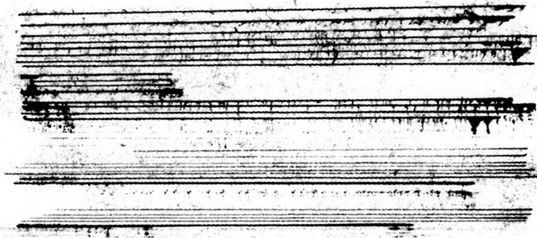
REVIEWS

Caroline Bergvall, *Drift*. Callicoon, NY: Nightboat Books, 2014. 190pp. $19.95

Caroline Bergvall's *Drift*, like many works of documentary poetry, from Muriel Rukeyser's "The Book of the Dead" to M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!*, tests the elasticity of its own methods and materials in order to intensify the ethical pressures of the story it tells. *Drift* recounts a 2011 tragedy in which a small plastic boat carrying Libyan migrants ran out of fuel in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea. Though the migrants sent repeated distress signals to passing fishermen, cruise ships, and NATO warplanes, they received no aid. The vessel drifted for fifteen days' time, during which sixty-two of the seventy-two passengers died of hunger or thirst.

Drift does not treat what others have called the "'left to die boat' case" neatly as a "case," because doing so minimizes the extent to which crimes of inaction implicate the broader functioning of modern society. Rather, the text inhabits multiple points of subjectivity, each of which is narrowly focused: survivor accounts, NATO statements, and sonar tracking technology (in "Report," a documentary account of the vessel's drift); personal reaction (in Bergvall's own creative "Log"); historical investigation (in "Hafville," modeled on the tenth-century Anglo-Saxon poem "The Seafarer"); and drawing (in the series of ruling lines that open the book, only to end abruptly). Though these sites of subjectivity are intensely diverse, each one takes up a myopic focus through which the text emphasizes personal difference rather than social commonality. Modernity's drive towards individualism engenders a focus on self-perfection, which, when taken to the extreme, becomes self-obsession. In its polyvalent and jumpy explorations of subjecthood, *Drift* investigates the way that radical individualism leads to social apathy and to crimes of inaction.

The first sixteen pages of *Drift* comprise a wordless visual poem that presents an abstract rule or stave on which an actual text might be written. Entitled "Lines," this series of line drawings is a mimesis of poetry: it imitates poetic form, but, devoid of language, it refuses poetic content. Here, for example, is the ninth drawing in the series:



Each drawing seems to be the product of a tautly perfectionistic impulse pushed too far, especially when the lines veer off, marring their arranged order. They prefigure a later entry about the technological advances of medieval writing and illustration. In "Log," Bergvall tells us she has

> become fascinated by the medieval ruling lines with which scribes would prepare the parchment for writing and for illustration, and the various tools they developed for greater regularity and to speed up the tedious preparations. Line follows line follows lines. Horizontals, verticals.

The ruling lines appear in *Drift* as an interrogation of efficiency. In using them here, Bergvall reappropriates a technology that was developed for maximizing efficiency, "for greater regularity and to speed up the tedious preparations," and perverts it to the point of self-obliteration. Jagged, seepy, and polydirectional, the drawn lines are awful ruling marks. In their stubborn rejection of utility, in their brutal mimicry of language, and in their insistence on proliferation, they become a signpost for hyper-individualism, which is both constrained in its narrow focus on the self and expansive in its draw to artistic creation.

Two subject positions mark the poles of *Drift*'s experiments with focus and fluidity. True to its navigational roots, Bergvall's "Seafarer" relentlessly seeks the structure of directional logic. Though it carries the connective fibers of forward-motion, its locomotive thrust is pockmarked by its wildly specific content, meaning that it eviscerates its own causal order:

> Sailed on to red tides of nonpoint source to the sea of mercury island-hopping To the abyssal plains To isles of dumping To knolls of wild plastic To rigs of leaking To the flaming scrap swamps circled round pillars of solid scitta upsetting camp on a heap thinking it be homelike Shoring up alongside floats of glued birdwings

Noun-hopping struggles against linear connectivity in this passage's reiterative "To." In these fibrous patterns of language, repetitions of "To" and "Thats why he" insist on causality, yet in their repeated and garbled iterations they suggest a repressive mode—that it is chaos and a lack of causality that require the implementation of mantras of causation. In single-mindedly clambering for literal directionality, for northness, Bergvall's seafarer loses the ability to speak with fluidity, his tongue searching through New and Old English to catch on glottally to the keyword itself: "Sailed on due north nord norþ norð norit norþe norh northt." In becoming hyper-focused on achieving northness, the seafarer is unable to move beyond the word's direct articulation, an analogy for his being unable to move outside of himself.

"The Seafarer" is also the template for "Hafville," in which the loose positioning of subjects—of "they," "we," and "I"—grafts together a huge, cytoplasmically continuous subject. Here, by eschewing logic in favor of horizontal association, Bergvall is able to inhabit two mutually exclusive planes, acting simultaneously as a "they" and a "we." In performance, Bergvall's fluid adoption of subject is even more pronounced. Performances of *Drift* are sensually immersive, incorporating Bergvall's voice, visual artist Thomas Köppel's 3-D renderings of text, and percussionist Ingar Zach's sonar-esque musical accompaniment. Largely sung, Bergvall's open figurations of *Drift* enable her to take part in performances as a medium rather than a creator. Her gentle sensitivity combined with her willingness to be completely vulnerable transform her into a pliable substance through which the voices of the dead, NATO reports, and sonar tracings may pass, such that Bergvall's séance-like performances become palpably of the sea in a way that her text alone is not. In performing "Hafville," Bergvall tightly and anxiously loops the two and a half pages of continuous "t"s and the subsequent line "t go off course," missing a breath between lines and straining for oxygen with the propulsion of the verbal loop. In performance, the blocky "ttttttttttttttt ttttttttttttttt…"'s of the page are digitally reformed into an undulating mass that appears behind Bergvall, thickly grouped and swaying as if underwater. Through this visual rendering, the chain of "t"s that were on the page aggressive, cold, and procedural become tender, organic, and kelp-like. The poems of *Drift* have their most complete realization in this intersection of page and performance: embodied and visualized in human pulp, the written work's struggle between fluidity and focus, between dispersed and singular subjectivity, becomes palpable.

