

CIRCLESHOW

THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF SEVEN CIRCLEPRESS

DOUBLE POETRY WITH CHEESE
BY JOSHUA STEWART
INTERVIEW WITH TOBI COGSWELL
7 NEW POETS
AND MORE...

VOLUME 6
SUMMER 2011



Editor-In-Chief
 Seth Jani

editor-in-chief@sevencirclepress.com

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About the Press



From the Editor

The New CircleShow by Seth Jani

As you all know Volume 6 represents a great turning point for CircleShow, SCP's modest little journal that has become a staple of the press and continues to be our main source of both new authorship and readers.

We have indefinitely ceased the printed version of the journal and have re-launched it as a purely online project.

The beauty of this is that we are now free from the size/formatting limits imposed by the cost of maintaining a printed product and can now expand the premise of the journal both in size and content to more fully express the vision of the press.

This first new issue is just a taste of what is to come. Some of the new long-term features include:

Author Interviews

Essays by poets about the nature of poetry and its place in contemporary society

Information about quality publishing venues/opportunities for poets and authors

Spotlights on neglected poets/poetry books

And of course more and more great poetry from new and established authors

On top of all this the journal has been redesigned to appear sleeker with a more magazine-like layout. We encourage people to view it with the most recent version of the free Adobe Reader, though any PDF viewing device should be sufficient.

With that said feel free to print issues out on your home printer for private use and to share with friends.

Here at SCP we hope you enjoy the New CircleShow, and come back to check on us as we continue to expand and grow in the future.

As always thanks go out to all the authors who have sent us work over the last three years, many of whom continue to do so. As well as to all the wonderful readers who come back again and again to our website and the pages of CircleShow.

Enjoy.

-Seth Jani
Editor-In-Chief

October 15th, 2011

Poet's Perspective

Double Poetry with Cheese by Joshua Michael Stewart

About the Author



Joshua Michael Stewart has had poems published in *Massachusetts Review*, *Euphony*, *Rattle*, *Cold Mountain Review*, *William and Mary Review*, *Pedestal Magazine*, *Evansville Review* and *Blueline*. Pudding House Publications published his Chapbook *Vintage Gray* in 2007. Finishing Line Press will publish his next chapbook *Sink Your Teeth into the Light* in 2012.

He lives in Ware, Massachusetts.

Visit him at:

www.joshuamichaelstewart.yolasite.com

Does poetry matter? This is a question often asked much more frequently so in the past twenty years. What does it mean to *matter*? Does it mean what is popular, what is profitable? Why is poetry always the subject of this question? You never hear anyone ask, “Does pop music matter?” “Do the visual arts matter?” “Does reality TV matter?”

Soon after the 911 attacks the NPR radio program, *On Point*, dedicated an entire hour to this question. I have noticed that during conversations surrounding national or personal tragedy people will often question the validity of poetry while seeking the *right words* placed in the *right order* to convey emotional integrity and understanding. In other words, even those who may believe that poetry is no longer significant want to find a way to make it so. As far as I am concerned, William Carlos Williams settled this debate more than a half-century ago when he stated, “It is difficult to get the news from poems, yet men die miserably every day for lack of what is found there.”

Another phenomenon that occurs in this strange world of poetry is the lopsidedness of those who write poetry and those who read (and buy) poetry. *Poetry* is one of the most googled words on the internet. There are hundreds if not thousands of web sites dedicated to poetry. New online literary magazines pop up almost daily, and social media outlets like AuthorsDen—where people can share their own creative works, have been around longer than Myspace or Facebook.

So why is it that people seem to have a desire to connect with poetry but are unwilling to purchase books of poetry? The public school system introduces poetry to many people. For me, that is where I first read Robert Frost, Emily Dickinson, and Wallace Stevens. The public school system did a wonderful job introducing to me intelligently written and well-crafted poems that I felt as emotionally connected to as I do with a dryer sheet. It is hard to have an



emotional bond with a writer's work when you have no idea what they are talking about. Yes, you can take a class and learn how to analyze the poem, but by the end, you are drained and hungry, and the only thing you care about is finding a place that sells cheap hamburgers. I will admit that I still do not know what some of those poems are expressing, and I do not give a shit. In contemporary poetry, there are still those poets who write poetry that read like crossword puzzles. It is the riddle, the exclusivity of the poem that they are after. It is about proving how smart one is, forget communicating any real human emotions. When people pick up a book of poetry, they want it to kick them in the chest, not quiz them. Novelist David Foster Wallace said it best: "I think American poetry has gotten what it's deserved. And, uh, it'll come awake again when poets start speaking to people who have to pay the rent."

The good news is not all poetry is so inaccessible. There are many poets (and there always have been) who write wonderful and intelligent poetry that one does not need to take a class to understand. Billy Collins has edited two amazing anthologies entitled *Poetry 180* and *180 More*. These anthologies contain 180 poems each that are contemporary and accessible to any reader, poems written by some of the best poets of today, including Dorianne Laux, Stephen Dunn, Sharon Olds, Dean Young, and many others. You can check them out here: [Poetry 180](#), [180 More](#).

I believe there are many people out there who do not read contemporary poetry simply because they do not know it exists. How could they? There are no poets on TV, or the radio. There are no books of poetry in the best-seller displays at the box bookstore, and there are no scandalous stories about poets in supermarket tabloids. There is this idea that when Robert Frost died, so did poetry. If the public schools focused on writers such as Billy Collins, Charles Simic, Russell Edson, and Bob Hicok, as much as they do *a bunch of dead dudes*, as they are often referred to, then there would be a lot more people reading and buying books of contemporary poetry. To be clear, I am not saying we should do away with Shakespeare and Yeats. Students need to study the great artists of the past, but they also should know that poetry is alive and well.

