, winding
And crossing. I follow to the beginning to look
Where they jumped in.*

Her words themselves are *deep hoof prints...trails through the snow, winding/and crossing*, throughout this entire book. We follow, and share both Takacs' awe and concern. For instance, in the poem "The Flicker," the poet speaks directly to yellow-headed blackbird, as if to her Muse, in trying to cut a deal, imploring it to stay with the promise:

*.....I'll set out
water under every tree if you raise
your young among the milkweed
and bindweed in my yard.*

The bird is at the mercy of the drought, as are we. The water she offers to supply can quench it, as does her very language. At the beginning of the poem, the day of the yellow-headed blackbird's arrival, the speaker admits having given up such a "drought," of having thought herself a victim in the past, and unloved. It is a day she had decided to *clean out her closet of all / shirts that were gray, my favorite color / I became sick of*.

Likewise, in "Flying Home After Visiting Aunt Ginny With her Broken-Hip Delirium," there is such sadness in the image of her aunt she has just visited in the hospital who

*stroked her teeth
glued in by an aide each morning,
made sure they were still there.
She held the blue sheet
over her head, pushed it
through the bedrails,
asked me to push it back.
Her face was always dusky, afraid,
her eyes in constant surprise.*

or the image of the man sitting next to her on the plane as she flies home

*His furrows and tufts remind me
of last spring's badger
I didn't mean to corner
in our old railroad-tie shed...
widening to show its back teeth.*

Yet even in her mourning Takacs searches, taking an aerial view out the plane's window, and finds, healing in landscape that even from this distance calls to her. She looks down over the plains, over Wyoming, and the Wind River Range and sees

*a field in the shape of a shoe, its ankle opening, unweaving in a spray
of unearthly green, early snap peas? Broccoli? my aunt ate to keep herself
well.*

The color green, like the juniper berry's green center, renews her memory of Aunt Ginny, taking her back to the time when she had *strong hands*, when as a girl she held them, felt them her own and renews her gratitude for her garden at home with its

*blooms of blue flax, penstemon,
daisies, beginning fortunately
all by themselves, how
they appear to live only on air,
with so much grace.*

"Home" is the title of the last poem in this collection. Again there is nature about to bloom in these last lines, on her windowsill where

*The amaryllis
has made another turn on its stem,
has leant again toward the light. It won't be
long before the ruby slips from its green lips.*

The poem is as well a tender portrait of her neighborhood where, waking early, the speaker looks out the window and considers her neighbors' lives, their daily routines, lights just starting to turn on. She watches from her quiet house, while her husband sleeps, as the *kitchen percolates*, the coffee brews in *the ancient pot he washed and filled last night*. In *Juniper*, as in this poem, it is as if it is because of her love, and her saying, that amidst this darkest time of year, the amaryllis bloom will open—and *the skies lift in dark blue and peach*. The book doesn't seem to want to end, but to begin again, the last poem taking us beyond the cycle of a year and spilling over as from the amaryllis bud, when *the ruby slips from its green lips*.

MISSING YOU, METROPOLIS

BY GARY JACKSON

(Graywolf Press, 2010)

REVIEWED BY NICK DEPASCAL

What are the lives of superheroes like? Given the chance to be one, would your life improve? How do comic books offer us a lens onto our own lives and histories? Are comic books merely escapism? Gary Jackson's first poetry collection, *Missing You, Metropolis*, winner of the 2009 Cave Canem Poetry Prize, succeeds in providing an interesting and fresh exploration of these questions, as well as questions about what mediums are perceived as art.

It is easy to question why anyone would write a book of poetry that focuses on comic books and superheroes. Though the poems never answer this question explicitly, it is clear that the first poem of the book, "The Secret Art of Reading a Comic," wants to dispel any reader assumptions about the relative worth of comics. The poem is modeled after Auden's "Musee de Beaux Arts," which is in turn a consideration of Brueghel's painting "Landscape with the Fall of Icarus." Auden's poem begins *About suffering they were never wrong, / The Old Masters; how well, they understood / Its human position; how it takes place / While someone else is eating or opening a window or just walking dully along*, and goes on to consider Brueghel's painting specifically, and its figures' willingness to overlook the misfortune of Icarus, as it doesn't affect their own desires and commerce.

Similarly, Jackson's poem begins, *The old comics were never wrong. / Right always defended / by the hero*, and continues, *These are treats, delicious twenty-two-page / snacks we swallow, never questioning / the actions between the panels' gutters / and how similar that world bleeds / into our own*. In the last stanza, like Brueghel's Icarus, we see Captain America in *Avengers #4* falling from a disintegrating plane while the action of World War II rages on below, its players oblivious to the figure *wrapped / in the American flag, dropping / into the frigid ocean behind*.

"The Secret Art of Reading a Comic" draws attention to the antithesis of the book. While comics sometimes avoid small details, jumping in space and time between single panels, Jackson's book examines the detailed lives and motives of characters in the comics. In "The Dilemma of Lois Lane," we see Lane confronting the reality of living with the perfect man.

