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**BELOIT POETRY JOURNAL**  
**Fall 2015, Vol. 66 N° 1**

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**Mary Greene**, Design

**Cal Lane**, "3 Shovels," plasma-cut steel shovels, 2006.

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An arrow at the bottom of a page indicates the stanza does not break.

**KERRIN MCCADDEN**

**Burial**

The father will keep the son on ice,  
keep him cold so the body will last the day,  
the tractor spinning its wheels inside  
the circular driveway, the bucket pulling  
up the front yard, piling soil under  
the box elders. The choir will sing  
around his bed with us, and one man  
will be a kind of clown, unable to make  
any face but his frozen one so that he looks  
like he is singing the tractor song  
while we sing songs we don't know,  
say words that sound like words  
in songbooks until we play a game  
of singing, sounding like we are praying  
in tongues, but we will have to sing  
or listen to the tractor out front, digging.  
When the word is *Alleluia*, the room will ring,  
the syllables clear to us like water at Nichols Pond.  
You will think this is bad planning—the digging drone  
underneath the song. Won't it be in poor taste,  
the tractor blatting its own song in the front yard?  
The tractor is a water strider in the front yard,  
its legs like oars to each side, but it has nowhere  
to go, it refuses to dig anywhere else,  
sounding like a furnace in an old home.  
You will speak over it, or sing, anything.  
When the woodcock comes to circle the house,  
someone will lower the pine box.  
It will be so quiet then. It will be hard to believe  
the woodcock's song doesn't come from its throat.

**KERRIN MCCADDEN**

**Passerines**

I want to tell you about the thud against the back door,  
that my man says, “bird.” That later we see its tail  
sticking out from underneath the siding. That its  
tail feathers shine like oil, shifting purple to blue,  
and we are kneeling on the wet decking. The yellow  
of its stomach making it something more  
than the brown birds everywhere, a tiny prize  
for kneeling there, for prying back the vinyl siding  
to find a yellow-bellied flycatcher, its cheek bloodied.  
I want to tell you how he held it, said “Passerine”  
before it took flight. Little Passerine. Songbird.  
Before she left, I brought my daughter to Saint-Jeanet.  
There were swallows like boomerangs near dark,  
like here, like everywhere I go. I want to tell you  
about the neighbor, the scientist, who said they were  
swifts, not swallows. Swallows are Passerines,  
but swifts are not. *Passerine*, I thought, *Passerine*—  
a more future verb tense for *to pass*, a tense I can’t  
know yet—a passing I can’t understand. The order  
Passerine is a mess, the scientist said. It’s impossible  
to track its evolution. I want to tell you I don’t understand  
evolution, any of it, even mine, becoming the mother  
I will be next, the one who lets go. Once, I stood  
on a bridge and a man taught me to call sparrows to eat  
from my hands, told me he was a sinner, that what he did for me  
was atonement, which is a thing I might understand.  
I want to tell you there is nothing like their tiny grip,  
the way they quiver while they peck at your palm,  
wanting to fly out of reach. I want to tell you what happened  
when I let her go, but I don’t understand it yet. I want  
to talk about this morning, the little yellow bird in sudden,  
dizzy flight. The trees full of yellow. How I lost sight.

**SAM SAX**  
**Ultrasound**

it's not that we're all born  
genderless though we are.  
rather, once we were all small  
women inside our mothers'  
uteri, something about science  
& sex organs & hormones  
& god. no wonder she wept  
red negligee when she walked in  
on me at ten in her worst dress  
spinning before her dead father's  
mirror, my eyes made up  
into science fictions. felt me  
again inside her, my pig thirst  
threading her blood & body  
mass into another veil i'd wear  
& not care for. seeing mother  
cry i found myself  
into manlier fabrics. years later  
when i am a boy again she tells me  
it's not that she hated me fey.  
rather, she swore she saw  
the mirror sob. fetal lady,  
little daughter, tiny apology.



**CAROL ANN DAVIS**

**Breaking the Night Sky Mug with Luke before the Bus Comes**

Some part of it goes or is taken                      blue because white and slick the driveway  
and me absentminded                      from my hand quickly falling so that what he made  
cracks along elemental pathways                      cracks as those parts of the brain without much  
prompting surrender themselves                      the time it takes to forget I'm holding it  
later grateful not to have clipped artery on ceramic                      some part of my body  
missed or missing in blue Luke once imagined                      darkest nightfall  
pinprick alongside celestials the morning half delirious                      with worksheet sums  
and what they add up to when you shade them in                      *guess what from the night sky*  
*your numbers make*                      his dissolution when he can't see one V each  
for Big and Little Dipper and one missed number for star-tip                      tracing by hand celestial bodies  
the way the mind parcels out minuses                      your night sky's in pieces careful  
when you go out and when he does he is                      but falls where they fell says *after I go*  
*can you save them*                      *can you pick them up*

**DAVID HERNANDEZ**  
**Meditation on Impermanence**

In Raphael's fresco

*The School of Athens*, we see within  
the large concentric arc

an assembly of philosophers, astronomers, mathematicians, scholars—  
some in discussions, some writing  
with quills, two reading, at least one reading  
what he wrote, and one

wholly in the zone of his own  
thinking, oblivious to  
the hullabaloo around him, cut off

from the rest: Heraclitus.

The one who said, "We both step  
and do not step in the same rivers. We are and are not."  
Penned it in his native tongue:

Ποταμοῖς τοῖς αὐτοῖς ἐμβαίνομέν τε καὶ οὐκ ἐμβαίνομεν, εἵμέν τε καὶ οὐκ εἶμεν.

The accepted interpretation is one cannot  
step into the same river twice  
since, moment to moment, a river  
rearranges the mosaic of its face.  
Same goes with us and all the reshuffling  
we do nonstop: body and thoughts,  
cells and breath.

Our bodies are sixty percent water,  
the brain alone seventy-seven percent,  
we carry a river inside us, we are  
and are not  
this current passing between us.

Praise the dead for bestowing us these, our waves.  
Downstream, we'll do the same.



Look how Heraclitus looks so

intently at his left

leather boot. That knowing smile  
nestled in his ragged beard.

I like to think Raphael was thinking Heraclitus is thinking

about his foot entering  
the scrolling water

the first time.

The second.

Then back

onto the riverbank

to shuck off his boot, tip it

just enough

to let the river free.



River in Greek: ποτάμι

River in Latin: fluvio

River in Spanish: río

River in Vietnamese: sông

River in English, chiseled on a marble slab, lying on a hill in Tennessee, for the next one hundred thousand years (wherein each subsequent line denotes ten thousand years, the natural erosion that comes with the passage of time):



*intonaco*: Final coat of plaster, the smoothest, on which a fresco is painted while the plaster is still wet.