When jazz musician Chris Botti appeared on the Oprah Winfrey Show, his record sales skyrocketed. Afterwards during interviews, Botti would humbly state that if Oprah brought musicians such as Keith Jarrett on to her show, everyone would be buying Keith Jarrett records. If Oprah selected a book of poetry for her book club, you can guarantee it would have been a national bestseller. The bottom line is books of poetry do not sell because no one sells books of poetry. It is not enough to print a book of poetry then stick it on a shelf and hope someone will come by arbitrarily and pick it up.

In Dana Gioia's essay, *Can Poetry Matter*, he states, "American poetry now belongs to a subculture. No longer part of the mainstream of artistic and intellectual life, it has become the specialized occupation of a relatively small and isolated group." He goes on to say that by moving poetry out of bohemia and into academia is one of the reasons poetry has lost its importance in America, that having some poets in the business of teaching others how to write



poetry is a great thing, but having all poets in the field of academia isolates them from the general public.

In the fields of sociology and health education, and in the fight against poverty, there is often the talk of *food deserts*, which are neighborhoods, rural or urban, where healthy food is unobtainable due to the lack of supermarkets in the area to sell fresh produce and other healthy foods. Instead, convenient stores selling soda and chips, and fast food joints dominate these locations. Studies have found that people living in these communities will buy healthier food, thus live healthier lives if they are educated on the benefits of eating healthier, and have access to those foods. If poets, at least some of the poets had occupations other than as MFA professors, possibly there would be more of a connection between poets and the people. If publishers invested in marketing poetry and the public schools exposed students to contemporary poetry that they can relate to, then people will have the education and opportunity to access what they have been hungry for all along. Then they may fill up on more poetry and less greasy reality TV.

Interviews

Interview with Tobi Cogswell

About the Author



Tobi Cogswell is a two-time Pushcart nominee. Publication credits include *Illya's Honey*, *REAL*, *Red River Review*, *Inkspill* (UK), *Iodine Poetry Journal*, *The Smoking Poet*, *Slipstream*, *Chiron Review* and *Hawai'i Pacific Review* among others, and are forthcoming in, *Paper Nautilus*, *North Chicago Review*, *The Linnet's Wings* (Ireland), *StepAway* (UK), *Ballard Street Poetry Journal*, *Blinking Cursor* (UK) and *Untitled Country Review*. Her latest chapbook is *Surface Effects in Winter Wind*, (Kindred Spirit Press). She is the co-editor of *San Pedro River Review* (www.sprrreview.com).

SCP: So we want to kick this off with a rather generic question. The type of question one would expect in such an interview. And that concerns the impetus of your work. What is it that compels you to participate in this very strange and underappreciated habit of writing poetry? What's your inspiration? And then secondly, what sort of atmosphere is conducive to this habit i.e. are you one of those poets who tends to write frantically on scraps during whatever moments can be salvaged from the day, or do you have a quieter, more regimented time set aside for the creative process?

TOBI: I have no choice. I have to write. Poetry. I have taken classes in fiction and mixed genre and always complete the assignments as poems. In fact the mixed genre class made me realize that I will *never* write a memoir because in my opinion I am not very interesting. I eavesdrop a lot and try to observe what's going on around me; that is a source of a lot of inspiration. If something interests me I pay attention to it.

But sometimes it doesn't matter what inspired me. What gets written is what wants to come out, no matter how detailed the backstory has become as I've thought about it. Once I wanted to write a poem about a gray weimaraner in the driver's seat of a gray car that I saw in a parking lot. I knew everything about this dog, and the owner, including why the car was in the parking lot and what the owner was buying. What came out was "I Wish I Looked Like Meg Ryan".

I love workshops and writing prompts. Again, the final poem may have nothing to do with the original prompt but I end up with a poem and that is great. With workshops, I have been lucky to be in classes with wonderful, brilliant, generous poets. Every time I take a



workshop I learn something, not only about poetry but about respect and generosity. My only regret is that I will never be able to workshop with Dorothy Allison because I just don't write fiction.

For years I wrote from 4:15am to 6am. Every day. Even on vacation. Partly because I work full-time and partly because I would wake up with words. Now I write whenever the words are ready to be written. I remember the first time I wrote a poem during the day, when it was light out. It was so odd. I have gotten out of bed at night to write down a line. My son has emailed lines home to me while I was driving. I don't try to manage it, and except for writing workshops I am not very disciplined. One thing I have learned – if I have a word, a line, a thought... I write it down *now*. I won't remember it later!

SCP: There is a great variety in your work stylistically, but as with any artist there are some ongoing themes that thread the pieces together. One of the ones that seems most notable is the subject of personal and/or romantic love. In your extensive oeuvre there are many poems of domestic warmth, poems of jazz-like romance and quiet comfort, but there is an equal number dealing with the failure of love, the fragility of family ties. One senses at times that your words are softly treading over those unspoken abysses that yawn beneath any family unit in 21st century America.

Do you find this accurate? And if so, what is it that continues to draw you to these themes over and over? These stories of seemingly personal wounds that at the same time reflect the experience of so many people, so many couples and families, in the new century.

And at a time when divorce rates are skyrocketing, and more and more people are setting aside the notion of personal love for purely legal partnerships and the corresponding socio-economic benefits what do you think is the relevance of romantic love, the personal, somewhat mythical quest for one's other half?

TOBI: Oh my lord, there are a few subjects that I don't write about often because I don't want to give them too much power and I don't want to be defined by them: work, my divorce and not having 100% of my health. I was diagnosed with MS in 1996. That's probably where the failure of love and fragility of family ties comes in, the "treading lightly". Those subjects do permeate the poems sometimes, like little darts doing a slash and burn, hopefully with a bit of humor. For God's sake, they are what they are. Might as well laugh at them. Even though they may be couched, they are honest.