Elsewhere in *Drift*, "they"/"we" can also turn into a "you" that represents a tunnel-visioned "I." The jumpy subject inverts its relation to the outside world so that the objects it faces orient themselves to it, rather than the other way around:

> This is totally flipping • you look down • its a fine day • caught in quiet susp • theres a small root or a stone sticking up from the tarmac • just under your foot • keeping you perfectly susp • ended • a very small root or a stone is upsticking from the strata top layer tarmac • you bend down to pull at it • it isnt a root at all nor is it a stone • looks more like a bone or a tooth • could be a large wooden oar with carvings from an old sunken ship • looks very much like a tooth • clean it up with your sleeve • def no þing like any tooth youve ever seen • not like the tooth you had removed the other day • its more like a • or some þing •
>
> You put the tooth in your mouth • doesnt fit at all now thats a relief • feels like a large sail in your mouth • its big it pulls at your jaw •

In this jarring turn to the second person—the first of the text—Bergvall explores the restrictive logic of self-absorption. What kind of logic governs that if you see a tooth on the ground you worry that it is your tooth, and you aim to fit it in to your own mouth? Even after realizing that it is not a tooth after all? Here the reflexively gummy language and narrow orbit of possibility make the problem of the lost tooth the problem of self-involvement.

The same kind of logic that leads one to see a tooth in the tarmac and think, "Mine!" is also the logic that makes intervening in harrowing situations so prohibitive. For the fishermen, helping the migrant vessel could have meant being accused of smuggling; for the cruise ship, it could have meant jeopardizing the safety of its passengers; for NATO, it could have meant diverting energy and resources during a time of great political upheaval throughout the Mediterranean. Yet *Drift* itself doesn't provide this information. Though "Report" is informative, it leaves out some of the most telling aspects of the vessel's drift. It doesn't tell one, for instance, that the vessel almost entirely skirted the prescribed zones of responsibility as dictated by the national naval boundaries of Malta and Italy. Going directly to *Forensic Architecture*, Bergvall's key source for "Report," one learns that the vessel entered into the Maltese search and rescue zone for just two hours, aside from which it drifted in NATO maritime surveillance area, where nationalities have no legal responsibility to provide aid. *Drift*'s omission of this geopolitical context speaks to the work's stubborn partiality, to its emphasis on vortices of self-obsession.

For all its investigations, Drift is insular; it avoids complete engagement with its subject matter in order to emphasize the totality of modernity's narrow focus on individual gain. Ethical obligation remains evasive throughout, even when directly addressed in "Log" or when the consequences of its neglect are brutally relayed in "Report." It is one of *Drift*'s many drifts.

Gwendolen Muren

§

José Antonio Mazzotti, *Sakra Boccata*. Brooklyn, NY: Ugly Duckling Presse, 2013. 70pp. $14

Sakra Boccata. Simultaneously "sacred mouthful," "devil's foul breath," and a euphemism for cunnilingus, the title of José Antonio Mazzotti's book resists easy and direct translation. *Sakra* in Italian (*sacra*) means sacred, but in Quechua (*saqra*) it signifies a "mischievous demon," obscenity, or mere ugliness. *Boccata* in Italian "refers to strongly exhaled or foul breath," but in Spanish the equivalent would be *bocanada*, a word that can be divided into "boca" (mouth) and "nada" (nothing), thus connoting an impotent silence that the title, in its pregnant untranslatability, seems to both qualify and refute. But *Sakra Boccata*, foremostly, describes a plural-tongued invocation, a prismatic orison to the "amber goddess" that signifies nothing obtusely specific, and yet, in its aural repletion, sets into motion an ecstatic androgynous lyric that celebrates the "primordiac flesh" of She, "Mother of all mortals," who "appear[s] even on Chicago walls" in a splendid shattered moonlight that effaces crude solar distinctions and the worn semantics of the everyday. Mazzotti achieves an alchemy of the word that does not gesture at shamanic transformation but enacts it in the aural fabric of these polytongued poems.

The title's blend of Italian, Spanish and Quechua represents Mazzotti's own heritage as a Peruvian poet with Milanese roots who writes in Spanish but is grounded in the high-ridged richness of Quechua culture. The aural complexity of the title indicates the amount of layering—erotic, linguistic, and alchemical—present in the polyform language and construction of *Sakra*'s twenty-eight poems. Twenty-eight is the number of days it takes the moon to orbit the Earth, and as such the poem sequence might be conceived as a lunar cycle that traces the moon's shifting erosion and rebirth. The "She" who features in the poems (the She who is invoked by *Sakra Boccata*) goes unnamed; She is instead a principle, an aspect, a depth, a surface that changes face (or body) with each poem. Perhaps it is blasphemous to give her a name other than what She arouses or evokes, stimulates or engenders, disguises and reveals. An organic, alliterative *eros* provides a regular impetus for image-coherence and prognostication:

Mussel every night when the bonfires howl and birds do not fly overhead
Mussel because this mounting is sweeter than a cardinal's melody
At the hour of the Holy of
Holies the delights of the fingertips
Are dissolved in the mouth
The music crawls
With the strength of caparisons
Mussel clean and oblong secretly opening
Its aroma of sandalwood its sweetness
Of lemonade

Clayton Eshleman's translation of poem 6, sterling as it is, cannot quite capture the dense aurality at work in Mazzotti's original. "Mussel" is the direct translation of "choro" (at least in Chile and Peru, when it doesn't also mean, in the vulgar, "vagina"), but Mazzotti's use of "choro" also derives from an epigraph by Brazilian poet Manuel Bandeira that heads the poem: "*Eu canto assim como que eu choro*" (translated as "I sing exactly like I cry"). Here the Portuguese word for crying (*chorar*) stands in for the equivalent Spanish word (*llorar*), the two words blended sonically across the languages by the variation in Spanish pronunciation in certain regions of South America. *Lloro* becomes *choro* becomes *mussel*. "*Choro porque este chanto es más dulce*…" is translated as "Mussel because this mounting is sweeter…," a rendition that inevitably loses some of the original's aural interplay. "Chanto" evokes the Spanish-Portuguese "canto" ("I *sing* because this *song* is sweeter…") but also directly translates, colloquially, to *fucking*: "chanto," from the verb "chantar," is Peruvian slang for "intercourse." Eshleman makes note of this pun and chooses "mounting" as the closest approximation in English: one "mounts" during intercourse, but one could also "mount" a song, a composition, *un chanto/llanto/canto*.