*pounce bag*: Small square of muslin filled with powdered charcoal, cinched and tied off.

*pouncing*: To transfer a cartoon directly onto the intonaco with a pounce bag.



Raphael needed first to scrape away a section of his fresco—some steps, some flooring—then apply another intonaco,

transfer the cartoon of Heraclitus, pounce his stippled outline onto the still-wet plaster, and finally

brushstroke him into being: flesh, hair, the nest of his beard.

And his lilac-colored stonemason's smock, his tan workmen's boots.

And the marble block where he rests his elbow, where a black inkwell is set precariously on the corner.

And the up-curved paper beneath his hand, five lines already written, the sixth half finished.

And all the shadows woven over him, encroaching toward what is lit.



A bean, a nearly  
500-year-old bean was found

during the restoration of the fresco.  
Kidney or cannellini

the article does not say, long  
green Romano pole

or violet podded stringless  
I will never know. There is

a theory: “probably from  
the lunch of one of the plasterers.”

Slob. Clodhopper. (You think  
any of Michelangelo’s workmen

were this careless?) The fallen  
bean might explain why

restorers detected problems  
with the plaster’s ingredients:

instead of sand from northern Italy,  
Raphael’s men mixed

volcanic rock from Mount Vesuvius.  
Hence a faster ruin.

Hence the cracks forking down  
from the fresco’s upper region

like rivers, lightning, the intricate  
scaffolding of branches, or our own

arteries dividing to delicate vessels,  
divide again: thinnest of fissures.



Circa 1510, Raphael

painted da Vinci as Plato,  
made Plato and da Vinci one,

right hand gesturing

heavenward, beyond  
the stone archway to

that fractured sky, that volcanic eruption

hidden within the clouds.

See how the breaking

creeps toward the one raised finger?

This is the contract we make by breathing.

We sign it every second.

**SEAN SHEARER**

**Urine Sample**

M fills a condom with clean piss,  
ties it off around a rubber band.  
He takes off his pants and shimmies the band  
up his thigh like a garter.

A wolf walks in on hind legs.  
It howls its intestines out.  
The wolf is a body with important holes.

I am in Saint Paul,  
far from home, three months sober.  
My body feels desiccated.

M is shedding his body. His body,  
one giant peachbruise dribbling venom.

Anyone can buy clean piss online.  
M buys it from the sober house next door.  
An old man peddles twenty-ounce Gatorade bottles for ten bucks.

M is filled with holes (he is not the wolf).

Beneath his blanket he shoots heroin  
between his toes, within his fort  
he floats toward the yawn of light.

**JEFFREY THOMSON**

**Led Zeppelin Debuts “Stairway to Heaven,”  
the Ulster Hall, March 5, 1971**

*Around 900 were killed that night and half the homes in Belfast  
destroyed.*

—BBC

The crowd waits, ready to burst into anything but this  
slow-motion wreck of an intro

they’ve never heard before with its swaying guitar  
and that recorder floating out of the dark

like Irish pipes, and now some jostle to the bar in the back,  
talking over the top of this strange lady

*who’s sure all that glitters is gold* and into the white faces  
on the tops of their pints, while one girl—

spattered with paisley and red beads like stopped droplets  
of blood—sways before the stage

(the tempo and reefer in perfect harmony now) and no longer  
wonders about this man with blunt hands

and manners short as his hair, this man she recently started thinking of  
as her love, no longer wonders when he will return

to put his arms around her in the clumsy way she finds endearing  
but suspects that—if it lasts—she will come to loathe,

and then the lights drop and Plant sweeps the blitz of his hair  
across his eyes in echo of the gold leaf sparkling

across the ceiling like the small and distant fires of homes burning  
in the hills all around him

as if it’s Easter Tuesday 1941 again and the American soldiers  
whose children will gather like druids

around any turntable playing this song are covered by a blackout  
in that theater as air-raid sirens squeal up into the distant hills,

the city unprepared (no searchlights accusing the cloud-speckled sky,  
no chuff of anti-aircraft),

and because there is nothing to be done and nowhere to go,  
Delia Murphy, on stage in chiffon and lace

as bombs begin their soft percussion in the distance, says,  
“We’re not going anywhere,”

and drops into “Bye Bye Blackbird” as one soldier gathers  
the small bouquet of an Irish girl in his arms

and swings her onto the bare runway of the dance floor—  
this floor that will collapse twice in years to come

beneath dancers pounding their lives into it with all the rhythm  
the small hammers of their feet can manage,

but not this night, no, not tonight—and now other soldiers  
drop their need, their dread urgency

to do *something*, and follow his lead, gathering their own girls  
from the garden of faces along the wall,

and soon the floor is swirling and Murphy is singing,  
*Make my bed and light the light, I’ll arrive late tonight,*

bombs dropping across the city from a flotilla of diesel and gear,  
dropping down alleyways carved into the air,

and they dance on into the night, hour after hour  
as clouds and blaze swirl up throughout the city

like flirtatious color gels spinning paisley and psychedelia  
across the scene, Plant picking up the tempo now,

buckets of drumbeats dropped at his feet, Page’s guitar  
rising on the upbeats, and the lights pound

and the sound rises and the crowd finally engages,  
boys returning from the bar in waves like aircraft

JEFFREY THOMSON

coasting above a defenseless, darkened city, and  
    when he does return and slides his arms around her,  
  
his hands hefty as peat, she will smile and think him  
    wonderful, aware only of his hands  
  
and the music and the ripe crush of the crescendo  
    as it breaks across them both,  
  
together there on that fragile floor, not knowing, of course,  
    that he will die in McGurk's  
  
in December of that very year, die beneath a wall brought down  
    by another bomb, brought down  
  
out of some terrible and ongoing heaven.