Sometimes,

*when we're alone at home,
fixing dinner, you'll pretend
to wince when you cut yourself,
and I find myself hoping
that the tiniest drop of blood
will bloom on your finger.*

Likewise, in “When Loving a Man Becomes Too Hard,” Mary Jane Parker, Peter Parker’s/Spiderman’s wife, details the loneliness of loving a man that belongs to *New York / and its myriad of victims and villains, and how she holds / his absence like a crutch.*

Jackson’s work succeeds because it resists the comics’ urge to summarize. Instead, both the poems that focus on characters and those that seem more autobiographical seek to illuminate a particular event, emotion, or trait in a way that comics, in their brevity, do not. In this way, his poems also reject the willful ignorance Auden ascribes to humanity, as the poems become about identifying and empathizing with those who aren’t often given opportunity to share their motives and emotions. Jackson’s poems pull Icarus from the water and set him down on the shore to talk, to explain exactly why he ignored his father’s missive to stay away from the sun.

These poems challenge the assumption that poetry, and literature in general, are superior to comics as an art form. By modeling this opening poem after Auden, and by linking *Avengers #4* to the painting by Brueghel, Jackson likens comic books to other art forms, and suggests that they can and do deal with the same themes and issues of so-called “high art.”

Jackson spends much of the book bridging the gap between reality and comics. Interspersing the world of mutants and superheroes with that of our own allows Jackson to talk about race in an original way. In “Magnetoe Eyes Strange Fruit,” Magnetoe—enemy and sometimes-ally of the X-Men in the Marvel comics—comes across a horrific scene wherein two mutant children have been brutally murdered and their bodies festooned with signs that mark them as mutants. This scene echoes the famous picture of the real-life lynching of Thomas Shipp and Abram Smith that inspired “Strange Fruit,” the song made famous by Billie Holiday. Like the Northern outrage and anger that sparked the poem and song, Magnetoe’s reaction is violent, as he wishes to:

*rip every man out of his home,
make each one burn, reverse
the earth’s rotation, rupture the core*

*and tear this planet inside out,
only so they can know how it feels.*

A few lines later, Magneto decides that *someone must be / the villain for the dead*. Likewise, in the poem, “How to Get Lynched on the Job,” we see an example of racism in the real world. The speaker describes an incident at work where a friend whispers something to a white, female co-worker, and that *It was the first time / I worried for him, because Whistling and whispering, it’s all the same. The truth is the world ain’t changed. / None of us are far / from ending like Emmett*. Both poems make a nod to terrible events and images associated with the murders of African-Americans in U.S. history. The use of one event that occurs in the imagined world of the comics and one in the real world shows the way comics can—like another medium—deal with history and ideas as an art form, and suggests why readers are attracted to comic books.

Jackson uses the seeming dichotomy of the real and imagined worlds to compare autobiographical events with their comic book counterparts. In “After the Green,” the speaker discusses visiting his disabled sister at her school for the first time to see *the students chewing blocks, / throwing crayons*, and how the speaker then feels *ashamed to see her among them*. Later, the speaker is *filled / with a hollow rage. When all you can do / is watch a body fail, / what words are there?* At the end of the poem, shocked at his mother’s pride that his ailing sister outlived the doctor’s predictions, the speaker closes with the line *As if this were a good thing*.

Compare the tone of this poem to that of “Home from Work, I Face my Newborn Mutant Son,” wherein the speaker arrives home to discover his son is a fragile, glass-bodied mutant and his wife is dead from childbirth. As with “After the Green,” the speaker of this poem seems to barely contain his rage beneath the surface of a well-crafted and coherent voice:

*He cuts into my palms and slides
in the creased blood. I see
his tiny organs getting used to their work,
while my wife—bled out—grows cold.*

*What paper-bag test can this boy pass?
His skin reflects the white of my eyes.
And I know he cannot last.*

This poem also ends with a death, though it is the father—grieving the

loss of his wife and the fact that his newborn son will never survive the world in such a state—that drops his son to the floor, shattering him. Like the speaker in the previous poem, he checks out, refusing to grant that anything positive (a birth) can redeem both of his losses (the death of his wife and mutant son).

Interestingly, both poems use time pieces as a central image. In “After the Green,” the sister’s body *ticked / like a broken watch, arms moving staccato, / muscles jerking limbs to their own order*. In “Home from Work, I Face my Newborn Mutant Son,” after he drops his son to the floor, the speaker observes how *As he shatters on the floor, / everything from his heart to lungs / freezes like the hands / of a wristwatch at ground zero*. These images suggest a human body that is damaged beyond repair, and again subtly suggest a connection between two dichotomous elements: the unpredictable human body, and the supposed predictability of a watch.