Mussel, for all its marine inadequacy, manages to signal the erotic hypostasis of Mazzotti's *Sakra* poems: one sucks at the texture of the poems, one savors the saline residue in the emptied shell. When the mussel throbs, it morphs, it becomes muscle, it flees the condemnatory sunlight:

Ah throb silver molluscle follow your road
[…]
Golden molluscle
Crawl through the brooks
Escape at dawn

Mazzotti's neologism, "molluscle" (*molúsculo* in Spanish), combines mollusk with muscle, animating the dark-drawn invertebrate with sexual life, rendering it capable of kinetic sentience. Why the mollusk? Throughout Western culture,

this creature stands for sexual prodigiousness. In the motifs of classical art, such as the figure of Venus Anadyomene, the sea shell symbolizes the female vulva, an erotic theme that Mazzotti recasts from Botticelli's famous image of Venus rising from the sea. In Linnaean taxonomy, moreover, some mollusks, like the clam, the oyster, and the mussel, are bivalves: invertebrate organisms housed by the shell, two hinged valves that open and close. Such bivalvia have the capacity to change sex, to switch gender as a way of accommodating the partner. In Mazzotti's language, the bivalve's ability to change sex, to survive in an ontological motility symbolically enclosed by two valves (the *anima* as well as the *animus* in a single body), draws comparison to "the secret of two," the Venusian science of lovemaking in which androgynous coexistence (two bodies merging and indistinguishable) is at its highest pitch:

> The secret of two is a miracle
> Of the free, those heavenly bodies who pass each other on the highways
> and for barely an instant
> Look at each other as lastingly as comets.

The freedom spoken of here is what Raúl Zurita, in the prologue to the book, describes as the "desire to devour and to be devoured by the other in an extreme realization of a merger with the beloved." The secret of two is equally *chanto* and *canto*, sex and song, and each is a form of crying, a transmission of fluids, a bleeding into each other, a merger of words and bodies. Freedom to change sex in the act of love resembles the freedom of comets on a Baudelairean stroll: freedom to gaze lastingly at passersby, to desire them, to be desired by them, and to be changed by this desire.

Within such cosmic freedom astrological compulsion abounds, a paradox that Mazzotti maintains by troping the macaronic unruliness of his own language with images not just of sexual profusion but also of alchemical transmutation: the crossing of stars for the unfortunate, or for the fortunate, the revival of the moon, radiant on the surface of a lustful ocean "awaiting the longed for moment," as Mazzotti has it,

> When the Sun goes out in an interregnum with the Moon
> In broad daylight and seaweed and caparisons sing
> And the flesh of the ocean rests from its knives
> It's the hour in which fish swallow their own anxiety
> Throbbing in Chaos
> Moon of Scorpio on the lance point
> The slope of the wave rises
> Raises up its foaming hand intending to touch them

The sun/moon dyad conventionally mimics the male/female dyad, but Mazzotti, like the bivalve and "molluscle," continuously absconds from daylight and solarity, favoring the dark fold of the ocean, the pagan shadowplay of moonlight in which forms shapeshift and bodies switch genders. The androgyne, the alchemical achievement of a perfect union of the two sexes, makes an appearance in this setting:

> Spirits formerly of the divine body
> Live joined and jumbled obverse and reverse
> A perfect androgyne self-sufficient
> Double joy double bristling
> The past and the future concentrated and the present
> Open like an infinite arc
> [...]
> There's a lunar eclipse on the back of Scorpio
> The astrologers point out the harmony of the cycle
> Look within yourself look deep
> You'll find the leather bag in which the male's face
> And the female's nape float up front
> Or inside out they touch each other stretching forth their hands

The co-presencing of *anima/animus* recalls another Botticelli work, *Mars and Venus*, in which Love, awake and conquering, and War, asleep and conquered, cohabit an intimate space of conjugal relations. While Venus gazes at a sleeping Mars, their legs entwined in the aftermath of what might have been a vigorous session of *chanto*, a mischievous satyr (we might call him, in the Quechua tongue, a *saqra*) blows a conch at the ear of a probably dreaming and susceptible god of war. Strikingly, the conch, representing Venus, seems to be placed at the tip of Mars's lance ("Moon of Scorpio on the lance point"). While this symbolism clearly mimics the act of heterosexual love, the positioning of the conch on the lance figures, more intriguingly, the basic principle of the androgyne: Venus already lies within Mars, and Aries equally rests in Aphrodite. Mazzotti, for his part, makes sure we understand what sort of conch he writes to: "Your Konch is that throbbing spongy muscle / That never stops throbbing." The mussel, the molluscle, the Konch, are her qualities and caparisons. And Mazzotti lies at "the center of the earth between two legs / Suddenly happy / Like a sea animal / Slimy with ink." Mazzotti's stylus, like Mars's lance, rests inside the bivalve and, slimy with the ink of fluidic signatures, is stimulated into an ecstatic outburst of hybridic growths and transmutations.

This double-folded immersion in the conch is a return to *omphalos*, to the concentric life of the acephalic mollusk, which recovers the innocence of the child-like androgyne by returning to the womb at the originary state

in which chromosomes have not yet been sorted out. The nameless She, the "Sakra Wound," holds in her nothingness a plurality of names, an aural splendor that multiplies rather than recedes:

> Because you hold the Name of many
> And the beauty of all
> The solitude of boats at night
> The strength of nacre upon swallowing its pearl
> At the bottom of that funnel it rolls unto its origin
> Searching for the Conca
> Vity of its childhood

The split of concavity into "Conca" (evoking, in Spanish, *concha*) and "Vity" (in Spanish, "Vidad," which suggests *vida*, or life) repeats the dyadic split, only this time in terms of sameness rather than difference; the *conch* is already *life*, the spectral womb of the goddess. If there is a goddess invoked by *Sakra Boccata*, She is Killa, the Quechua word for "moon," which Mazzotti alchemizes into *LoKilla*, the Spanish diminutive of loca, and which Eshleman in turn translates as "LittleKrazyOne" ("Oh LittleKrazyOne Queen my Queen"). In cultivating a rich aural fabric that incorporates Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Quechua (and, via Eshleman, English, too), Mazzotti constructs a poetry of the moon, for the moon, and by the moon, an authentically *lunatic* lyric that swarms language and explodes its categorical binaries into androgynous depths.