**JEFFREY THOMSON**

**Rain, or a local poet long gone returns home**

—for Marianne Boruch

The lightning bangs and the rain takes its cue  
and looses its sacks of stones across my spring-  
cleared roof, but I hear another night in another city  
when rain rushed down as never before—a night  
in Belfast when poets read into the rising atrium  
of the Ulster Museum and rain was shrapnel  
on a steel roof, rain was horses in a galloping dark,  
the audience marooned there in that tower of art  
and history—soaring pterodactyl crossing space  
above our heads, Irish wolfhound hugely in the corner,  
posters acknowledging the Troubles down the hall—  
as the main lights vanished and the fingers  
of emergency lighting pointed out faces in the crowd  
while heavy shoulders of thunder trapped us  
in that bamboo garden of rain that fell and fell  
all around us and the rain kept coming and coming  
and water flowed feet deep down Botanic  
and flooded cars all along that street of bookshop  
and pub, the chip shop's lights like a ship lost at sea,  
until there was nothing to do but retire to the pub  
beneath a rain that fell like history and tenacity  
and filled Friar's Bush graveyard  
across from the pub—stone-bound acre  
of tall grass and headstones thin as roofing slates  
where the fake 'Friar's Stone' found inside and  
inscribed *AD 485* is in fact Victorian affection  
for a gothic past of mist and myth, because back then  
everyone was trying to forget the bodies felled  
by cholera and famine in 1847 when the island  
hunkered beneath another rain that gathered like  
the accumulation of syntax, long layering of grammar  
and history and hatred and dogged abandonment,  
and people either left or died, which is the condensed history  
of this island, and the easy answer, and wrong,  
because someone had to stay behind, someone  
had to write it all down, someone had to catalogue this space  
made empty by rain—green land of stone and rill  
and the vandalized sheep, small back room of an island

→

**JEFFREY THOMSON**

now dark and filled with chatter and pints,  
a peat fire burning ancient, heaped accumulations,  
and these bodies warming, ridding themselves of the rain.

**JEFFREY THOMSON**

**Van Morrison Performs with his Daughter: Odyssey Arena, Belfast**

*Morrison, eh?* the cab driver asks  
as we're driving through Shaftsbury Square

and the collapse of old churches.  
*He forgets where he comes from,*

*so he does.* And we pass an old wall camouflaged  
by a mural of red hands flanking a masked gunman

and scarlet fists like all the small roses of rage, a wall  
that warns—YOU ARE NOW ENTERING LOYALIST SANDY ROW—

as the Union Jacks accumulate and the rain.  
In the gauzy wasteland of myth, one man

wanted this island so desperately  
he separated his hand from his arm

and heaved it from his ship to the shore  
to win the race to first put skin on Ulster,

so now red hands mark a bloody map  
spattered on buildings across the city.

The easy Irish soul has come and gone  
like a home left long behind when

Van's daughter slides out from behind the risers  
to sing "Sometimes We Cry"—her voice

a thin cloud in the long blue collapse of day  
over the Lough. The piano builds a bridge for her

to cross the black estuary of his voice,  
and their singing builds an island in the air

where waves bother a bird-churned shore.  
As they finish the song and wave to us before

the dark altar of the drums, the rough surf  
of applause beats down on them, and their two hands

join downstage, lit up as if they are wearing  
history's bloody glove and the future's long white dress.

**JOSHUA BENNETT**

**On Blueness**

which is neither misery  
nor melancholy per se,  
but the way anything buried  
aspires. How blackness becomes  
a bladed pendulum swaying between  
*am I not a man & a brother*  
& meat. How it dips  
into the position  
of the unthought,  
then out. Trust me.  
Foucault isn't  
helpful here. I am after  
what comes when the law leaves  
a dream gutted. The space  
between a plea & *please*.  
A mother marching in the name  
of another woman's dead children.  
Not the anguish she carries alongside  
her as if it were a whole separate person,  
but the very fact of her feet  
addressing the pavement,  
the oatmeal she warmed in the microwave  
that morning, sugar & milk  
& blueberries blending in a white bowl  
as she reads the paper, taken aback  
only by the number of bullets  
they poured like a sermon into him.  
How despair kills: too slow to cut  
the music from a horn or set  
my nephew's laughter to dim.  
Who can be alive today  
and not study grief?  
I am dying, yes, but I am not the marrow  
in a beloved's memory just yet.  
There are bodies everywhere  
but also that flock  
of cardinals making the sky  
look patriotic.

**JOSHUA BENNETT**

**Love Poem Ending with Typewriters**

*And maybe no one's happy*  
I think to myself, usually  
during the plane ride home  
or as I read dead French philosophers

on the couch, only a child's height away  
from my girlfriend who, for real  
for real, is a Platonic ideal in her own right,  
all any reasonable citizen

of desire might dare  
to imagine in these times  
of breakup over text message  
& earnest tweets left

unanswered for days. We fit  
like the grooves on a bullet.  
We both love Rilke & want  
children & think furniture

design is pretty important.  
Three months into our tour  
of the human condition,  
I dropped half my rent

on a Corinthian leather sofa  
because it sounded cool  
& she didn't eat anything  
with preservatives in it,

so I figured *No biggie.*  
*This is what all*  
*functioning adults do. They lie*  
*expensively. They lie awake*

on their side, eyes ajar,  
lover dreaming of cormorants  
right next to them,  
counting the minutes

**JOSHUA BENNETT**

until this, even this bows  
to the sovereignty of rot. Beloved,  
if I came from anything unworthy  
of shame, I would say so. I wouldn't

brood across the country this way.  
If I knew how to stop calling  
your presence pity, my therapist's couch  
would grow cold

as a slaughterhouse. And is that  
what you want? To break such a flawless  
routine? To stop screaming  
at typewriters, expecting rain?

**SANDRA KOHLER**

**Invisible Cities**

**1. The city in the distance**

Green-encircled, rising, it emerges  
from banks of fog shrouding the dust  
and scrub of that anonymous endless  
plain we call our country.

It is not. Our country is the city  
we have longed for, the city created  
out of that longing: *hortus conclusus*  
where every tree known to us flourishes,  
a green density blossoming beyond all  
ideas of beauty against that bluest sky.

In this city we can find the food  
remembered from a time before  
language, a potion for forgetfulness,  
which, tasted, satisfies a desire  
we never knew we harbored.

**2. The desire for a city**

It is not the desire of an old woman.  
It is not the desire of a young woman.  
Young, I wanted steppes, snowfields,  
a plain undelved by the devices of man.  
What calls me now—crone,  
haggard wraith—is ocean:  
the waves' spaces in water  
where water is not. Only in night's  
other universe, waking outside  
myself, am I the woman who  
once desired a city.

**3. The city as mountain**

In teeming rain I am climbing a hill so steep I barely manage to keep upright, keep moving, carrying bundles of wood, sticks, straw, packed bales that come from a country far from these cobblestoned streets. Alongside this path there's a construction site, massive buildings that seem skeletons of an unfinished monument. I see I'm lost, I don't recognize the names on street signs or the alphabet in which they're inscribed.

**4. The city of past and present**

The city contains its past in cobblestones paving old alleys that climb up from the river as if they were blind or drunk, mad to escape the water. In a tree that has grown around the iron fence of the present. In inscriptions not on parchment or bronze, but which, like lines on an ancient face, trouble the calm surface of the present: crazed hieroglyphs etching concrete, stone, steel.

**5. The city of despair**

If the stone turban of the grave marker could bow, weeping; if the arched branch of the aspen could shake its yellowing tears on the parched gravel beneath it; if the spike of the minaret could pierce the gray sky and bring down rain, perhaps a woman living in this city could stir, could shake off her torpor.