One time at a reading I read a poem entitled "Life's Mysteries". After the reading a woman came up to me and said "I'm sick". I said "I am too". She said "I never talk about it". I said "I don't either". That someone else can recognize their own challenges in my poem, *and tell me*, is humbling, and very much a blessing.



On the other side of things I laugh every day. I love every day. I eat candy every day. I hope that the laughter and love, and sweetness permeates my poems as well. Every poem has a story behind it. If you want to know the story, ask, I'm not going to spend 20 minutes explaining it and 1 minute reading it. Because they are truth-based in some convoluted way, I do write the occasional dark and quirky poem. I also love writing the celebratory ones. For myself, I *want* romantic love. I *want* the personal, somewhat mythical quest for my other half. And truly, it is my responsibility to make sure my son knows that it's possible. I want him to have that hope for himself.

SCP: Anyways on a lighter note you have for the last couple years been running your own independent publishing project *The San Pedro River Review*. What has the experience been like publishing and editing your own journal? How do you divide your time between such a demanding project like running a literary journal, and continuing to be such a prolific poet? And what do you look for in a submitted poem?

TOBI: Well to be clear, *San Pedro River Review* was always a dream of Jeffrey C. Alfier's. Jeffrey is a formidable and well-known poet in his own right. Several years ago when Jeff started SPRR I was fortunate to be included. I would never have undertaken a project like this on my own. I would not have known where to begin.

Having said that, I love being involved as co-publisher and co-editor of SPRR. It has given me the opportunity to see the other side of submitting work for acceptance. I now know that when my work is rejected (I like to say "declined"), it might not be because the editor hates it. It might be because the journal is shaping up in another direction and my work just doesn't fit. Editing *San Pedro River Review* has given me more forgiveness toward my own work while still remaining its most brutal critic.

We made the decision to publish only two issues a year so we would have time to work on our own poetry. I generally don't write very much while we are in a submission window but I can. During our last open window we were at the Tin House Writer's Workshop. We workshopped during the day, did our homework and read submissions at night. We missed a few evening readings but we got it all done.

Jeffrey and I do not write the same way. We have very different filters and styles. Jeff may take a photo of the upper window of an old brick building and write about the frayed white curtain blowing in the breeze with a shadowed old musician leaning on the sill, playing a saxophone. I will notice the old-fashioned street lamp at the bottom of the photo and write about the moths fluttering inside, and the 15-year-old girl who sneaks out of her house to write by the lamplight because she thinks it's romantic. We bring those same differing sensibilities to our review of

submitted poems. The result, I hope, is a well-rounded journal. What we look for is very well explained in our submission guidelines but we approach submissions in different ways. Jeffrey is more intellectual and educated in his review of submissions. I read them out loud and see which ones stab me in the heart or make me cry. We both agree that we will probably never publish a poem with antique Victorian language, the word “vomit”, or anything that could be centered on the page and pasted into a greeting card.

SCP: Besides regularly and passionately publishing other people’s poetry, you have quite consistently put out your own. This includes dozens of poems in online literary magazines, a handful of self-published chapbooks and even small-press trade titles such as your Poste Restante from Bellowing Ark Press. There is an ongoing debate at the moment about acceptable forms of publication. What constitutes real publishing. Do you have any feelings about self-publishing vs. trade publishing? Online literary magazines vs. traditional print methods? How do you decide if you are going to self-publish a handmade chapbook collection or send it out to other presses?

TOBI: My first three chapbooks were self-published. I learned something from each one of them. Sanity Among the Wildflowers was my final for a writing class. Hostage Negotiation in Negative-Land was my angry collection and Carpeting the Stones was my romantic collection. I made 100 copies of each. I still have about 20 copies of the second and third book but only two copies of the first. I chose Kindred Spirit Press to print my fourth chapbook Surface Effects in Winter Wind because I wanted it perfect-bound and I wanted an ISBN number. I loved working with Michael Hathaway on the chapbook and will hopefully work with him again.

The main difference between Poste Restante and my chapbooks was control. And the time horizon from start to finish is shorter with chapbooks. I get a box of 100 in the mail and as time goes on I know how many I’ve sent out and how many I have left. I know when it’s time to start thinking about my next one. And when I get that box, I’m still in love with the poems because they are still new.

Online literary magazines and traditional print magazines both have their place. I love getting contributor’s copies in the mail. I love paper. Besides the self-published chapbooks and trade full-length collection I am proud of the acceptances I’ve had in print journals. Because I go to many workshops I know poets from all over. I can post a link on Facebook or email a link to an acceptance in an online literary magazine, and not only can poet friends and acquaintances read my work if they are so inclined but they can read the submission guidelines and submit themselves if the journal matches their style of writing. Also, I don’t have a website. Someone can Google me and see work that is online. They can’t see work in a print journal.

It's important to be discriminating when considering a submission to any journal, be it online or print. Do the poems they print resonate with the way I write? Respecting the sensibilities of the journal and making submissions accordingly equals more acceptances. Acceptances are much nicer than rejections although we all know that both are a part of the writing life.

SCP: Lastly, we want to re-pose to you one of the perennial questions that we have addressed over and over through various means here at SCP and that a few years ago you tackled as part of our discontinued Post-Modern Poet Essay series ([Read Food, Loss and Failing Bodies by Tobi Cogswell here](#)) and that is what is the role of the poet in contemporary society and has your idea of it changed at all since writing "Food, Loss and Failing Bodies" back in 2008?