By the final poem, “Reading Comic Books in the Rain,” we see explicitly the main thrust of the collection. The speaker describes reading a comic in the rain, seeing the colors run, and wishing to *Stave off Topeka, Kansas, / the whole goddamn world, by falling / into another one*, and in the final line of the poem, *to inhabit a world a page removed from our own*. The speaker of this final poem wants to escape Kansas through the comics. The comic book characters that inhabit the poems want to escape their deformities through costumes and the use of their various powers. This hardly seems so different from poets and other artists who wish to escape to a new world, or at least a new vision of the existing world, through the various mediums of art. It is this theme of escape in the collection, seen through both the lens of the autobiographical and the make believe, that coheres the book and allows Jackson to place the art of poetry and the art of comics on equal footing.

BECOMING WEATHER

BY CHRIS MARTIN

(Coffee House Press, 2010)

REVIEWED BY CURTIS JENSEN

Chris Martin, in *Becoming Weather*, tracks between registers closely situated and theoretically distant, registers loosely coordinate with the particularly experienced the abstractly removed. *Becoming Weather* is significant in that it addresses the dual registers of human experience, the instant and the infinite, by poems which both contain and enact this duality. That is to say Martin manifests the dualism of *Becoming Weather*'s content by means of its tensioned form and vice versa. From *Disequilibrium*, the first section of *Becoming Weather*:

6

What we ask ourselves
Now is—What is forgivable?

I move to bare
the little splitting
inside as it

reds between
the pink on the end
of my finger

Somehow this coincides
with a faith in
the world as a place

In 6, Martin attends to that which we ask ourselves and *the pink on the end / of my finger*, the abstract and critical and the close and experiential. In terms of content, the compositional field of the poem is marked. Extending from 6 to *Becoming Weather* as a whole, Martin's pathos-rich poetic voice traces across the book a weave both local and global, highly personal and highly public. A sort of inscape is formed, but unlike Hopkins, *Becoming Weather* does not explicitly intend its instresses of poetic attention to some logocentric being or trope or combination of the two. Martin calls to the reader early in the text:

I'm asking you

*if it's possible to refuse
to go blind—I for whom*

*the divers tones
of a mental life meld*

*at once
So is it*

*the infinite or
the instantaneous*

*quality of movement
that frightens us more?*

Martin marks his registers, *instantaneous* and *infinite*, and he situates his poetic voice in a differential position between them, between *I* and *for whom*, between subject and object. Martin's vocation is to voice the inspired moments of his existence, to sing the correspondence between instance and infinity, between spots of time and high virtues, between epiphanies close at hand and the void beyond what is not at hand. Romantic and late-romantic poetics are applicable to Martin's poems, but fail to account for the formal signature of Martin's subject/object position. Thus Martin is set with the task of both seeing and saying:

8

*Can I say the air
is beautiful?*

*Can I spend my whole life
as a guest inside the eccentric
balloon?*

*Let us release
these appearances
and in so*

*doing hold
fast to what burden
bodies make*

thick returning

to us their
unconscious care

Can I spend my whole life as a gust
outside the eccentric balloon?

Can I see the air
as beautiful?

A follow-up question to stanza 2 could be: if not a speaking subject, then what? By inverting the opening couplet into the closing couplet, *saying* and *seeing* bind together in chiasm; Martin demonstrates the two acts' integral interrelationship in the formation of the speaking subject. For Martin the poet must attend to both inside and outside, must attempt both *saying* and *seeing*. But how can one do both, how can someone be both inside and outside? In order to manage this duality, an ethics of instability (see Ted Mathys's interview with Martin, soon to appear on coffeehousepress.org) is practically entailed and a poetics that privileges movement between registers is deployed. Across the poem and the book Martin flickers (and he must) between subjectivity and objectivity, the instant and the infinite in order to attempt *both*. Martin's poetic voice tends towards a reflection of something essentially dualistic by function of its demonstrated vocation as well as its chosen subject. In this way, *Becoming Weather* is a rich working out of Martin's poetics, a poetic vocation dually composite of a self-declared and content-determined set of imperatives.

I'm a man
becoming weather

None of this is to suggest that Martin aims for the expression of an imagined algorithm of nature—though the moment that one of Martin's poems seems to alight on a mimetic perch, it just as quickly veers away. But this figure happens less in the way a finch flits instinctively about and more in the way a deliberately composed loop is shaken out from a lariat. Accordingly, as often as the poems of *Becoming Weather* appear to manifest themselves, Martin clearly composes them.

Now if you would
gently tip
the assemblage
I will breathe

my torrent
once more

Both contingency and composition hold places of privilege in Martin's poetics. In *Becoming Weather*, perceptions follow one another quickly, but simultaneously Martin affects a subtle, tense chord between an emphasis on the open field and the particulars brought to position in that field. This tension is reflected in the poems' movements between registers concrete and abstract. Across the book, Martin achieves the radical *Dis-equilibrium* he sets out to enact. Martin both sings, to borrow more terms from Charles Olson, from a position of objectism, and sees from a position of objectivism. Though at times the work tips too far towards it theoretical ground, threatening to topple irrecoverably into the discourses of critical thought, it does not. Thus the work achieves through form an enactment of its own content, and it does so in the pathos-rich timbre of Martin's poetic voice. Martin's poetic inheritances are in this way clearly present in the book's figures (Oppen, Guest, and Berrigan are mentioned the book's last section, *Chorus*); the book presents a flush document of Martin's movement into a deeply dual poetics from a position informed by late modern poetry.