**6. The city of old age**

This city is capital of a different country—  
time, accident, affliction—its borders marked  
by a wide river I cross unaware  
on the vessel which bears and  
wrecks me.

The river carries me swiftly, insensibly;  
I have left my home shore far behind  
before realizing I am flotsam,  
washing up on foreign rocks.

In the city of illness, suffering,  
every morning I wish away the present.  
In the city of health, all  
I want is for the present to last.

The fortunate among us cross back again,  
welcomed by the sands  
of ordinary sorrow, transient ills: that green  
space where affliction waxes and  
waned, vanishes for a time.

Still we will return to the city  
where affliction is the soil from which  
each moment springs, the air we  
gasp for, the shards of ice  
wetting our parched lips.

**LIZZIE HUTTON**

**Nocturne**

—tells how after, still entangled, you roughly pressed  
your lips against my wrist,  
my eyes long adjusted to the dark

so that, and still uncome, I saw  
that your fourth finger, raised there on  
your arm propped by the pillow, shuddered also  
in some love throe of its own, your body's

inside violence fading here  
inside me too. Your thrown-back arm and face  
lit violet by the outside's shadowed  
snowlight.

It was then that I, uncome, remembered  
from my childhood  
those spring days when the front tree  
burst softly like first snow with cherry blossoms

floating from their thread-thin stems. Unpickable,  
their own brief being  
being its own climax, each blinked newly, thinking  
I've grown old the moment my partner blooms.

And I remembered from piano  
my own fourth finger quaking,  
clumsy and square-tipped  
since coupled with the smallest finger,

and how at my lessons  
that ring finger, betrayer,  
always seemed the weakest and the hardest  
to control. That trying not to try too hard

the piece's final fragments, how I took it up myself there  
in the darkness where I'd always been: that final trill  
that sounds an echo at/against  
night's separations.

**JOE PAN**  
**Log\*OS**

This garden thrush.  
& this one. & that one  
over there. Mates, matte-  
mediated & collaged, but  
round-bodied, ovarian  
as vowels & perfectly  
winged, each strikes  
the pose *passé juvenile*  
*delinquent* on driftwood in  
a gallery's open aviary.  
*Dear Catastrophe Waitress*  
pipes in as the artist  
with chevrons buzzed into  
his scalp is treed by art  
hounds chatty as  
sportscasters, erudite as  
olives with their one red  
point. The artist, it seems,  
has mismanaged  
imperfection, each of his  
objects accumulating  
zeros. But what of these  
thrushes? So hollow  
without us, each a vessel  
for this person I inhabit  
briefly, discretely, as I  
peruse & genuflect, each  
red second sabotaging the  
previous, scavenging &  
salvaging, trained socially  
to chirp no open  
grievances against art  
or artist & goodly as any  
obeisant deacon. It seems the  
birds are teaching me  
how to watch them. Even  
as the critic's ear bends  
sail toward another  
conversation, hooks a  
theory from an adjacent  
squabble & adopts it for his

own, I cannot help but be  
thankful for these centuries  
of contradiction in service  
of the new  
as the garden thrushes,  
almost human now,  
collect the dust  
of our captivity.

This garden thrush  
ginning bees  
from the hibiscus  
articulates a relationship  
between memory & desire.  
Or doesn't. Best to watch.  
Bird returns from bush  
unrepentant, un-alone,  
wings fraught  
with a terrifying living  
music & proceeds to seed  
from itself the subject  
of its desire in a violent  
yet quotidian dance.  
What does it remember,  
having fed its hunger?  
Does it regard instinct as  
a necessary madness,  
like the woodpecker who  
one day wakes  
to drive its perfect beak  
into a palm tree?  
Desire need not be  
satisfied, never taste  
its unsuspecting  
hunger-to-action-  
casualty. It lives  
in opportunity, however  
illusory, driving us wild  
& flitting about the fetish  
symbols of what absorbs  
us. It reinvigorates one's →

faith in the pure instant,  
free of before- & after-  
math. Like memory,  
it usurps one's willingness  
to participate, arriving  
unannounced with swift  
appetite to explode the  
immediacy of a moment.  
We cherish this agent,  
reject self-authorship  
& are emptied of time's form.  
Desire (umbilicus) unites  
us to thrush / thrush to bee /  
& bee to flower, whose own  
leaf dismisses its bond  
with the calyx  
for the intractable,  
quick love of gravity.

This garden thrush  
is a lark, an experiment  
in materialism, an attempt  
to determine how-when-  
why the mind bends  
to the ephemeral.  
Imagine this bird  
exploded  
so far & fast the migration  
of its atoms became both  
an anachronistic wave  
& eventual pointillism—  
light from a dying star.

(Finely layered in space-  
time, measurable in  
theory, being somewhere  
between the fleeting  
neutrinos of Seurat—  
recognizable only when  
they strike at something  
larger & the polarizing

Ben-Day dots  
of Lichtenstein, haunting  
immense vacuity, charging  
the in-between.)

Where then lies its song?

Some other poet has been  
here. I have recordings—  
song, poem, memory—  
“Split the Lark & you'll find  
the Music / Bulb after Bulb  
in Silver rolled.” Murdered &  
dissected for its music, the  
bird, with study, disappears,  
its particles expanding.  
It can be viewed no longer  
irrelative of everything else,  
is itself reconstituted as a  
collective probability,  
or the self-fulfilling  
replications of a viewer-  
cum-creator. Matter as  
energy, both testament  
& dream, the either-or  
of immemorial & we its  
beautiful, irreverent song.

This garden thrush, grub  
fat, notices me watching,  
notices me not

Wine cork popping—  
some breeze lilts a dandelion—  
garden thrush at noon

Brooklyn lamp—  
garden thrush under a cyclist's tire  
still twitters, still sings

Drunk off its own heartbeat,  
stroking clavicle of moon—  
garden thrush bewitched

This garden thrush is  
the infinite syllable  
held, some possibly  
bequeathed sentiment,  
or the essential call,  
the prolonged naming.  
Dear Unified & Infinite  
Interim: you are a god's  
stalled instruction,  
finger at the lip, the first  
thought or final wish?  
Saint Vacuum  
of Interminable Silence &  
Forgetting, you are  
Reason's longest winter,  
false prophet of hope  
that words can outlive us  
listeners. With Time  
peering back unblinking as  
Hirst's tanked tiger shark,  
I feel moved to repeat you,  
syllable—use you, as you've  
moved me to examine  
my own singsong &  
surreptitious love for  
sounds sexing themselves  
into poetry. It takes but one  
more sound, a pairing, for  
meaning to happen:  
another thrush—plush  
as a rush of barbiturates,  
crux of the coroner's  
kingdom, unhinged as  
religion, itinerant as wind,  
bitch of the slinky  
dominatrix unleashing  
a Sister's forgiving

permission—the second  
utterance giving way to  
a season, a song for one's  
self, a pleasurable aperture  
of private performance  
*sans raison d'être*.  
O wrong, wrong-  
headed, long-winded  
whisperers, music can be  
meaning enough.  
O long, song-laden words,  
you are reason enough  
for reason's artful  
obliteration.