Jose-Luis Moctezuma

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Harold Jaffe, *Induced Coma: 50 and 100 Word Stories*. Fort Wayne, IN: Anti-Oedipus Press, 2014. 170pp. $13.95

While Harold Jaffe's writing has been dubbed "literary terrorism" by numerous critics (and even his own publishers), one would find it difficult to categorize *Induced Coma: 50 and 100 Word Stories*, his most recent volume of docufiction, as terroristic. Rather, Jaffe's meticulous deconstructions of mainstream "news" articles and various other online and print sources demonstrate the consciousness of an artist who is struggling with, as he calls it, "writing in a dying world." The terror is therefore not of Jaffe's conscious doing, but the result of his ability to remove the blinders set forth by a rapidly deteriorating culture, one that does not want to acknowledge the extent to which it has succumbed to various millennial diseases: virtual solipsism, televised suicide, crimes against the environment, repressed sexuality, and an increasing disconnect between cultures, within families, and ultimately, from oneself.

In the prose style and formal structure of *Induced Coma*, Jaffe extends his characteristic use of economy and constraint as an immanent critique of what he considers the dangerous brevity now endemic to today's vehicles of vernacular communication. Much like its critically acclaimed predecessor *Anti-Twitter: 50 150-Word Stories*, *Induced Coma* comprises 50- and 100-word dispatches that entertain the reader with their stripped-down satire, all the while revealing the violence belying humanity—a violence so endemic to the human condition that the hope for remission and recovery seems futile. The reader faces an internal conflict, unsure whether engaging in or enjoying the texts entails complicity in that violence. However, it becomes clear by the end of the collection that Jaffe is not so much trying to foment despair in his readers as he is trying to encourage collective awareness and alternative perspectives. Take, for example, the opening text, "Induced Coma," where the medical practice intended to help patients cope during recovery from trauma is instead portrayed as a "sweet space" separate from the violence and technology of the modern world. In other words, a state to be desired, not feared. To understand the alternative perspective, no explication is needed beyond Jaffe's description of the scenario. The spareness of his prose is that straightforward, that unadorned. Trusting that his readers are intelligent enough to construct their own meanings, Jaffe allows the constraint to do the work for him. His technique demonstrates the extent to which the ironic understatements, tacit analogies, and subtle implications of blank parody can produce social satire.

The brand of irony in "Induced Coma" is a signature of Jaffe's docufictions, where existing texts are appropriated, reframed, and "treated" to generate a defamiliarizing effect for readers. Jaffe's signature irony is meant to do nothing less than expose the oxymoronic creeds of Western culture, a culture that Jaffe claims is "devolving." But readers of *Induced Coma* and Jaffe's other treated texts can see that little fabrication is required on his part to achieve that end. For instance, in "A Bangladeshi," Jaffe simply juxtaposes stories of the American "ice-bucket challenge" fad and the reality of water scarcity in South Asia to mount an exposé of overconsumption and waste in Western culure: "An estimated 25 million Bangladeshis have been exposed to arsenic through water making it the worst mass poisoning in history…Bangladeshis knowingly poison themselves because there are no alternative water sources." Jaffe does not need to drive the point home any further, for a self-incriminating culture requires no overt opprobrium or condemnation. And this is the true mastery behind *Induced Coma*. Each "treated" text—the result of carefully paring down the original prose and defamiliarizing it via name, place, and date changes (among other things)—is painfully (or humorously) self-aware and overt. Readers cannot mistake the cultural and political implications of Jaffe's treatments, as there are no idioms or symbols to obscure the artifacts'

identities. The original texts Jaffe treats retain a vague presence in his writings, but they reveal themselves through layers of palimpsest, out of which urgent warnings emerge about the need for compassion, the future of humanity, and (to borrow from Vonnegut) the prospect of "a planet which [is] dying fast."

Even though the texts are treated in such a way that they embody formidable power individually, the overall organization of the prose helps give depth and multidimensionality to the book's overarching lines of critique. Most of the pieces in *Induced Coma* are organized thematically, which helps carry one impression over into another, all the while inverting, reverting, and disorienting the reader's expectations about the given topic. For instance, "Niquab" begins a thematic series on women and describes the challenges of Egyptian female students who wish to attend exams despite a ban on the veil. When juxtaposed with the next text, "Millions of Women," an overview of how American divorcees are at risk of becoming "bag ladies" because of financial instability, "Niquab" becomes more than a snapshot of female repression abroad. It becomes a paragon of true subjugation against which the succeeding texts are measured. While neither "Niquab" nor "Millions of Women" overtly denounces Western culture, the series proceeds in that direction. Jaffe follows up with a text that details the "thigh gap mania spreading across social media" ("Thigh Gap"), and then gives readers a farcical European study entitled "Housework," which posits that "housework alone significantly reduces the risk of both pre- and post-menopausal women getting [breast cancer]." Together these texts provide an ample counterpoint to the struggles of the Egyptian student, revealing through contrast the extent to which hegemonic culture has become enslaved to its superficiality. Hegemony as farce may be the key theme of *Induced Coma*, but Jaffe's skillful treatment of his source texts ensures that the political overtones of this theme emerge gradually, obliquely, and with great subtlety over the course of the book.

Induced Coma does not exclusively critique sociopolitical themes. Jaffe also operates in metafictive, fabulist, and allegorical modes. Making a reappearance from *Anti-Twitter*, several pieces entitled "Things to Do" give the reader access to the various personas of the "writer" behind the writing. "Rockstar '69," "Stella," "Mephisto," "The Almost-Planet Pluto," and "Dialogues with Death," meanwhile, are fine formal and thematic departures that transport the reader towards an otherworldly, Borgesian-inhabited space. In fact, because of his ability to be simultaneously transparent and dreamlike or mystifying, one cannot escape the inclination to place Jaffe alongside Borges—or, in his more "terroristic" criticisms, Foucault. Ultimately, Jaffe's newest collection upholds his reputation as a master of literary activism, not terrorism: he does not disappoint readers seeking the ideological truths belying a diseased surface culture.

Tara Stillions Whitehead

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Edward Dorn and Leroy Lucas, *The Shoshoneans: The People of the Basin-Plateau*. Expanded second edition. Edited by Matthew Hofer. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2013. 165pp. $34.95

The Shoshoneans first appeared in 1966 as a firsthand report on the condition of the remaining Native American tribes of the Great Basin plateau, who were all designated by their shared language, *Shoshone*—a Numic branch of the Uto-Aztecan linguistic family. Comprised of a long essay by Edward Dorn and a series of photographs by Leroy Lucas, *The Shoshoneans* emerged as the result of a road trip in which both authors traveled from Idaho to Nevada and back in the summer of 1965. Despite these initial circumstances Dorn's essay does not exclusively fall under the category of travelogue but rather exhibits an eclectic and idiosyncratic mixture of different literary and discursive genres. Ranging from historical expositions and ethnographic inspections to impressionistic reports and lyrical descriptions, Dorn's prose appears to reflect the complexities of the sociopolitical panorama that he envisaged. As Simon J. Ortiz affirms in his foreword to this new expanded edition by the University of New Mexico Press, Dorn sought to unite his voice with the general outcries of discontent that pervaded the United States, of which the Vietnam War was just one among many causes. In Dorn's evaluation, the prevailing state of global affairs affected the sense of locality: "You don't have to talk about Vietnam. You don't have to talk about South America. You can talk about Nevada. That's much closer to home. That's right here."