BIOGRAPHIES

JEFFREY C. ALFIER is a 2009 Pushcart Prize nominee. His work has appeared recently or is forthcoming in *Crab Orchard Review*, *Kestrel* and *Vallum* (UK). He is author of two chapbooks, *Strangers Within the Gate* (2005), and *Offloading the Wounded* (2010), and serves as co-editor of *San Pedro River Review*.

JOEL ALLEGRETTI (www.joelallegretti.com) is the author of two full-length volumes of poetry from The Poet's Press: *The Plague Psalms* (2000) and *Father Silicon*, selected by the *Kansas City Star* as one of 100 Noteworthy Books of 2006. In 2010 Poets Wear Prada released his third collection, *Thrum*. Allegretti's work has appeared in *The New York Quarterly*, *Margie*, *Rattapallax*, *Slipstream*, *Voices in Italian Americana*, *Confrontation*, *Xcp Cross-Cultural Poetics* and others.

PAUL SCOT AUGUST has worked as an upholstery salesman, a roofer, a dishwasher, a mail room sorter, an automobile mechanic, a daycare worker, a pizza delivery driver, an independent bookstore owner, and a software developer. He is a former poetry editor of *The Cream City Review*. His poetry has appeared in *Dunes Review*, *Naugatuck River Review*, *Passages North*, *Poetry Quarterly*, *The Cream City Review*, *Scribble Magazine* and elsewhere. He currently lives in the Milwaukee area with his two children.

SCOTT M. BADE lives in Kalamazoo, MI with his wife Lori and sons August and Stuart; however, he spends most of his time in a state of confusion. In addition to working as a technical writer, Scott is pursuing a doctoral degree at Western Michigan University. He is a former poetry editor for *Third Coast Magazine* and is currently an editorial assistant at *New Issue Press*. His poems have appeared in *Fugue*, *Poetry International*, *H_NGM_N*, *Night Train* and others.

RYAN J. BROWNE received an MFA from the University of Alabama, where he now teaches writing and literature. He also teaches poetry and literature classes in medium- and maximum-security Alabama state prisons with the Alabama Prison Arts + Education Project. His writing has appeared in *Colorado Review*, *Gulf Coast*, *West Branch*, and elsewhere.

ERIC BURGER was a Jay C. and Ruth Halls Poetry Fellow at the Wisconsin Institute for Creative Writing. His poems have appeared in *Denver Quarterly*, *Quarterly West*, *The Missouri Review Online*, *Black Warrior Review*, *CutBank*, *Phoebe*, *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *Gulf Coast*, *Sonora Review*, *Puerto del Sol*, among others. He teaches at the University of Colorado and lives in Boulder with his wife Katherine and daughter June.

ELIJAH BURRELL is working towards an MFA in the Bennington Writing Seminars. His poetry has been published in *The Country Dog Review* and *Under One Sun*. He was the recipient of the 2009 Cecil A. Blue Award in Poetry, and a finalist in the 2010 Pinch Poetry Contest. He resides in Jefferson City, Missouri with his wife and two little girls.

RAFAEL CAMPO teaches and practices general internal medicine at Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center and Harvard Medical School in Boston, and is on the creative writing faculty at Lesley University's low residency MFA program. His most recent collection of poetry, *The Enemy* (Duke, 2007) won the Sheila Motton Book Award. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Harvard Review*, *North American Review*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Slate.com*, *Southwest Review* and elsewhere. www.rafaelcampo.com

ANNE CASTON'S first collection of poetry, *Flying Out With The Wounded*, was awarded the 1996 New York University Press Prize in Poetry. Her second collection, *Judah's Lion*, was published in 2009 (Toad Hall Press). She just completed a third collection (*The Empress of Longing*) and is at work now on a memoir about growing up in the Bible Belt. Anne is Associate Professor of Poetry in the University of Alaska Anchorage's MFA Program in Creative Writing.

ROB COOK lives in NYC. He is the author of four books, the latest being *Blackout Country* (BlazeVox [books], 2009) and *Last Window in the Punk Hotel* (Rain Mountain Press, 2010). Work has appeared in *The Bitter Oleander*, *Asheville Poetry Review*, *Fence*, *A cappella Zoo*, *Zoland Poetry*, *Tampa Review*, *Quiddity*, *Poor Claudia*, *Rhino*, *Aufgabe*, *Harvard Review*, *Colorado Review*, etc.