TOBI: I re-read the essay and no, I don't think my thoughts have changed very much. At the end of the day they are words. They can make us happy, they can make us angry, they can make us thoughtful, self-righteous, satisfied, superior or humble. For myself, I am grateful.

SCP: Thank You So much Tobi!

**Tobi's Faves
(Non-Inclusive of Course)**

[Beckian Fritz Goldberg](#) - She inspires me to write bravely

[Nick Flynn](#) - Everything he writes is poetry

[Neil Aitken](#) - Some of his words bring me to my knees. I *wish* I could write like him.

[Heather McHugh](#) - Brilliant. Funny. Generous beyond belief. I workshopped with her and learned volumes. Her reading was splendid.

[Joshua Mehigan](#) - His book [The Optimist](#) is beautifully crafted. I return to it often.

[Alex Lemon](#), [Brendan Constantine](#), [David Hernandez](#) - They are fine people, wonderful poets and I love their work.

Poetry

Dave Chambliss

Dave Chambliss is a History graduate student at the University of Tennessee at Martin. He hopes to own a rat terrier named Sophie with his fiancée, Brittney, by the time you read this.

American Historiography X

I

I am the child of thieves,
a hundred million packages stolen
and maybe a quarter of those
arrived at their destination

the packages were unwrapped
renamed
reassigned
run into the ground until irreparably broken
and the process repeated on their replacements

and when they took to their feet
and declared their freedom,
their humanity,
we hanged
and shot
and burned
and bombed as many as would stand still
and plenty who wouldn't

but we don't make mistakes, now do we

II

I am the child of rapists,
rapists in cornfields and colonies
rapists at nighttime and wartime
rapists of peasants and queens

rapists for business and pleasure

the victims were picked out
on natural resource maps
usually standing on valuable minerals
or farmland
or near valuable bays or inlets
or coaling sites for trading ships
or just too close for comfort
because we couldn't let anyone else
rape them first

when their children take to their feet
and ask uncomfortable questions
about why fifty percent of Americans
get five percent of government funds
or why sixty percent of the women we rape
think it's their fault

we roll our eyes and change the channel

III

I am the child of murderers,
not the first
but the best
the most prolific
and the least convicted
the most vicious
and the least suspected
from contaminated blankets
to cluster bombs
from the Lusitania
to Lockheed Martin

and now I read the crime scene reports
and all the evidence was there
reporters from different nations
standing idly by
(as if anyone could help)
across six continents
watching master races
manifest their destinies

against any and all

now we get out of school thanks to thieves,
schools named after rapists
on land taken by murderers

and the history teachers
look like my parents
and the history books
look like our photo album

and the victims
are special interests
and welfare queens
and anchor babies
and feminazis
and insurgents

and I am defendant, prosecutor, judge, and jury.

Transfiguration, 1940

How odd;
it appears a train
in Kaunas
became a tree
for twenty minutes
on 4 September

as autumn in Lithuania
brought the oak leaves
to the ground
leaves fell
from a train
bound for Prague

bizarre leaves
with a signature
and a seal
from the Japanese Foreign Office

entitling the bearer
to a train ride
(at five hundred percent markup)
across Siberia
to China

the leaves did not clutter the platform
as hundreds of Jews
were more than willing
to clear the area

three thousand similar leaves
had been seen
throughout town,
though their bearers
tended to leave the region
shortly after acquiring them

from the tree-train,
a voice cried out
“Please forgive me,
I cannot write anymore,
I wish you the best”

and disappeared forever.

Michael Gregory

Michael Gregory, an internationally-recognized toxics activist, has published widely in print and online. He is the author of several books and chapbooks including, most recently, re: Play (Pudding House, 2009). His Mr America Drives His Car, Poems 1978-2010 is forthcoming from Education in Reverse Press.

This Far

To think we've actually made it this far
despite the viruses space dust and dark matter
the missile envy the failed brinksmanship
in Seoul City Ho Chi Minh City
the City of Angels the City of Brotherly Love
all those remote horror movie locations
despite the pills and the Pill the antibiotics
the solar storms traversing us each
eleventh year since they A-bombed Japan
to this end of the second Christian millennium,
this Piscean Age Virgil said would be Golden

Having had our second coming of age
Freedom Summer to the Summer of Love
those delicious years as the world blossomed
on spindrift between the killer waves
of open markets and rightwing populism

Having endured the aftermath underground
coming down to earth to find ourselves
a place to sit out the storm collect our thoughts
tend our gardens and mind our own beeswax
letting our offspring outgrow such makeshift nests
as we were able to piece together in darkness
letting our imaginations imagine
solutions that don't require sacrifice

Not dying before we were too old to be trusted
or know first hand what gravity does in time,
not completely worn out from making a living,
adolescent in some ways even now
in love more than ever with these ephemeral bodies
(what time looks like in three dimensions)

the form it takes in these latitudes)
making up with pointed consciousness
as best we can for loss of faith in a god
(that foregone conclusion) and works of reason
that were supposed to save us from ourselves
by building a post-lapsarian paradise
out of the allocated abundance of goods

Nervous as never before about the failure
of vital organs: kidneys heart brain
Congress Supreme Court Presidency
the rising cancer and morbidity rates
the inner workings at ward and precinct levels

But passing our Saturn returns, our seven times seven
in a breeze, passing fifty-five the year
they raised the limit again, passing gas
more than ever but here, weathering
the unending death throes of Romanticism
the days and nights when rage was all the rage
the dying from sex instead of just for it
the worldwide jump in US arms sales
since the walls came down Berlin to Soweto
the gales of free market democracy
bringing Bretton Woods to Suriname
leaving where the cold warriors had been a gap
the Righteous Right was only too happy to fill