In this regard *The Shoshoneans* "is not necessarily a pro-Indian text," as Ortiz comments, but could be considered instead a study and legitimization of dissenting Native American communities within the broader frame of the radical 60s. In fact, a defining tension permeates the entire essay in the tangible opposition between the notions of community and nation—which also became the most notable source for what Dorn would retrospectively term his "fashionable concern for the social and cultural appurtenances of Native American life." According to Dorn, Native Americans were indifferent to possessing a United States citizenship, and they held no interest even in the sense of belonging to a country. This position made them part of the Fourth World, Dorn's category for tribal societies dispossessed by and excluded from prevailing Cold War classifications of nation-states. To assert his own sympathetic sense of membership to the Fourth World, Dorn not only disowned his citizenship (at least discursively) but also equated his own condition as a poet with that of the Native American: "I have to be there with the Indians. I don't have a country any more than they do. I'm like part of the Fourth World too. I, of necessity I have to be part of the Fourth World to retain any possible honor for myself." Perhaps the most prominent conclusion *The Shoshoneans* allows the reader to draw is the incommensurability of Dorn's own aspirational nationality: his

voyage to the Fourth World would deny him any sense of honor by exhibiting the transgressive nature of his presence there and the consequent negation of any sense of belonging.

When first published, *The Shoshoneans* offered concise and relevant insights into Dorn's poetic ambitions. Nonetheless, these insights have had to wait for the retrospective and analytic framing of the current republication in order to come fully to view. In this expanded edition, editor Matthew Hofer includes several appendices to further contextualize and specify the interests and concerns that Dorn held throughout the period, along with the implications and consequences of his journey into the Great Basin. As part of the generation of poets that emerged after World War II in the United States, Edward Dorn was immersed, as was his mentor Charles Olson, in the search for an essential and primal ground for his poetry; for Dorn this quest took the paradoxical form of wandering. Introducing the book's ample and illuminating cache of supplementary historical and archival materials, Hofer writes that "Ed Dorn's serious engagement with Native Americans and the western United States became a quest to discover something about place, time, and American identity that entailed, at first, a need to get lost." The echoes of his findings among the Native American tribes of the Great Basin can be heard in his subsequent poetry, such as his most renowned work, the *Gunslinger* epic, or his collection from 1974, *Recollections of Gran Apachería*. In *Recollections*, for instance, "The Whole European Distinction" stresses the resistance of Native American tribes to white invaders since the seventeenth century as an event that "can only be attributed to / the superiority of Native / over Alien Thinking."

The Shoshoneans opens with an event in Duck Valley that Dorn acknowledges as the climax of the entire trip. At this particular moment he and Lucas meet Willie Dorsey, a 102-year old Shoshoni who Dorn suspects of being "probably the oldest living being in Idaho or Nevada." The encounter is so central to Dorn's trip because it illustrates the deeper relationship that he develops with the individuals he attempts to approach. Dorn is sincerely stricken by the drastic conditions of impoverishment in which Willie Dorsey and his wife live—conditions recorded in all their severity and devastation in Lucas's stark black-and-white photographs. But as he contemplates the couple, Dorn finds himself supplementing this sympathetic reaction by indulging in the paroxysm of his awe:

> Thus wrapped in the service of their ritual antiquity, they formed an effective edge of the real, an area of existence both life and death, neither morbid nor quite quick. A substantial prayer of flesh, plasma, spirit, all one fluid. And so, if this all sounds religion, I hope it does in no orthodox sense, more *religare*—to tie back: the nearly absolute briefness of ceremony, its power an intense spark, renewable as each time it constitutes the entirety of creation, the *Every Thing*.

The alternation between metaphysical and mundane remarks is a basic iterative feature of *The Shoshoneans*. It exemplifies Dorn's almost excessive awareness of his position at the moment he encounters the Native Americans—an awareness that constantly evokes in him a feeling of intrusiveness. Perhaps sensing an incompatibility between his political allegiances and the ethnographic purpose of his journey—a feeling intensified by the anthropological overtone that the photographic material brings—Dorn is always mindful of the historical implications of his presence as an outsider. Reflecting on his encounter with Willie Dorsey, Dorn writes, "I was struck right off and singularly by his beauty, the sense of power of his presence I later remembered I felt immediately, but I also saw myself as a curious paleface."

No doubt with a touch of ironic helplessness, Dorn emphasizes in these encounters a dichotomy between his sense of powerlessness before a tribal culture awe-inspiring in its otherness and his very real (if tacit) power as a white poet-ethnographer. These gestures are crucial to Dorn's account: they make his activities resonate with what he regards as the imperial relationship between the US and Native peoples, which is defined by the violent imposition of the nation over the community. When outlining the expanse of the Great Basin region, Dorn tellingly underlines the established relations of power by instructing the reader in the spatial appropriations inherent to cartography:

> Lay your right hand palm down, fingers spread, on a map of the West scaled approximately one inch to fifty miles, your little finger under Salt Lake City directly under the wall of the Wasatch, the end of your thumb on Reno by Lake Tahoe in the Sierra Nevadas, the tip of your great finger just under the mountains of Idaho, your index finger touching the southeast corner of Oregon, the heel of your hand above Las Vegas, and you have covered the Basin-Plateau area.

Dorn frames the notion of an object of study by symbolically placing its entire domain under the grasp of his hand, correlating this action with the inevitable enactment of control proper to the nation-state. "They don't think of this as a country. After all that's our word: America." During a talk given at Berkeley following the trip, and published in this expanded edition, Dorn would contend: "You say, 'Well, you're American too. You're the first Americans.' Nix. They're not the first Americans. They never were Americans. That's your word. You applied the word 'American' to them."