MATTHEW COOPERMAN is the author of the collections *Still: of the Earth as the Ark which Does Not Move* (Counterpath Press, 2011), *DaZE* (Salt Publishing Ltd, 2006) and *A Sacrificial Zinc* (Pleiades/LSU, 2001), which won the Lena-Miles Wever Todd Prize. A founding editor of *Quarter After Eight*, he is currently co-poetry editor of *Colorado Review*. Cooperman teaches at Colorado State University, where he is currently Director of Creative Writing.

NICK DEPASCAL currently lives in Albuquerque, NM with his wife and son, where he's working towards his MFA in Poetry at the University of New Mexico. His poetry has appeared in *Sugar House Review*, *Adobe Walls*, *The Houston Literary Review*, *Breadcrumb Scabs* and more.

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

BENJAMIN EVANS is the editor of the arts review, *foggedclarity.com*, and the collected book of original fiction, poetry and portraits entitled, *Fogged Clarity 1*. His own poems, essays and reviews have appeared in *Gargoyle*, *Ilya's Honey*, *Scythe*, *The Beyond Race Quarterly*, *Anderbo.com*, *The Ambassador Poetry Project*, *San Pedro River Review*, and *The Muskegon Chronicle*, among others. He is a contributing blogger to *The Huffington Post Arts Section*.

JONTERRI GADSON is Debra's daughter. She is also a 2nd-year poetry fellow in the University of Virginia's MFA program. Her poems have previously been published in *Torch*, *Conte*, *Assisi*, *Diverse Voices Quarterly*, and others; a review has been published in *Meridian*.

JUSTIN HAMM now lives near Mark Twain territory in Missouri. He is the author of *Illinois*, *My Apologies*, a chapbook forthcoming from RockSaw Press, and his work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Nimrod International Journal*, *The New York Quarterly*, *Cream City Review*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, among others. Justin earned his MFA from Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

JEFF HARDIN lives and teaches in Tennessee. His poems appear in recent and forthcoming issues of *The Hudson Review*, *The Southern Review*, *Southwest Review*, *The Gettysburg Review*, *Ploughshares*, *Poetry Northwest* and others. He is the author of two chapbooks and one collection, *Fall Sanctuary*, which received the 2004 Nicholas Roerich Prize.

JEN HAWKINS is an English/Philosophy double major and Art minor at Idaho State University. Her writing and artwork have been published widely and have received numerous awards. A recovering masochist, Jen enjoys caffeineing, shebeening (with all due moderation) and making stuff. She loves Joe with all her bleeding heart.

MELANIE HENDERSON, a 4th-generation native of Washington, DC, earned an MFA from Lesley University. An alum of Voices Summer Writing Workshops (VONA), her poems, paintings and photos have appeared in several publications. She is a winner of the 2009 Larry Neal Writers' Award and the Managing Editor of *Tidal Basin Review*.

CAROL HENRIKSON is a poet who lives in Vermont.

BRANDI HOMAN is the author of *Bobcat Country* and *Hard Reds* (Shearsman, 2010 and 2008) and is Editor-in-Chief of Switchback Books. Probably, she loves you.

MARK JACKLEY is the author of four chapbooks, most recently *Lank, Beak and Bumpy* (Iota Press), and a full-length collection, *There Will Be Silence While You Wait* (Plain View Press). His work has appeared in *Melic Review*, *Pebble Lake Review*, *10x3 Plus* and other journals. He lives in Sterling, VA.

CHELSEA JENNINGS designs/hand-binds books and teaches writing at the University of Washington, where she's pursuing a PhD in English. Her work has appeared in *Madison Review*, *Sycamore Review*, *Poet Lore*, *Best New Poets 2007* and *Black Warrior Review*. She was a recipient of the 2010 Discovery/Boston Review award and a finalist for the 2010 Ruth Lilly Fellowships.

CURTIS JENSEN'S work has appeared in *Try!*, *Lit*, *The Boog City Portable Reader*, *No, Dear*, *Precipitate* and *The Equalizer*. He has lived and worked in Utah, Wyoming, Ukraine and now Brooklyn. He maintains a blog at theend-ofwaste.blogspot.com.

BROCK MICHAEL JONES is a Utah native who graduated in 2010 from Utah Valley University with a BA in English. He joined the Army in early 2002 and spent four and a half years on active duty before joining the National Guard. Three tours to Iraq later, he's still trying to figure out how to write a good war poem.

ABY KAUPANG is the author of *Absence is Such a Transparent House* (Tebot Bach, 2011) and *Scenic Fences | Houses Innumerable* (Scantly Clad Press, 2009). Her poems have appeared in *VOLT*, *Verse*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Best New Poets*, *The Laurel Review*, *Parthenon West*, *Aufgabe*, *14 Hills*, *Interim*, *Caketrain*, *lo-ball*, *PANK* and others. She received her MFA in Creative Writing and is now pursuing her MS in Occupational Therapy. View more at abykaupang.com

ALAN KING'S poems have appeared in *Alehouse*, *Audience*, *Boxcar Poetry Review*, *Indiana Review*, *MiPoesias*, *RATTLE*, among others. A Cave Canem fellow and VONA Alum, he's been nominated for both Best of the Net and a Pushcart Prize. When he's not reporting or sending poems to journals, you can find Alan chasing the muse through Washington, D.C., people watching with his boys and laughing at the crazy things strangers say to get close to one another.