This garden thrush  
walks into a bar with a  
cat on a leash  
& a flamingo in drag.  
The bartender asks him  
what's the deal with  
the entourage.  
The garden thrush says,  
“My grandmother died  
and willed me this old  
lamp & when I go  
to clean it, out pops this  
genie, who says he'll  
grant me three wishes.  
So I asked for a bird  
with long legs  
& a subservient pussy.”  
The garden thrush  
loses it, squawking  
at his own joke.  
The bartender goes back  
to wiping mugs  
with a rag. The garden  
thrush asks the bartender  
what the problem is &  
the bartender says,

→

“Jesus, T. This shit,  
day in day out?  
Where’d you get these two?”  
T looks over his shoulder.  
“Met ‘em at a party. What’s  
your fucking problem?”  
“Go home to your kids, T,”  
says the bartender.  
“Not before I get a drink,”  
T replies. “We really  
gonna do this?” asks  
the bartender. The garden  
thrush stares at him  
a moment before putting  
on his hat. “Some kind  
of brother,” he says.  
“It ain’t no pleasure in life,”  
says the bartender.  
“Fuck you,” says the garden  
thrush. “It ain’t nothin’  
*but* pleasure.”

“Is that guy really your  
brother?” asks the flamingo  
once they’re back outside.  
“We served together,” says  
the garden thrush. The cat  
is already down the block.  
“Served? Served like how?”  
asks the flamingo, “Like at  
a Burger King? Like in  
a war? You ain’t been to no  
war.” The garden thrush  
leans against the wall,  
points. “When you tuck  
that between your legs,  
you reckon that makes you  
more of a woman or less  
of a man?” The flamingo  
has heard enough, takes  
flight, an asterisk tagged

to the moon. The garden  
thrush opens his flask,  
wishes he had back all that  
money spent on shrimp  
cocktails. The pleasure is  
all mine, he thinks, but I  
have no right to pleasure.  
A sacrifice here & there &  
you’re left with nothing to  
sacrifice. & a man with  
nothing to sacrifice is no  
man at all.

This garden thrush  
is garnering burrs  
as it escalates  
through the brush,  
is garnering bits  
as it unfurls  
across my computer  
screen, digitized &  
greedy in its becoming,  
claiming, pixel by pixel,  
the birthright  
of its origins  
in varying coded colors.  
The old world snaps.  
The new physical  
arrives in diminished  
consciousness, fed  
by a taste  
for the next graphic  
element it will inherit.  
Narcissus at the water’s  
edge sees his truer,  
eternal self—pliable,  
reducible,  
downloadable  
& made anew.  
The movie star  
is made of extras.

→

JOE PAN

The morning star  
has stolen every North.  
What zodiac  
could possibly contain  
what it is itself  
contained within?  
What inner life will  
we consider precious  
when we decode  
the thrush's song  
and replace it with  
our own?

**TAKAMICHI OKUBO**

**Self-Portrait as Grendel**

I am the shadow stalker    sin-dripping  
& God-cursed    begotten of the descendants  
of Cain. From between    the claw scales  
of my body seep    solitude & words  
meant to be scrawled    monstrous across  
the walls of my cave    as war-blood  
& bone-rattle.    Bored & insomniac  
I stand staring    outside my den  
at the pretty haloes    of pine torches  
burning in the distance    in their disparate pulses  
& listen to the singing    the bright laughter  
& calloused clapping    their cackling voices  
honey-hued    & at home in the brogue  
of their own kith    & kin. While I

flense the bodies lying 'round my cave  
& stuff myself inside their skins & scalps  
from head to toe & loping down the hill,  
across the moors & through the night, I reach  
their mead-hall, trailing blood & strips of skin  
to join their wassail. There I toast & boast  
among the men I used to butcher, glib  
& loud in this loose hide I've jury-rigged  
from their dead. My tongue is riven as I fight  
the urge to mount the bench & roar in their faces:

Don't you hear    the music in my howling  
in the hard-struck    syllables of this sibilance  
in these rough-hewn    runes of my roar?  
So different from your tongue    the tempered cadence  
of your dumb iambs    like the drumbeat no one  
dances or sings to.    Do you see the edges  
in my keening, their gleam    & grace, grooves  
& jags brittle    in their barbed beauty?

But the rage-cry    gets caught in my throat  
stays there quivering    unsung like an arrow  
just struck    striving to be more than  
itself: a murmur    a melody, a hymn.  
So I remain stuck    in their skin, mute  
& enormous with war    & words, unnoticed  
to the end of the night.    Unnamed. Englished.

**BILL NEUMIRE**

**Firemen's Practice Burn House**

Maybe you're thinking of crying at the news  
because you can't pronounce the names  
of the cities where children are lined up

lying in the street, wearing T-shirts  
with American actors  
& they aren't children anymore

because they're dead & their city  
is burning & has always been  
burning & the envelopes from your credit

card bills are too close  
to the stove's orange circles where your pasta boils,  
the kind you make

when the man who protects you is coming over,  
but the men who protect us, don't worry,  
have their axes & their hoses & they light

the ghostly building again to practice breaking  
inside her many hells, her many languages  
of interior monologue & some of them will fail

because they will see the way  
she always stares at the nearby river of sleep,  
the way she's not there anymore

because what she wants is not there  
because death is like protection  
from what you know

& maybe you cry there in the brittle evening  
whose silence reaches the pitch of alarm  
whose leaves imagine themselves

as smoke dancing apart in the sky,  
sifting over the broad bloody shoulders  
of the men who protect us

some crying

names they can't say.

**ROBERT MALLOY**

**Muscle and a Shovel**

—for my daughters *Isibéal, Sadhbh, Rathnait*

. . . the Famine also set in motion “a vagabond proletariat” that went wherever there were jobs that required little more than muscle and a shovel . . . they wandered off, or their children did, their descendants rapidly losing any conscious sense of an Irish past or identity.