In *The Shoshoneans*, the antagonism between indigenous tribes and the imperial nation-state is encapsulated in the historical proliferation and censorship of Native American rituals and dances. For Dorn, the 1890 massacre at Wounded Knee registered both an atrocious instance of "national lust" and "another installment in the spiritual death of America." The spiritual

consequence of the massacre was the permanent erasure of the Ghost Dance, "a preparatory celebration for the coming of the Messiah." Ultimately, a deep reverence for the spiritual practices of other people underlies Dorn's anti-imperial stance: he promotes and cultivates devotion to a religious diversity that, despite its continual decay, he still regards as quintessential to America.

The Shoshoneans is where Dorn fully articulated his personal opposition to a particular national project of standardization, a position he had already worked out in his correspondence with LeRoi Jones/Amiri Baraka. Dorn rejected the idea "that any people are told to destroy, or get rid of, what is most essentially themselves before admittance into the homogeny. Since there is no spiritual life worth entering," he argued, once America has destructively consolidated its national empire, "they are asked, as initiation, to subscribe to the cheap and dishonorable mentalism of the 'American Dream.'" *The Shoshoneans*, then, should be read as an essay on America coming from two distinct perspectives. It is a document that both captures a particular moment in the developing concerns of a poet who was deeply committed to the notion of a heterogeneous America and reflects, in turn, his role in a project that defined the 60s as a whole: radically reimagining the nation's democratic ideals by exposing their underlying corruption.

Gerónimo Sarmiento Cruz

§

Lew Welch, *Ring of Bone: Collected Poems*. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2012. 262pp. $17.95

Lew Welch's *Ring of Bone* was first published by Donald Allen's Grey Fox Press in 1973, two years after Welch disappeared from Gary Snyder's Nevada County cabin. Welch himself prepared the manuscript, arranging in roughly chronological order all the poems written between 1950 and 1971 he saw fit to publish. Supplemented by the uncollected poems Allen gathered after Welch's disappearance (presumed to be a suicide) and included alongside the poet's own selection, *Ring of Bone* is, as the subtitle to the new City Lights edition indicates, Welch's *Collected Poems*. In his preface, Welch calls it "a spiritual autobiography," and the book "tells a story": the poet leaves soul-killing Chicago, where he worked for several years writing ad copy for Montgomery Ward, heads "On Out" west to his native California, retreats into the mountains of his "Hermit Poems," and then finds "The Way Back" to friends and lovers in San Francisco. In this personal mythology, inflected by the Buddhist practice Welch shared with college friends Snyder and Philip Whalen, the poles are "The Mountain" and "The City," self and "the din," solitude and sociality.

The book records the poet's oscillation between these poles, a pilgrimage without clear progress, a ring-shaped quest. As Welch writes in "He Greets, Again, the Open Road": "Shrineless, I // pilgrim // through the world." By both design and circumstance, *Ring of Bone* is coeval with the poet's life: it's organized according to the phases of his personal narrative, and his actual life ended not long after the manuscript was complete. This autobiographical ethic, definitive of Welch's work and shared with contemporaries such as Allen Ginsberg and Joanne Kyger, was central to the Beat sensibility. In Welch's equation of life and art, we can see plainly the Beats' avant-gardism, their transformation of artistic practice into a living countercultural force.

Reading *Ring of Bone* from front to back is a curious experience. While the cumulative effect of the book is a powerful one, many individual poems seem insubstantial or deliberately off-handed. The text almost always feels subordinate to something else, something toward which it only gestures, and indeed, Welch viewed the printed poem as a secondary artifact. "This is a book of scores, for the voice," he writes in his preface. "The scores will become poems only while they are sounded, performed, sung." However precisely scripted they are, the texts themselves are not the poet's end. Of all the New American poets wedded to a speech-based poetics, Welch was perhaps the most total in his commitment and had perhaps the finest ear for the "American idiom." But his texts are secondary not only to vocal performance but also to the person of Lew Welch himself, to his lifestyle or vocation. While he was no confessional poet, *Ring of Bone* reads as the notation of a life lived in poetry—not a life lived to produce poems, but a life lived *as* poetry, of which the texts are mere remains. Consider one of his most memorable poems, included among "Hermit Poems":

> Whenever I make a new poem,
> the old ones sound like gibberish.
> How can they ever make sense in a book?
>
> Let them say:
> "He seems to have lived in the mountains.
> He traveled now and then.
> When he appeared in cities,
> he was almost always drunk.
>
> "Most of his poems are lost.
> Many of those we have were found in
> letters to his friends.
>
> "He had a very large number of friends."

Here are the essential qualities of Lew Welch's poetry: irreverent yet tender sincerity, unobtrusively meticulous phrasing, a plainness of address learned from Chinese and Japanese poetry in translation and from William Carlos Williams. The poem's central gesture is to diminish the textual object and defer whatever authority we might have thought resided in the poet. Welch's diction emphasizes his craft: he "makes" his poems. Yet rather than advance his mastery, each instance of craftwork only dismantles his oeuvre, turning old works into "gibberish." Emphasis falls on the present, the event of each poem's making, not on the preservation of poems in a collection; we can see why, in gathering his poems for a book, Welch insists that they should be taken as scores for vocal re-performance. The poet's speculative afterlife is pitched explicitly against collection and consolidation, his poems lost or literally scattered among friends. Furthermore, most of this poem's words are imagined to belong not the poet but to "them," those others among whom his remains are dispersed. Here we can recall Shelley's scattered "ashes and sparks," though Welch, with characteristic Beat casualness, scales down Shelley's "mankind" to "his friends." Collective word-of-mouth replaces the "collected," singular, written self; the poet's social life displaces his literary legacy. He wants to be remembered for how he lived, not what he wrote—though this poem is surely memorable.

We find a similar simultaneity of egoism and self-dispersal in another of Welch's best poems, again from the "Hermit" sequence:

> I saw myself
> a ring of bone
> in the clear stream
> of all of it
>
> and vowed,
> always to be open to it
> that all of it
> might flow through
>
> and then heard
> "ring of bone" where
> ring is what a
>
> bell does

This poem's craft is one of carefully enjambed assonance, its modulations of open "aw" and "o" sounds rendering audible the hollowing out Welch avows. Without fuss, the poet's act of regarding his own bony image mirrored in

a stream becomes a figure for his poetics, which is also his way of life—an open conduit sounding out what passes through it. Welch is a self-involved writer, but he strives to write himself out, leaving a hole in the center usually occupied by a consolidated ego. The "ring of bone," at once so physical and so disembodied, is his variation on the poet-as-receiver myth, in line with Coleridge's Eolian harp and Spicer's radio. This Buddha-inspired project of receptive self-negation occupies much of the writing from the last few years of Welch's life. Among the most interesting of the fugitive poems Allen collected is a sermon-in-verse entitled "How to Give Yourself Away" and delivered at Glide Memorial Church in February 1967. Welch's spiritual meditations can be serene or optimistically ecstatic, but despair and self-disgust are never far off. His self, so hounded it seems by demons that threatened to destroy him in less receptive ways, was a particular burden for him—something not perhaps to be given away but to be outrun or put down. Welch's scattering of himself in so many transcriptions of speech, pages to be "given away" to friends, at some moments seems a virtuous self-effacement, at others a desperate self-annihilation. A life lived as poetry can also become a scripted death. In "Song of the Turkey Buzzard," the final poem in the *Ring of Bone* manuscript, Welch imagines a buzzard eating his remains as the realization of a "new form," but his "disembowelment" seems equally a gory premonition of his early death.