WILLIE JAMES KING'S poems appear widely in such literary magazines as *Alehouse*, *America*, *Appalachian Heritage*, *Confrontation Magazine*, *The Lullwater Review*, *Southern Poetry Review* and elsewhere. He is the author of several collections of poetry, with his most recent being *The House in the Heart*

by *Tebot Bach*, 2007. Willie holds an MFA from Queens University, Charlotte, NC, and he is a Pushcart Prize nominee. Email him at wll3ki@aol.com.

STEVE LANGAN is the author of *Freezing*, *Notes on Exile and Other Poems*, and *Meet Me at the Happy Bar*.

Raised in rural Maine, GRACIE LEAVITT finds herself now slowly adjusting to city life as an MFA candidate in poetry at Brooklyn College, where she concerns herself with imagined nostalgia and syntax as a function of the soul, among other things. Her poems have appeared in *La Petite Zine*, *Caketrain*, *2River*, *Fourteen Hills* and *elimae*.

CHRISTOPHER ANTHONY LEIBOW graduated from Antioch University Los Angeles with an MFA in poetry. He is a two-time Pushcart Prize nominee, a Utah Book Award nominee and the winner of the Writers@Work Writer's Advocate Award 2008. He curated Cabaret Voltage, a spoken word, art and music show in Salt Lake City, for 7 years. He has been published in *Barrow Street*, *Interim Magazine*, *Juked* and others.

JULIA LEVERONE is in the University of Maryland's MFA program where she teaches writing. Originally from the Boston area, she writes and translates poetry from Spanish.

DAWN LONSINGER is pursuing a doctorate in creative writing and literature at the University of Utah, and is the author of two chapbooks, *the linoleum crop* (Jeanne Duval Editions) and *The Nested Object* (Dancing Girl Press). Her poems have recently appeared in *Colorado Review*, *New Orleans Review*, *Sycamore Review*, *Post Road*, *Subtropics* and *Best New Poets 2010*. She, like most living organisms, has a thing for light.

JEFFREY MCDANIEL is the author of four books of poetry, most recently *The Endarkenment*, published by University of Pittsburgh Press. A recipient of an NEA Fellowship, his poems have appeared in *Best American Poetry 1994* and *2010*. He teaches at Sarah Lawrence College.

CINDY HUNTER MORGAN worked for 10 years in the orchestra field. She loves Beethoven, snow, apples, unicycles, pencil sharpeners, avocados, parchment paper, and socks. Her work has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and has appeared in *West Branch*, *Tar River Poetry*, *The Literary Bohemian*, *Bateau*, *The Vermont Literary Review*, *The Christian Science Monitor* and elsewhere.

JOSEPH MURPHY is a professional editor and writer who lives in Michigan with his wife, three black cats, and two black and white cats. His recent publications include *The Tower Journal*, *The Driftwood Review* and *The Broad River Review*. Born in New Orleans, Joseph was raised on Martha's Vineyard, but has lived most of his adult life in the San Francisco Bay area.

KRISTINE ONG MUSLIM authored the poetry collection, *A Roomful of Machines* (Searle Publishing, 2010), and several chapbooks. She's published in more than 400 publications including *Bellevue Literary Review*, *Boston Review*, *Contrary Magazine*, *Narrative Magazine*, *Potomac Review*, *Southword*, *The Pedestal Magazine* and *Weber: The Contemporary West*. She has been nominated five times for the Pushcart Prize and twice for *Best of the Web* 2011.

GREG PAPE is the author of nine books, including *Border Crossings*, *Black Branches*, *Storm Pattern* (University of Pittsburgh Press), *Sunflower Facing the Sun*, and *American Flamingo*. His poems have been published in such magazines as *The Atlantic*, *Iowa Review*, *The New Yorker*, *Northwest Review* and *Poetry*. He teaches at the University of Montana, and in the Brief-residency MFA program at Spalding University. He served as Poet Laureate of Montana from 2007 to 2009.

ALISON PELEGRIN is the author of three poetry collections, most recently *Big Muddy River of Stars* (U. Akron 2007) and *Hurricane Party*, which is forthcoming from the University of Akron in 2011. She is the recipient of a creative writing fellowship from the NEA, and her poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *Ploughshares* and *Southern Review*.

MIKE PETRIK received his MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Memphis, and he is now pursuing his PhD in fiction writing at Missouri. He is a member of the Quill'sMen, a rogue literary faction. His literary interests include the creation, continuation and alteration of the American myth through creative writing as well as the specific ecology and pathology of small islands. He is married to poet and writer Bethany Reisner.