Still torn between the conviction that everything
is predetermined, a matter of cause and effect
(freedom of choice at best only choosing to do
what we have power and inclination to do),
and the niggling suspicion that everything
especially inside where we think we are
is open-ended and subject to acts of will;
still pretty sure that if we could get freedom *from*
we'd figure out what to do with freedom *for*;
still bleeding from scratching that last seven year itch;
but fairly fit otherwise, considering,
though more than a little tired at this stage
of all the lines, excuses and other bullshit

—tired of having the public good sold out
to private greed: the woods getting thinned
the air and water thickening, the soil
sterilized, the politics of person
personality and ecstasy
confused with rugged individualism
liberty with state capitalism
world peace with the Pax Americana
property rights with the ark of the covenant
the right to bear arms with the sweet lightness of being

—tired of republics built on slavery
democracies based on ability to pay
cities of God with walls around them
revolutions that end up as only
flip sides of the coin or hit singles
by and for the usual suspects
with clean nails who always seem to believe
in the words of one of our founding fathers
the country ought to be run by those who own it

—tired of lowest common denominator
democracy tyranny of the greatest number
unanimity without amity
calculated without a full body
count of those disappeared without a trace
always having to remind ourselves
the Constitution is not a suicide pact
or writ of servitude to Daddy Warbucks

—tired of watching the fortunes of war trickle down
through the polished fingers in charge of the till
then evaporate before hitting the ground
down here where misfortunes fall like red ink
coagulating in the eyes of children
fermenting in the bellies of misused women
shrinking the dreams of once-virile men

—tired of be bop doo wop hip hop
played in the cadence of shop shop shop
coming into us in pulses and beats
the steady diet of predigested worms
pouring into our ears so we can't think

in any rhythm or register but cash,
every instrument of every culture
morphed into a financial instrument
every note of every song we sing
a bank note no more than legally tender,
strip-searched at customs and allowed in only
redressed in blue jeans, logos and credit cards

—tired of the political *can't* whenever
we mention economic democracy,
for what it's worth universally understood
as the definitive Americanism,
everyone sucked into the cash nexus
fighting each other for left overs while millions
are given to players to play with little balls,
showing their perfectly eager bodies on screen,
of being told that driving someone to ruin
is rational and moral that nature's law,
divine law, requires that some of us
suffer poverty and inordinate pain,
that *karma* means reward and punishment,
a contract between a feather's weight and our heavy
hearts, so afraid of losing what little
we've got we spend our lives as good consumers
addicted to endless growth and acquisition,
willingly buying ourselves into bondage
to corporations programmed to replicate cancer
unable to answer the question *How much is enough*

—tired of trying to end the war by electing
one lesser evil after another
in one popularity contest after another
ignorance and venality in high places
sadistic cops and corrupt justices
the same Business Party always in power
the equation of democracy
with business class neoliberalty,
a nationalism that makes people believe
what's good for Bullmoose is good for us all,
fundamentalist religious figures
in bed with fundamentalist economics
the top one percent worth more in dollar terms
(what counts, as they say) than the rest of us together

—tired of born again candidates slicked up
with that old time religion, testifying
that freedom *of* means freedom *for* not *from*,
that faith is morality's sole source, that those
without that faith aren't fit to run
for office and are in fact the main reason
our great nation is headed for perdition
and ought to be made to see in faith-based schools,
battalions and prisons the error of their ways

—tired of consent and consensus manufactured
by international conglomerates
that twist, spin and fluff-dry public opinion
in cyberspace brainwashing machines,
headlines that say the majority think
the opposite of what the majority think,
justices who rule for injustice,
landslide victories claimed for slim margins
(if that) in elections where fewer than half
the voters eligible to vote bothered

—tired of being told by those who believe
a little bit of tyranny is ok,
that privacy is a luxury in times
like these when crime is rampant in the streets,
market, boardroom, pulpit and White House,
that if we have nothing to hide we should be happy
lying in bed with the bugs, more secure
for the cameras on streetlamps,
the webs of information homing devices,
the greenbacked obelisk looking over our shoulders

—tired of genocide ecocide suicide
king of the mountain and queen bee mistaking
technological and financial for moral,
social, legal and lately even genetic
superiority, misconceiving
ability as imperative (based
on nothing more than the drift of words
toward their own realization), reducing
religion to platitudes dogma and lines of credit,
the nostrums and tribal notions sold from pulpit
bench oval office and ivory tower,

silvery things with wings like angels and missiles
packaged in holier than thou condescension
patriotic gore and the rule of gold:
freedom narrowed down to product choices
equality put off till the *danse macabre*
big money and laser minds controlling
the triple threat of schools / media / work
the tiger biting its own tail become
Saint Economy, Urobouros, Mater
Magna and Paterfamilias rolled into one
big enchilada on our merry-go-round
altar to what passes for sound reason

—tired of all the mystical mumbo jumbo
crackpot theories and haywire revelations
propounded in the wake of each of our lost
generations and failed revolutions
by backlot philosophers barroom prophets
drugstore geniuses and self-help hucksters
the specialists in public righteousness
the psychedelic snakeoil salesmen
recycling the greatest stories ever told:
transcendence, participation at a distance,
unification by analogy,
salvation by sanctified imagination,
love by subscription and pie in the sky when you die,
the fossil record devolved to deluvial silt
deposited by the sick notion of sin,
trying of all things to talk us into it
as if words were more than residues of desire
as if they could save us from mortality