—Peter Quinn, “In Search of the Banished Children: A Famine Journey”

Of what was passed down, this much we know: Sunday, near turn of century, Henry’s wife and children came home from church to find him spread-eagle among the potatoes, charred bits of stump guts around his body like an aura. Dead from dynamiting stumps. Supposed to be laid up in bed with a bad back, that’s why he stayed home from church. But why he chose to haul up from the blankets, limp and shuffle to the potato patch, we can only guess—perhaps his eye and jaw set on a sprawling oak stump he’d been hacking at off and on for years, perhaps his mind was churning on the plodding-implacable day upon day of a farm: birthing, feeding, slaughtering, hoof-trimming and shoeing, the summer-long tending of oats, buckwheat, and peas, the hilling and bug-picking of potatoes—potatoes . . . and that would get him thinking of his only home, King’s County, Ireland, and the long crossing from it way back, and how it all just never ends, how one blackness bleeds to another, how his escape from a wasted-starving homeland launched into the bare-dark stinking hold of a Canada-bound British lumber ship, where for moaning and retching nights melting into weeks, he prayed for life or escape, whichever came first, whatever first—and even though his prayers were answered and he made it to the sunshine and fresh air,

→

that long-groaning crossing slipped into  
the deep-snow cold winters and short  
growing seasons of a rocky, stumpy,  
two-cents-per-acre rented farm—how  
the burning hauling cutting never ended  
in this new world, how that battle roiled up  
again with the coming of each of the ten  
children—more clearing lugging sacking—  
sufferin' Christ. Always meant to struggle.  
By the time he sank stiffly to his knees  
to knife a hole for the dynamite, his mind  
would have been a rolling boil of hate, a lifetime  
of it, for sandy, silty soil, killing frosts, potato  
bugs, wheat flies, horses that fought shoeing,  
iron unbowing to form and shape, days  
and days of rain, a wet cool spring, potatoes  
rotting in the mud—potatoes . . . An Gorta Mór,  
The Great Hunger . . . women and the young  
foraging for nettles and blackberries, cabbage leaves  
and grass, men digging a ditch, building a road  
under the coolly economizing eye of Trevelyan,  
friends an arm away crumpling like burlap,  
too sick for work, too sick, weak to cross  
the ocean in a vessel built to carry  
New World pine for His Majesty's masts,  
to be packed into the hard-dark hold like salted cod,  
thin bone shoulder to shoulder . . . the dull ochre clanging  
of the bell calling, calling one hundred cattle-like  
to the soup kitchen—one quart of soup, thickened  
with Indian corn meal, four ounces of bread or  
biscuit—then treading single file out the exit,  
the bell calling, calling for another one hundred.  
A quart of soup, four ounces of bread or  
biscuit . . . we'll never know if he settled on  
his knees with gritted teeth, said, "The hell  
with it, the hell with it all," watching the running  
spark hiss down the fuse, one, two seconds  
too long. The hell with it.

**MARK BURKE**

**When the Days are Small**

November's meager daylight  
seeps through the doorway  
into the barn's dark shell  
and I hear the wind insist,  
whistling along the eaves.  
The snow line has eased  
down the mountainside  
marking the advent of cold.  
Sheep file inside,  
inspect the corners,  
and we stand together  
as the horse steps in  
by degrees, cautious.  
He comes and touches  
his nose to my chest  
and the sheep follow the old ewe  
into the front stall where  
they stand, out of the wind.  
When winter closes in,  
there will be no other place for me  
to come for this comfort.

**AN INTERVIEW WITH KERRIN MCCADDEN: Hungry to Flip the World**  
**Rachel Contreni Flynn**

**Kerrin McCadden, *Landscape with Plywood Silhouettes***  
(Kalamazoo, MI: New Issues Press, 2014, 82 pp, \$15.00 paper)

In her poem “Burial,” published in this issue, Kerrin McCadden juxtaposes an indoor scene of mourning with an outdoor scene of work that must be done despite, and to move through, that mourning. The poem enacts a mash-up of song where human, machine, and bird voices combine, and these sorts of intersections of scenes and music are emblematic of McCadden’s work. The poems in her first book, *Landscape with Plywood Silhouettes*, are wide and wise enough to encompass that which is brusque as well as gentle, the methodical *and* the ambiguous. McCadden’s work seeks, delicately yet steadfastly, to illuminate complex mysteries that nevertheless remain partly in shadow. Through her poems we learn truths about our shadowy, mashed-up world; in “Burial,” not only do we come to understand something of the way a woodcock makes its song, but about how to grieve in a world that moves on, keeps digging.

Kerrin McCadden’s *Landscape with Plywood Silhouettes* won the 2015 Vermont Book Award from Vermont College of Fine Arts and the 2013 New Issues Poetry Prize. McCadden has also won fellowships and awards from the National Endowment for the Arts, The Vermont Studio Center, and The Sustainable Arts Foundation, among other honors. A graduate of The MFA Program for Writers at Warren Wilson College, she lives in Vermont and teaches at Montpelier High School.

■

**BPJ:** From the outset of *Landscape with Plywood Silhouettes*, it’s clear that the speaker has been struck lonely, stunned by heartbreak “after the marriage, the long marriage, the forty / open acres of marriage,” and the collection proceeds to acknowledge, wrestle with, and seek to reconcile the loneliness. Your work displays time and again a refreshing *restraint* in tone in deeply felt poems such as “Mostly, She Practices Falling” in which the speaker admits, “What is true is that I have figured out / how to do it, how to live alone. I sponge off / the table, wash the plates, and go to bed.” Could you talk about the poems in the first part of the book that proceed with emotional restraint

by adopting a “how-to” mechanism (for example in “Safety Instructions” and “How to Miss a Man”)?

**McCadden:** A restrained tone in poems about heartbreak can function as a kind of dissonance, providing tension. Poems send a reader to solve, or reconcile, the world of a poem—not as if there is a correct answer, but as if there is something to construct, some work to do. If a poem wells up from flailing emotions born of grief and loneliness and sings its song through a restrained tone, I hope it sends a reader reckoning. In grief we both wallow and set our shoulders to move forward. Somewhere between wallowing and setting our shoulders, we tell ourselves how to do it; we look for instructions.

Yet this is an impossible task—finding instructions for how to live. We don’t know anything. I know that, but I’m always hopeful, hunting to see, and a piece of the first section’s how-to poems comes from this appetite. Finding instructions in all the wrong places—in a tattoo, in the anatomy of a bird’s wing, driving through the Midwest, in the making of tea—this is a prayerful act. The poems deal in sets of instructions as if these imperatives are real and actual means, as if they could transact magical answers, could manifest a new life. “How to Miss a Man” makes use of Regina Spektor’s song lyrics as well as various figures (for example, “You are a needle just then, / darning holes in things”) as a pretense of providing comfort. The poem ends, though, with the flatly stated truth: “You can draw two / lines on a graph that can never touch. This is what you are building.” These lines undercut the magical earlier figures; the restraint, the flatness of the ending is meant to be blunt and a little cruel.