ELIZABETH PRESTON lives in Chicago, where she is the editor of *Muse*, a children's science magazine. Her readers often threaten to send armies of vicious fantastical creatures after her if their fan mail isn't published. She counteracts a creeping paranoia by wearing running shoes at all times.

STEVEN D. SCHROEDER'S first book of poems is *Torched Verse Ends* (BlazeVOX [books]). His poetry is available or forthcoming from *New Eng-*

land Review, *Pleiades*, *The Journal*, *Indiana Review* and *Verse Daily*. He edits the online poetry journal *Anti-*, serves as a contributing editor for *River Styx*, and works as a Certified Professional Résumé Writer.

KATIE JEAN SHINKLE'S work has appeared or is forthcoming in *American Poetry Journal*, *BlazeVOX*, *PANK Magazine*, *DIAGRAM*, *NANO Fiction*, among others.

MATTHEW SINEX works as a high school English teacher in Surprise, Arizona where he lives with his wife and son. His poems are forthcoming in *Ellipsis* and *decomp*.

DAVID STARKEY is the Poet Laureate of Santa Barbara and Director of the Creative Writing Program at Santa Barbara City College. His most recent poetry collections are *Starkey's Book of States* (Boson Books, 2007), *Adventures of the Minor Poet* (Artamo Press, 2007) and *Ways of Being Dead: New and Selected Poems* (Artamo, 2006). *A Few Things You Should Know about the Weasel* was published by Biblioasis in 2010. Over the past 20 years David has published more than 400 poems in literary journals.

JASON TANDON is the author of two collections of poetry, *Give over the Heckler and Everyone Gets Hurt* (Black Lawrence, 2009), winner of the 2006 St. Lawrence Book Award, and *Wee Hour Martyrdom* (sunnyoutside, 2008). His poetry and reviews have recently appeared in the *Boston Review*, *Bellingham Review*, *Notre Dame Review*, *Pleiades*, *Verse Daily* and *The Writer's Almanac*.

ADAM TAVEL recently won the 14th Annual Robert Frost Award, and his latest poems appear or are forthcoming in *Indiana Review*, *Phoebe*, *Redivider*, *Devil's Lake*, *New South*, *Cave Wall*, among others. A finalist for the 2010 Intro Poetry Prize with Four Way Books and a recent Pushcart Prize nominee, Tavel is an assistant professor of English at Wor-Wic Community College on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

DIANE UNTERWEGER lives and writes in Nashotah, Wisconsin and teaches composition at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Her poems have appeared in *Free Verse*, *Verse Wisconsin* and *Luna Creciente*.

ROBERT N. WATSON is a professor of English at UCLA, teaching mostly Shakespeare and 17th century poetry, and has authored books on Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, the fear of death and the roots of modern environmentalist consciousness in Renaissance literature and painting. His poetry has appeared in *The Antioch Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Ariel*, *The New Yorker* and other journals.

SARA WATSON received her MFA from Chatham University. She continues to live and write in Pittsburgh, where she no longer works at the mall. She calls her mother daily.

CHARLES HARPER WEBB'S latest book is *Shadow Ball: New & Selected Poems*, published by the University of Pittsburgh Press in Fall 2009. Recipient of grants from the Whiting and Guggenheim foundations, Webb directs the MFA Program in Creative Writing at California State University, Long Beach.

JEFF WHITNEY was born in Texas but grew up in northern California. The past few years he's been in Madrid, teaching English at CEIP San Sebastian and playing copious amounts of soccer. He is currently in Missoula, pursuing an MFA at the University of Montana.

JOSHUA MARIE WILKINSON'S recent works are *Selenography* (Sidebrow Books 2010); *Poets on Teaching* (University of Iowa Press 2010); and *Made a Machine by Describing the Landscape* (IndiePix 2011), a tour documentary about Califone co-directed with Solan Jensen. He lives in Chicago.

SHANGRILA WILLY is a sometimes attorney who lives in Baltimore with her Great Dane and her husband. She runs an orphanarium for lost and forgotten words. Her work most recently appeared in *LUMINA*.

SUGAR HOUSE REVIEW STAFF

JOHN KIPPEN Editor

NATHANIEL TAGGART Editor

JERRY VANIEPEREN Editor

NATALIE YOUNG Editor
Graphic Designer

MICHAEL MCLANE Review Editor

Rock & Sling



www.rockandsling.com

herhowell \nancymairs \leepassarella \briestimson \jessievaneerden \kelleywhite \galabent

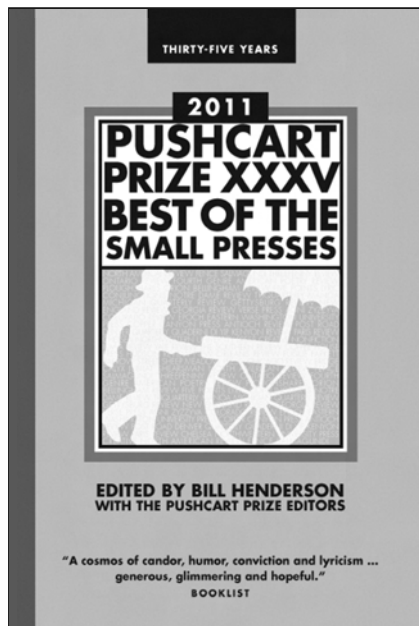
rayamorosi \cathybobb \barbaracrooker \marcharshman \tomholmes \christop