—tired of the Serial Goddess model
this theater of cruelty and farce:
the knotted string of Beggar and Fisher Kings
the game show winners celebrated each spring
toasted all summer plowed under after each harvest
bearing their brothers' blood and fathers' guilt
twined like ivy and snakes around their arms
served up the following fall as fond object lessons
for Our Lady of Perpetual Orgasm
—tired of the I Am That I Am version:
the magic delta hand / eye / mouth

intoning the holy strictures of *thou shalt not*s,
the parade of daughters sacrificed on the smooth
stone of patrilineal reproduction
or cast in the runway treadmill fashion
sex upstaged by sexuality
disporting themselves in various modes of undress
their lovelives self-censored simulcasts
digitally enhanced for viewing pleasure,
or turned into sexless workers for hire and hive,
their labor a red mark in a two-column ledger
a hymn to piety and drudgery
so He can be on top of It and Her
as if Lilith weren't there from the first

—tired of love that isn't honest allegiance:
a sacrament of mind body heart
(loving enough to let each other be
whatever we need to be to be free)
but pay-on-demand obedience, a ripoff
numbers game circus act perverted
into abortive productions in a ring
that doesn't liberate but binds in fear
and abject co-dependence: marriage
as rape and mutual assured destruction
sexual politics a state of affairs
Big Brother and Big Nurse in our bedrooms
enforcing the law of diminishing returns

—tired of poems about poetry and poets
ink blot exercises and gut-spilling
in spurts of breath all over the page,
phrasemakers egging each other on
the *morts-petits* of post-modern hindsight
propped up for viewing in the *lebensraum*
the inner dialogue of Logos and Eros
expressed into stand-up comedy
community as a literary conceit
the pursuit of novelty as a way
to get out of thinking through the given,
titillation and shock aping those arts
generated closer to the heart

—tired of the line thickening,
the coarsening of sensibilities
idiom and civil discourse,
freedom of expression abstracted
into the blob that ate the city of angels,
experimenting with the furniture
as a face-saving for nothing to say
beyond *look how sincere I am*,
extravagant metaphors expedient motives
irony and fluorescent graffiti-figures
outrageous caricatures grotesqueries
this month's disordered psychology
surreal juxtapositions superlatives
ironies and inane images
obligatory symbolisms supreme
fictions houses of cards we enter
sales pitches of any frequency
snow jobs of any kind obfuscations
deliberate misdirection and outright lies:
each life is too short and all our lives
together still more too short
to hoard or falsify any information
that might be to the point or otherwise useful

—tired of trying to figure out the meaning
of meaning, of being as being, of being-
here or -there, this in terms of that,
you in terms of me and *vice versa*:
sympathetic to the search for things
in themselves, the essence of being at home
with ourselves at one with ourselves
having the time of our lives this time but not
forgetting the suffering our words bring
or the inhumanity that comes
from thinking of things as ideas, of real people
as characters, allegorical figures,
categories in some double-blind scheme,
mere statistics examples of something else

—tired of infinitive expectations:
to know, to understand, to have and to hold,
the putting off into the subjunctive
at best the ablative absolute at worst

all we could possibly want in our desire
for instant gratification here where we are
now: infinity and eternity
getting lost in one another at this
intersection where metaphor and fact
cross each other while all the traffic lights
are flashing all their colors all at once

—tired of incremental strategies
that lockstep into Zeno’s paradox,
leaving the poor poor, the hungry hungry,
binding the feet tighter and tighter till leaps
become impossible, the promised land
unwon, desire unrequited forever,
landfall never made where love might flower

—tired being enthralled to the ruling eye
the mess and clutter of life as lived
edited only by turns of the head or shutting
of lids, sight without insight,
wit absent that agenbite of inwit
our ancestors in crime charged us with,
seeing the world turn into the sun
each morning, rising to meet the step of the one
turned toward her, petals blushing in
these cryptic hands we cup them lovingly in
even knowing the slightest touch will bruise
the perfect cast of their unfolding complexion.

Over-educated well-read almost
terminally hip and p.c. tuned in
to sub-text pre-text nuance double entendre
hardly ever missing a bet a beat but still
dumb as stones about whole universes
inside, still at a loss about who we are
what this is where we are what we’re doing
ought to be and might be doing here
what our work together here is
—how to open the heart without so much hurt
—why Venus still finds us in the dark
—whose horse that was that ate the blue rose of Sharon
—where Sylvia is and what comes next



Martin Willitts Jr

Martin Willitts Jr's recent poems have appeared in *Naugatuck River Review*, *MiPOesias*, *Flutter*, *Atticusbooks.net*, *Muse Café*, and *Caper Journal*. He was recently nominated for two Best of The Net awards and his 5th Pushcart award. He has five new chapbooks: [The Girl Who Sang Forth Horses](#) (Pudding House Publications, 2010), [Van Gogh's Sunflowers for Cezanne](#) (Finishing Line Press, 2010), [True Simplicity](#) (Poets Wear Prada Press, 2011), [My Heart Is Seven Wild Swans Lifting](#) (Slow Trains, 2011) and [Why Women Are A Ribbon Around A Bomb](#) (Last Automat, 2011).

The Beachfront

The clouds have decided not to form
into something dramatic. Everything is
foreshortened. The seascape is slower here.
The distance extends further than we can see.
Two boats are abandoned on the shingle.
The waves are static. A few sailboats
in the coldness, are detached, in indecision,
as to returning or turning their sails into wind.
The air is nonchalant, willing to go wherever,
without determination, much like us
when we cannot make a decision.
On the other side of the inlet
is the spire of a church no one is attending.

Bruce Lader

Bruce Lader won the 2010 Left Coast Eisteddfod Poetry Competition and was interviewed by AmeriCymru ([Check It Out Here](#)). He is the author of four published and two forthcoming books, *Embrace* (Big Table Publishing, 2010) and *Landscapes of Longing* (Main Street Rag Publishing, 2009). *Discovering Mortality* (March Street Press, 2005) was a finalist for the 2006 Brockman-Campbell Book Award. His poems have appeared in *CircleShow*, *New York Quarterly*, *Poetry*, *Confrontation*, *New Millennium Writings*, *Harpur Palate*, *Fulcrum*, and other publications. www.brucelader.com.