The same is true of “Safety Instructions,” where what is offered is what *not* to do. The poem essentially offers nothing—a set of instructions for how to live once the plane has landed, as if a flight attendant or the relationship with one’s anonymous seatmate could provide Truth, but the speaker is earnest in decoding the instructions. In these poems, the speaker imagines she can decipher how to move forward. That’s a lonely, rueful place—dealing in magical thinking—but it’s simultaneously lovely to believe what is not possible: a “how-to” mechanism can help structure and complicate an exploration of loneliness.

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**BPJ:** “How to Miss a Man” also establishes early the speaker’s affection for mathematical accuracy, straight lines, reliable calculations of all kinds, inventories, and graphs: “You need to be a graph. A grid. Numbers are perfect.” Near the end of the book, in “UVB-76,” the speaker writes a letter to the world across the night sky and requests, “*Write back to me with every kind / of regularity—because, really, I am in love / with regularity—the regularity / of every kind of thing.*” Tell us more about your poetry’s affection for the regularity found in math, grids, and maps.

**McCadden:** Inside the concerns of loneliness and grief, very little is regular or consistent, and these poems reach for consistency as antidote. I’ve always loved the puzzles of mathematics—how one can “solve for  $x$ ,” matrices, not knowing how much or how big or how hot, then adding, subtracting, converting, and arriving at an answer. I find the images and language of mathematics clean and beautiful and strange, and to use them for illogical purposes in poems with a searching speaker seems both sad and lovely. Such use of math, grids, maps, and other logical means combines impossibility with blind optimism, much like the “how-to” poems. This speaker is tentatively seeking joy across the collection, too, and the language of calculation in this context is a way to begin asking questions about possibility, to try to solve for  $x$ .

**BPJ:** In her essay “The Sound of It,” Marianne Boruch discusses the pleasure of poems that move between two dimensions: public (reasonable, emphatic, witty) and private (quirky, delicate, sorrowful). The intersection of these modes of voice and stance in a poem enriches the work with complications, acting as a means to “mess it up a bit.” When a poem shifts to private, intimate impulses, Boruch notes, “What might have gone on as plain story is abruptly altered . . . We’ve gone inward to the unexpected, the broken off.” These observations aptly describe what goes on, I think, in many of *Landscape’s* poems. They’re funny, efficient, narrative, and then they veer into dream, surreal inner worlds, or disorientation, imbuing the poem with the quirky, delicate sorrowing Boruch describes. Could you talk about combining public and private moods and the shifts (or

leaps) between them in poems such as “Saint Albans” and “My Brother Sits for a Life Drawing Class”?

**McCadden:** When I was very young, I would lie on the bed with my head upside down until the ceiling was the floor—light fixtures coming up from the floor, little walls between rooms. Poets have certain appetites, and I am hungry to flip the world. In writing poems that go “inward” or that become surreal, I’m interested in trying to keep the materials—the narrative information—of the poem largely of the perceived world. While there is often an impossible element—various transformations, a ghost, *Meteora*—most of the rest of the poem keeps playing with what is “real,” but flipping it. Many of my poems come from this drive to re-perceive the quotidian.

I find that wholly interior poems can become oddments, and, conversely, poems wholly situated in the social, tangible world can become documents. There is nothing wrong with either, but a reader can read such poems at arm’s length, as an observer. What I mean is that if I write a mostly interior poem that says rather plainly, “I am lonely,” the reader may well experience the poem as a kind of voyeur and think, “That person in that poem is lonely.” And a door closes there. How much better the poem could be if I could make that reader *feel* lonely, too.

Somehow, when a poem has collisions in it, a reader’s apple cart gets upset enough that the poem hoodwinks the reader into feeling, rather than observing feeling. Regarding the shifts themselves, I think these need to be swift—a rapidity we engage with in films—rather than labored in any way. There is authority in swiftness. I want the reader to come with me when the poem leaps, not hang back and have time to build doubt.

In “Saint Albans,” in order to render a speaker who has come a bit unhinged from the world—except for when she feels connected to her beloved—I had her look at everything as if through a lens of comparison, through the eyes of an angler fish distracted by the bioluminescence it can’t ditch. Of course the distraction is really the thought of the beloved, but who hasn’t felt under water in love? So the poem continued from that conceit. In the moments when the speaker is steady, she is

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“algebraic” and “increasingly alphanumeric.” And while these descriptions are a means to “mess it up a bit,” they are also mechanisms to locate the speaker in a world that makes sense, before she goes “under water.”

In a poem like “My Brother Sits for a Life Drawing Class,” I think it’s almost required that the poem veer inward, go strange; otherwise it would assume too much authority to remain credible. This poem is a reconnaissance mission, sending a speaker to reckon with a drug-addicted brother. The short, declarative sentences in the first three or four stanzas of this poem are a stab at narrative authority, but they really are a sham, as truth slips into a clear fiction. Brothers and sisters can’t turn into art objects, just as one person can’t narrate into understanding another’s mind, let alone an addict’s. The “reasonable, empathic” speaker boldly attempts to establish authority over a story when no authority can actually be had. All there is, then, is a kind of giving up, or giving over, or, as Marianne Boruch writes, going “inward to the unexpected, the broken off.”

**BPJ:** A gentle but dark humor buoys several of the poems in your book, from the skeleton friends chatting in a light but macabre manner in “Skeletons” (“Your flap jaw kept moving in that fetching way, / its hinge clicking in that way it will when a man ages some”) to the frustrated courtship of two cut-out lawn sculptures in “Landscape with Plywood Silhouettes.” Please comment on the role of humor in your poems.

**McCadden:** In general, I’d say humor is a hiding place, and a fabulous one, its job being to obscure some kind of truth, then mete it back out. Humor, then, is also a way of moderating and controlling truth; it’s a pretense, a slip of the tongue, a series of lies and stories and doublings. Humor is also an apt release for tension. We become unsure or confused, or tension builds, and then the punch line arrives, and we laugh or sigh or groan—we are released. As readers, when we “get the joke,” we’ve broken a code, solved a puzzle, discovered an answer. I hope to use humor to all these ends: manipulating truth, providing release, and suggesting answers.

I love how humor facilitates surprise. I can't arrive at the serious ending of "Landscape with Plywood Silhouettes" with the same impact if the rest of the poem is not trippingly light-hearted, if we haven't gone on and on with these two in their impossible plywood courtship. In "Skeletons," humor is useful in complicating the situation of the poem. The two people have, in "real life," stayed up until two in the morning talking in a truck in the cold. We don't know why, but we do know the speaker then dreams about the two as skeletons, and only in this dream does she reveal any desire for, or reach out to touch, the other person. So in this poem, humor is a veil, allowing the transformation of the humans to release the desire of the speaker, and it's also a reminder that, dammit, we *are* skeletons. Those people in the truck can worry about whatever they want, but they are headed to being only bones, ridiculous bones.