CELEBRATING 35 YEARS

PUSHCART PRIZE 2011

**AMERICA'S BEST FICTION, ESSAYS, MEMOIRS AND POETRY—
69 BRILLIANT SELECTIONS FROM HUNDREDS OF PRESSES**

"A monumental year."— PUBLISHERS WEEKLY



"As ever, essential. Period."

KIRKUS REVIEWS

"Must reading...and an indispensable teaching tool."

FRED LEEBRON, GETTYSBURG COLLEGE

608 PAGES ■ HARDBOUND \$35.00 ■ PAPERBACK \$18.95
PUSHCART PRESS ■ P.O. BOX 380 ■ WAINSCOTT, NEW YORK 11975
ORDER FROM W. W. NORTON CO. ■ 800 223-2584 ■ WWW.PUSHCARTPRIZE.COM

Poets Prepare The I-90 Revolution Has Begun



**Redactions: Poetry & Poetics
with Guest Editor
Sean Thomas Dougherty**

www.redactions.com/i-90_manifesto.pdf
<http://thelinebreak.wordpress.com/2010/09/06/i-90-manifesto/>



NATIONS TITLE AGENCY, INC.

FOR ALL OF YOUR TITLE AND ESCROW NEEDS.

7090 Union Park Center, Suite 160
Midvale, Utah 84047
(801) 255-6392
www.nationstitle.com

Service is not just our policy, it's our commitment.

SUGAR HOUSE REVIEW

AN INDEPENDENT POETRY MAGAZINE



RECENT CONTRIBUTORS

Rane Arroyo
Kenneth Brewer
Teresa Cader
Jim Daniels
Major Jackson

Claudia Keelan
William Kloefkorn
David Lee
Campbell McGrath
Paul Muldoon

Richard Robbins
Jerome Rothenberg
Natasha Sajé
Janet Sylvester
William Trowbridge

**Work from our first issue is included in
2011 Pushcart Prize XXXV: Best of the Small Presses.**

For more information, to submit or subscribe, visit:
www.SugarHouseReview.com

GET YOUR SUGAR FIX

SUGAR HOUSE REVIEW
MAIL ORDER FORM

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____

Email (optional)_____

SUBSCRIPTIONS:

[] \$12: 1-Year Subscription (2 issues)

[] \$22: 2-Year Subscription (4 issues)

Start subscription with issue #_____

SINGLE ISSUES:

[] \$5 + \$2 s/h: Fall/Winter 2009, Vol. 1/Issue 1

[] \$7 + \$2 s/h: Spring/Summer 2010, Vol. 2/Issue 1

[] \$7 + \$2 s/h: Fall/Winter 2010, Vol. 2/Issue 2

PDF ISSUES (compatible with most e-readers):

\$2: Available for download at www.SugarHouseReview.com

Please make checks payable to Sugar House Review.

SUGAR HOUSE REVIEW
P.O. BOX 17091, SALT LAKE CITY, UT 84117

GET YOUR SUGAR FIX

READ. SUBSCRIBE. PASS SUGAR HOUSE REVIEW ALONG.

CONTRIBUTORS:

Jeffrey C. Alfier
Joel Allegretti
Paul Scot August
Scott M. Bade
Ryan J. Browne
Eric Burger
Elijah Burrell
Rafael Campo
Anne Caston
Rob Cook
Matthew Cooperman
Nick DePascal
Brock Dethier
Benjamin Evans
Jonterri Gadson
Justin Hamm
Jeff Hardin
Jen Hawkins

Melanie Henderson
Carol Henrikson
Brandi Homan
Mark Jackley
Chelsea Jennings
Curtis Jensen
Brock Michael Jones
Aby Kaupang
Alan King
Willie James King
Steve Langan
Gracie Leavitt
Christopher Leibow
Julia Leverone
dawn lonsinger
Jeffrey McDaniel
Cindy Hunter Morgan
Joseph Murphy

Kristine Ong Muslim
Greg Pape
Alison Pelegrin
Mike Petrik
Elizabeth Preston
Steven D. Schroeder
Katie Jean Shinkle
Matthew Sinex
David Starkey
Jason Tandon
Adam Tavel
Diane Unterweger
Robert N. Watson
Sara Watson
Charles Harper Webb
Jeff Whitney
Joshua Marie Wilkinson
Shangrila Willy



WWW.SUGARHOUSEREVIEW.COM

EMAIL: editors@sugarhousereview.com

SUGAR HOUSE REVIEW

P.O. Box 17091

Salt Lake City, UT 84117

© 2011