Differences Between Suicide Bombers and Generals

adaptable clothing blends in	stiff funeral uniforms blare TOP GUN
fast	dine on heaps of steak tartare
hypnotized automatons	weigh pivotal deals with presidents and drug lords
execute instant outcomes	stealthy chess-game strategies drag on for decades
deliberately target townspeople	collateral accidents result in civilian casualties
ravish Death with flaming passion	have long-term love affairs with Death
serve God's Will	defend separation of Church and State
stuck in dead-end positions	escalating careers
wear floral-scented water to smell good in paradise	dab on a hint of Calvin Klein Eternity Cologne
a battle cry "Jihad is Holy"	a battle cry "Avenge the Towers"

to become shaheed
sacrifice the lives of children

for honorable causes
sacrifice the lives of children

The Threat

took longer than a missile passing through an infinite
number of points to fight over the color of God.

A revelation to warmongers,
it sowed rumors in mine-fields of superstition,

paved the way for nuclear power plants on fault-lines,
promised to escalate into the ultimate secret.

The Department of Propaganda exploited it to coerce
unquestioned conformity.

It fast-tracked surveillance plans to map eyes and replicate
identities in the Bureau of Virtual Disappearances.

Cartels colluded commodity scams till it became
the only index of net worth.

It stole food from the starving, devoured children,
stacked their bones to commemorate military preparedness.

The threat was less terrifying than the thought
it might not exist.

Larry Schug

Larry Schug has recently published his sixth book of poems, Nails with North Star Press. He lives with his wife, dog and two cats near a large tamarack bog in St. Wendel Twp., Minnesota.

Conjecture

The doe's back was raked raw,
claw marks, it seems,
but what would do such a thing, and how?
A cougar, I conjecture,
leaping from a limb onto her back,
but how did she shake it off
and why no bite marks on her neck?

I wonder, was that same doe
the matted pile of hide
and scattered bones I found
when the snow melted?
And why did she return to memory
six years later--
a kind of re-birth for the sake of a poem,
a lesson in mortality sent by some local god?

In Vallecitos, New Mexico

We could've turned around
in that driveway in Vallecitos
where we stopped to check the map;
and I should have known
it was a bad plan
to keep going on that road
by the look on the faces
of those two ranchers unloading hay
as they watched us drive by,
due north on a road
they knew would disappear
beneath snow drifts up ahead
beside the frozen river, become
impassable beyond Cañon Plaza .
We should've turned around then,



when I saw the laugh in their eyes,
there for a minute, but dimmed
when they turned back to work
and another day in poor Vallecitos
surrounded them again.

Pretender

The widow turns on the kitchen radio,
tunes it to a ballgame while she watches tv.
The radio bothers the hell out of her,
just like it did when her husband was alive.
But after ballgame and her shows are over,
when she turns the distractions off at bedtime,
the house is so quiet;
she's the only one in their double bed
and there's just no way
to pretend her way out of that.

Craig Shay

Craig Shay has poems published or forthcoming in *Skidrow Penthouse*, *The American Dissident*, *The Bitter Oleander*, *Counterexample Poetics*, *The Sound of Poetry Review*, *Clockwise Cat*, *The Bicycle Review*, *Underground Voices* and elsewhere. His wordpress site is at www.craigshay.wordpress.com

Night Baseball

Neighborhood kids disappear
in the darkness of the outfield.
Swinging at shadows in the abandoned lot,
running around an invisible diamond.
Running with their heads down,
gaining speed, through the darkness,
breaking away into an April moonlight.
They dodge in from the shadows as wounded men.
Men running home through silent streets
lit by yellow lampposts. Men with the faces
of children, looking confused, and adrift.
Men in suits and ties and business shoes,
scurrying because wolves are at their heels.
Blindly they sprint, through mazes
of streets and towns, which are changing
before their eyes. They escape with glorious speed.
So focused, they cannot hear the warnings
or the shouts, to stop, or to open their eyes.

Alex Stolis

Alex Stolis lives and works in Minneapolis. His sixth chapbook, Poem of the Month Club, is forthcoming in Fall 2011 by Redbird Chapbooks. Another chapbook, Excerpts from an Interview is forthcoming from White Knuckle Press. He has been the recipient of five Pushcart Nominations.

Confession

Here we are, two stories written in the same book.
Neither one of us are where we think we should be.
You: unaware of your innocence, lips moist, lashes
that quiver when you smile. Me: I get drunk, look
down at the stars from rooftops-break our memories
into easy to slice pieces. Pretend not to remember
colors: the light red of rain as it falls through your hair,
the dark blue of regret for things unsaid. Piece by piece
you reinvent me; wish to make love in Paris, travel by
train to the coast and drink champagne, eat fish stew
and toast to beginnings. I have imagined it all more
than once. We will end up by the ocean. It will be
the first time I see you naked; arms tanned, brown
hair that barely scrapes your shoulder. Your calf
is a poem and every time I look away you give me
a glance, that wicked half grin that tells me you know
where my mind just wandered. There will be an open
air café, umbrella-ed tables, arrogant waiters in waist
coats and black shined shoes. There will be the *clink*
clink of glass against stone. I'll scratch your name into
a napkin, two children build a lopsided castle at the edge
of the water. It tilts to one side and slides into the surf,
their laughs drowned out by the shrill cry of seagulls.
Back in our room, I threaten to throw away everything
I've written about you. There will be a wash of words
between us but no need to speak. You close the blinds,
lips barely move; *I'll love you, one sliver at a time*
until eventually we are whole.