**BPJ:** A recurring image in *Landscape* is one of hands held out in supplication or an imploring gesture, but forgiveness, apology, and sincerity are slippery and suspect notions in these poems, especially in the final section. What are your thoughts on this book's perspective on contrition, particularly in the poems "Jake" and "Apology, Its Absence"?

**McCadden:** In keeping with the book's interest in calculations, contrition is an attempt to subtract one's actions; the root of the word is "to grind down." This book's interest in *contrition* is a way of digging (grinding down) at the ghost of the book—the wreckage of the marriage.

"Jake" is a poem written about a painting of the same name by Alison Goodwin, an artist whose work I'd fill my house with if I could. What struck me about the painting was the look of pure generosity—almost supplication—in the man's face. He holds out a fish and wears a halo and a baseball cap. He both looks like a man seeking forgiveness and like one who has no need to, and this struck me. When I saw that painting, I wanted to be loved by a man who could make that face. The poem is written as a direct address, and, coming later in the collection, is a return to the "how-to" poems from the first section, essentially telling the speaker she wants this, and how to have this, how to see what is

beautiful in that frozen moment—which is the essential lesson, how being loved can happen.

“Apology, Its Absence” is an exhibit of apologies as well as their absences. I found myself fascinated by “official apologies” and how long countries and organized religions often take to make them for wrongs they have committed. The poem examines a world that requires apologies and a world that requires none, ultimately imagining an existence where conflict is not a daily navigation but something to go see in a museum.

These poems ask, “What will become of me?” The image of hands held out is a gesture that means both “I have no idea” and “please.” It is both resigned and imploring, and somewhere between the two is vulnerability finer than simple loneliness. You ask, too, about forgiveness. I don’t think this is a speaker who deals much in forgiveness, rather wonders *how* to forgive as she wonders how to move forward. If forgiveness, apology, and sincerity are slippery, especially toward the end, I think it’s because the book is still contemplating their arrival.

**BPJ:** In the preface to her first book, *To the Place of Trumpets*, Brigit Pegeen Kelly writes of her profound attachment to poetry’s music, and although her influences are varied, she states that “because sound is related to nurturance for me . . . it is finally with the music of poetry that I am most concerned. When I write I am trying quite simply, as my father did before me, to sing.” Your work, for me, shares qualities with Kelly’s poetry: an attention to precise imagery, imaginative scope, and most powerfully, an ability to render seemingly effortless, natural sounds and cadences. Would you talk about the importance of music in your work, especially in the second poem published in this issue, “Passerines”?

**McCadden:** I’ve always been interested in how language makes music—the way words make the mouth move, how they taste, the quality of noise each one makes, how changing out one sound for another can act like gears in a poem, shifting everything. I read once that Yeats organized the vowel sounds in the last line of “Lake Isle of Innisfree” so that they were made, sequentially, from the front to the back of the mouth, so that by

“core,” the throat is open. Patterning like this happens throughout language, and I think we hardly notice it, but we are moved by it when we hear it, when it is just so. The sentence, too, is an instrument for music—phrases in tension, pacing controlled by punctuation and groupings, the order of words—as if it is really all a song.

I envy musicians and wish I could answer this question by saying music is just in me, but it's not. If I come to music at all in poetry, it's through a hunger to make music—in the absence of the ability to sit with a guitar in my lap at a campfire, or even to sing a song all the way through. I want it, so I look for it. I make a sound, and then I make it again, move away from it and then back to it. I revise purposefully and constantly and playfully, as often for sound as for meaning. I lean, too, on the weight of a lifetime of reading poetry. I think back, even, to weekly mass growing up: its wildly varied poetry, its varying metrical cadences, the call and response, the repetition. I still call on these tools in my poems. I think, too, about the language of my immigrant grandparents and the way they prized stories and sayings and invented language.

In writing a poem, I often begin to find music through repetition and through a pattern I enjoy unfolding. You asked about “Passerines.” I think music began in this poem through syntactical patterning. Though some sentences are grammatical fragments, they are mostly hypotactic throughout, beginning with the subject and verb, which works to lend a pattern to the poem. The speaker is working something out, weighing, sorting, making sense—discovering, which is what the sentences do, too, as they unfold. The sentences are also parsing widely varied materials: a bird hitting a window, a trip to France, a chat with a scientist about evolution, a man teaching the speaker to hand-feed birds, and, ultimately, a daughter leaving home, and keeping the sentences in an approximation of such a “structure” helps the leaps cohere. The syntax in this poem helps build the poem's music perhaps as a bass line would. Beyond that, I'm attracted to sound play—introducing a certain sound, and then continuing to bring it around, like keeping a note alive in a song—as with “we are kneeling on the wet decking” and “prying back the vinyl siding / to find.” Overall, “Passerines” makes bold

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play with *w* and *o* sounds and other sounds that open the throat. If a poem is about sadness, the sounds should do some wailing, should make the body do some wailing. I like to think poems are songs we play on the body.

**BPJ:** What's next? As we correspond, you're traveling abroad. What plans do you have for poetry and other pursuits during this trip?

**McCadden:** As I write, I'm in Ireland, here to visit family. When I come here, they say I am "home on holiday," which is ineffably beautiful to me. I'm staying with my cousin at the farm my grandfather left to come to America. It's at the end of a very long lane outside of Laghey, Donegal, not far at all from the border with Northern Ireland—about two hundred acres, a hundred sheep, two border collies, and one man who farms and then runs a taxi company in Donegal Town at night. My grandmother's homeplace is just over the hill, and the valley is full of cousins. My family tree feels latitudinal, not longitudinal, if that makes sense. It doesn't go back in time; it stretches out across this place.

I have recently begun writing poems half rooted here. They pepper the manuscript I'm working on and are central to its concerns. If I can say anything definitive yet about my second book, it's that it's telescopic. *Landscape with Plywood Silhouettes* investigates a somewhat microscopic set of concerns: how to move through wreckage and loss to find peace. This next collection, currently titled *Street View*, looks backward and takes a longer view. The poems center on constructions of home, locations of home, the building and wrecking of homes, safety and threats in homes. The title poem is a love poem to the little orange Google Maps man and comes out in *The American Poetry Review* this winter. Being here in Ireland puts, for instance, my family's ghosts in front of me. It feels like a focusing mechanism to be here, where I'm always asking myself, "How was that home? What is home?" and, "Where is home?"