At the center of *Ring of Bone* is Welch's masterpiece of self-dispersal, the nine-page collage called "Din Poem." In "Language is Speech," the statement of poetics included at the end of this new edition, he writes, "That is language. Speech. The din of the Tribe doing its business. You can't control it, you can't correct it, you can only listen to it and use it as it is." While the well-honed "Hermit Poems" meditate on sociality from a position of quiet solitude, "Din Poem" is sprawling and polyvocal, comprising ad jingles, sheet music, Eisenhower's holiday address, a barrage of racist slurs hyperbolically repeated into inane gibberish, and drawings of a meadowlark and a dove surrounded by musical notes. When some "I" tells a story of viewing New York City from the Empire State Building or of visiting a mysterious spiritual adviser, we cannot be sure whose "I" it is. *Paterson* is the poem's nearest predecessor, but *Paterson*'s materials are more mediated and synthesized by an authorial presence. "Din Poem" is not well-served by quotation, and perhaps the best way to read it is while listening to Welch's astonishing 1967 performance of it at the Magic Lantern in Santa Barbara, which is available on PennSound. He was a commanding performer of his work, a decent singer who sometimes performed with San Francisco rock bands, and his performance of "Din Poem" is filled with song, whistling, and a proliferation of voices. It makes me want to perform the poem myself, to make noise as Welch did, to add to the din. This displacement of his voice by my own seems perfectly apt to the poetry, consistent with the way Welch imagined his literary

(or anti-literary) afterlife. *Ring of Bone*'s textual record gives way to archived audio recordings; his scores give way to his own ghostly voice, technologically preserved and reanimated; his voice gives way to his reader's voice, his breath and body to my own. In ways that he perhaps could not quite predict, Welch has become a multimedia poet. Somewhere between the book and the audio archive, his *Collected Poems* almost dissolves into collective life itself.

Patrick Morrissey

§

Frederick Seidel, *Nice Weather*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012. 112pp. $24

Who's afraid of Frederick Seidel? All of his critics, apparently. The "most frightening American poet ever," says Calvin Bedient. "Frederick Seidel is a ghoul," says Michael Robbins. Adam Kirsch thinks his poetry as scary as a nightmare. Michael Hofmann calls him a "cannibal." These are terms of praise, from critics who think Seidel one of our best living poets. It is notable, however, that the epithets used to describe Seidel sound like an advertisement for the latest Hollywood horror film. In a recent review of the Jeff Koons Retrospective at the Whitney, Jed Perl comments on "the S&M of the contemporary art world," which assumes that whatever shocks and disgusts must, *ipso facto*, be good. But, he rightly points out, "not all unease is equal." Frederick Seidel is the Jeff Koons of contemporary American poetry, with "the swagger of a macho buffoon," in Perl's words, scaring his readers into admiration.

But what has happened to the carnivore, the cannibal, the bogeyman, and above all, the phallus-man that for decades have combined to form Seidel's signature poetic persona and the hallmark of his poetic style? In his latest book *Nice Weather* (2012), most of the poems are as bland as the kind of small talk the title suggests. Here's the title poem in its entirety:

> This is what it's like at the end of the day.
> But soon the day will go away.
> Sunlight preoccupies the cross street.
> It and night soon will meet.
> Meanwhile, there is Central Park.
> Now the park is getting dark.

Okay. This is Cheez Whiz Robert Frost. But if it is true, as Randall Jarrell said, that "any poet has written enough bad poetry to scare away anybody," then Seidel has to be judged on the best lines and the best poems of his career, where his "macho buffoon" persona first began to take shape and scare critics

even more than his worst lines. Seidel's recently published *Poems, 1959–2009* (2010), which gathered together almost all of the poetry he has ever published, contains some of the most vital work in American poetry in the last fifty years. It takes us back to the provocatively titled *Final Solutions* (1963), Seidel's debut and portentous *succès de scandale* that caused the judges of the first Helen Burlin Memorial Award to resign in protest over sponsors who refused Seidel the prize due to fears of libel. More importantly, Seidel's collected poems takes us back to *Sunrise* (1980), his second collection, and its impressive title poem, which contains some of the best verse Seidel—or any poet of the past half century—has written. The critical consensus of late dismisses his first two books as knock-off Robert Lowell, or worse. Eliot Weinberger, one of the few critics who have had anything at all to say about "Sunrise," claimed that it's an incomprehensible imitation of John Ashbery. Certainly, there is something of Ashbery's polished surrealism in the poem, but the voice and rhetoric are decidedly Seidel's own. Their signature is an arch persona that is not only hyper-masculine but also ultra-bourgeois, a sort of twisted Byronic hero, which Seidel has constructed (or has become) over the years in order, ironically, to *épater-le-bourgeois*.

If one reads "Sunrise" with care, the basic outlines, if not every image and line, become perfectly clear. Here's the scenario: the poet is lying in bed as the sun rises, lapsing into a few dreams (the bed will moonlight as a psychoanalyst's couch and a hospital bed in which a quadriplegic boy has surgery); he has just turned forty in February, but it is now Easter and soon to be the National Bicentennial (Seidel was born in February, 1936; "Sunrise" takes place in April, 1976). This event constitutes a major occasion for the poet to take stock of his life, his country, his (ir)religion, and to face the full power (and lure) of nihilism. "Not to be born is obviously best of all," a paraphrase of Sophocles, is the title of the poem immediately following "Sunrise," but the theme is opened in the poem itself, with a specific twentieth-century twist:

> When you are little, a knee of your knickers torn,
> The freshness of rain about to fall is what
> It would be like not to have been born.
> Believe. Believed they were lined up to take showers
> Dies illa, that April, which brought May flowers.
> Safer than the time before the baby
> Crawls is the time before he smiles, maybe.
> Stalin's merry moustache, magnetic, malignant,
> Crawls slowly over a leaf which cannot move.