One more cup of coffee

The last table is taken. You nod when asked if I can join you.
Pass me the cream. No glance. No words. Your sleeves pushed

up, lips thin, a brushstroke of red. I ask you the time. You tell me how to catch fire. How to hold the spark, the correct way; how to live with ashes and dust. You want to teach me to rub the stain from a crucible, polish it, hold it to flame until my breath turns to smoke. You tell me everything I am thinking is true. That aqua blue is the color of sincerity. That shyness is a refuge, desolation a virtue. The café empties. Streetlamps flicker, the city struggles to stay awake. We are unnoticed. The final stop. I study the curve of your mouth, want you to feel the weight of loss in the palm of your hand; consider the heft of grief, its angles and curves. Share the heaviness that comes with remembering.

We won't last another year

I no longer believe in myths. Fables to take the edge off. No winged horses cutting a path through the sky, no simple answers found in ashes or bones, no blond fields with a burial ground for our sins. Every day there will be less and less. The space between now and then will fill with your voice that is no longer mine. I want to hear every story you have lived, again and again, until I am filled with nothing but you. Tell me about scabbed elbows and braids, morning and bare feet padding to the window to trace frost with your finger. Tell me about your first wish, the smoothest stone skipped across water and how you felt yourself in each ripple and wave. Tell of passageways made of rock, tucked on the slope of a hill. That is the place I'll fall to my knees, forget everything I know about loss. I no longer believe in legends, doors that lead to open roads. I believe a shot glass is large enough to hold the future, that there are no beginnings, only an empty sky to witness our pain. Every untruth we whisper becomes winter and when the snow melts and the air smells of wet leaves, the gallows will be high; polished wood with desolated space to break my fall.

Venues

Here at SCP we know that seeking out and finding quality publishing venues for one's work can be a difficult and tedious task. With all the phenomenal options out there for a budding or seasoned poet how to choose where to send your work?

Well that's why we created our new feature Venues. Every issue we will showcase two of Editor-In-Chief Seth Jani's favorite poetry-focused websites, magazines, e-zines etc. along with pertinent submission information and links.

It's a way to both help great authors find great venues, as well as brings those venues to a wider audience. Enjoy!



Foundling Review

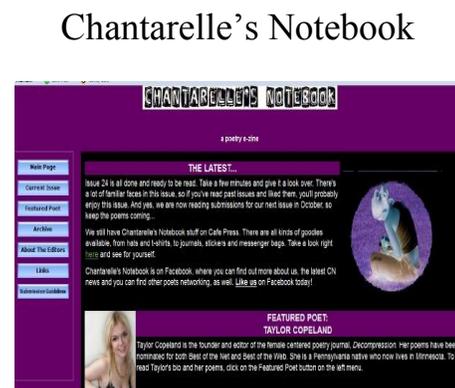
Website:
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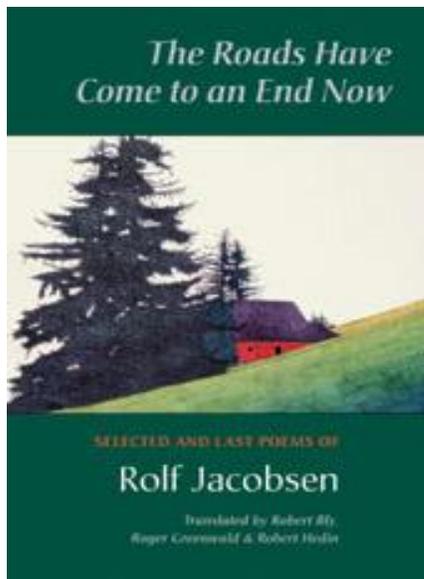
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Lost Classics

The Roads Have Come to an End Now by Rolf Jacobsen



Publisher:

[Copper Canyon Press](#)

Translated from Norwegian by:
Robert Bly, Roger Greenwald,
Robert Hedin

ISBN:

1-55659-165-9

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Format:

Paperback, 212 pages

From the Publisher:

Rolf Jacobsen was one of Europe's most prominent poets. This bilingual collection spans his entire career and includes, for the first time in English, his final poems. An early champion of modernism to Norwegian poetry, Jacobsen writes of smokestacks, billboards, and telephone wires alongside his beloved praises of nature and its small, forgotten things.

From Seven CirclePress:

Jacobsen's poetry is rooted deep in the natural world and extends poetry's ancient mythology-making ritual of anthropomorphism right into the heart of industrial civilization where "old clocks often have encouraging faces" and even "the buses long to go home."

He is a poet who is not afraid to face the world with grace and humor and attends to the wild living forces in every object and being, whether natural or mechanical.



CIRCLESHOW

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About the Press

Founded in 2008 by poet Seth Jani, SCP is an online, in-print and ephemera based micro-press that seeks to vigorously promote and distribute the works of new and established poets.

It is funded solely by its editor and friends, as well from book and product sales. It never solicits subsidies or reading fees from its contributing authors.

It commits to no prescribed esthetic but has a strong inclination to view art as a means of promoting unity and meaningful interaction.

The heart of the press is its online literary journal CircleShow, and its home on the web can be found at www.sevencirclepress.com.

Created by Alli May of ALLIMAY DESIGN (<http://allimaydesign.blogspot.com/>) our logo represents our belief in a flexible lunar consciousness, a nourishing, dark maternal creativity.

The small sprout also points to our identification as a homegrown project born out of commitment, passion and vision free from either establishment esthetics or corporate packaging. A wild, poetic biodiversity of weeds and roses.

For more information about the press and our vision, as well as an explanation of the Seven Circles themselves visit our About SCP Page on our website at: <http://www.sevencirclepress.com/aboutscp.htm>

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