The first sentence is one that continues to haunt Seidel, as it continues to haunt me. It returns, *mutatis mutandis*, several times in *The Cosmos Poems* (2003),

and in "Barbados," which Michael Robbins rightly says is the best poem in a later volume, *Ooga-Booga* (2006):

> Literally the most expensive hotel in the world
> Is the smell of rain about to fall.
> It does the opposite, a grove of lemon trees.
> *I* isn't anything.
> It is the hooks of rain
> Hovering with their sweets inches off the ground.
> *I* is the spiders marching through the air.
> The lines dangle the bait
> The ground will bite.
> Your wife is as white as vinegar, pure aristo privilege.
> The excellent smell of rain before it falls overpowers
> The last aristocrats on earth before the asteroid.
> I sense your disdain, darling.
> I share it.

And again, in the final stanza of the poem: "And there we were, / The cane toads and the smell of rain about to fall." Recycled lines like this, Seidel's personal clichés, have attracted the attention of his critics, but for the wrong reasons. Robbins likes these lines from *Ooga-Booga*, but instead of recalling their origin for us in "Sunrise," which would challenge his reasons for echoing Weinberger's dismissal of the book, he suggests Pound's *Cantos*, quoting Canto 83: "the clouds over Taishan / When some of the rain has fallen / and half remains yet to fall." Maybe Seidel had this in mind, too, but I doubt it. No, "Barbados" is a variation on the theme of "Sunrise," the resonance with the older poem lending it much of its power. The smell of the rain about to fall, in all of its many repetitions in his work, is a figure of the lure that nihilism has for the Seidel persona, imbricated with the wasting away of America since the 1960s. (Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Kennedys recur in Seidel's poems as often as the rain about to fall). But the pathos that the lines have in their original context is increasingly lost in his later poems, as if to affirm the triumph of nihilism in their hollow, mechanical repetition.

"Sunrise" ultimately affirmed life, despite the Holocaust, despite the innocence lost with the fall of Camelot, despite all the senseless suffering, despite full recognition that the universe doesn't give a shit about us:

> Organizations of gravity and light,
> Supremely mass disappears and reappears
> In an incomprehensible *-1* of might.
> Sat up at last, the quadriplegic boy

Feels beyond pain, feels beyond joy—
Still, stately as the Christ of Resurrection.
I wake beneath my hypnopompic erection,
Forty stanzas, forty Easters of life,
And smile, eyes full of tears, shaking with rage.

The "hypnopompic erection" is, in some ways, Seidel's version of Whitmanian virility—partly induced by the narcotic of sleep, it is an erection nonetheless. But it is also perhaps the essential feature of his Byronic persona, which puts the "pomp" in "hypnopompic." These days, however, his penis is in bad shape:

It took a shirt of Nessus wrapped around my penis
To get rid of the crabs.
The burning ointment got lovingly applied by Babs—
Penis burned at the stake by Venus!

That is from "Baudelaire," one of the best poems in *Nice Weather*, which begins, appropriately enough:

I walk on water in my poems, using the lily pads
Of the sidewalk homeless as stepping-stones.
I'd stop to talk, but they don't have cell phones.
Their alcoholic faces come in various plaids.

These lines are excellent, and maliciously witty, issuing from an arch and ironic stance of urbane privilege to shock the bourgeoisie. But he soon embraces the art of sinking:

His hands are in the basin washing, crashing.
His brain is on a boardwalk walking.
Her bigs don't stop stalking.
The mirror is asking for a thrashing.

I'm standing at a sideboard carving a wild duck I shot a lot.
My bullfrog croaks.
My unit smokes.
My Mumbai is hot. My Bali spits snot. I've shot what I've got.

This is self-consciously bathetic, of course. It is even possible that Seidel is playing Hazlitt to his own Byron. (Hazlitt memorably characterized Byron's tendency toward bathos in *Don Juan*: "A classical intoxication is followed by the splashing of soda-water, by frothy effusions of ordinary bile.

After the lightning and the hurricane, we are introduced to the interior of the cabin and the contents of the wash-hand basins. The solemn hero of tragedy plays Scrub in the farce.") But here Seidel is not artfully or subversively bathetic like Byron or Frank O'Hara or James Schuyler—or like Frederick Seidel can be. Even the extreme parataxis of these lines feeds into a superficial rather than a subversive bathos by partaking of a cultural fad already fully exploited by the semioticians of advertising: *Real. Comfortable. Jeans.*

Nice Weather typifies much of Seidel's post-9/11 verse. A central conceit of "Baudelaire" is really just a simple literalizing of the token liberal guilt that believes our chickens have now come home to roost: "A terrorist in his underwear, / Shaving in the steam, wipes the bathroom mirror clearer." In our complicity through banal domesticity and blind consumerism, we are all terrorists. But the theme has grown stale, the thrill is gone. *Nice Weather* suffers from rampant inbreeding, the diminishing returns of blasé self-cloning. Seidel exists now not by sympathy, or antipathy, but by apathy, whether his subjects are political crises or penchants. Marinetti claimed that "a roaring automobile is more beautiful than the Nike of Samothrace." In "Sunrise," Seidel gave us Futurism on speed, one-upping Marinetti:

> Being walked and warmed up, they roared like lions on leashes.
> The smell of castor oil. Snarl suck-suck-suck waaah
> A racing motorcycle running through
> The gears, on song; the ithyphallic faired
> Shape of speed waaah an Italian's glans-bared
> *Rosso di competizione...*

His ridiculously expensive motorcycles have been roaring through his poems ever since. "Beautiful things that go fast have enchanted me," he writes in "Lisbon," but even Seidel is getting sick of it, thinking "it's time to leave Jack Kennedy and my motorcycles behind." Amen. But the alternative is a bit droll: "I face a yawning lion shaving in my mirror in the morning, roaring, / And there's my grandchild standing in the doorway, adoring— / Many teeth to brush, a beard to shave!" The sharp asteism has dulled into domesticated cynicism.

Seidel seems to have arrived, perhaps because of 9/11, at the nihilistic conclusion of the young ladies in Věra Chytilová's film *Daisies*: "If everything's spoiled, we'll be spoiled, too." And hence, apparently, our poetry must be spoiled. Seidel's best poetry was insistently, disturbingly, thrillingly, alive. Now—I'm afraid—he's just a scary, finely tuned machine. Kind of like one of his Ducati bikes.

Eric Powell