

Michael Dowdy

A Defense of the Keg

It suffers the mud room,
the washing machine's glare
and the kitchen's crumbs,
slid into a plastic trashcan
like a swollen foot into a wader.
In the garage next to garden shears
and weed eaters, or on patio bricks,
it squats under ice bags
wide and roly-poly like its country.
The college kid who slips
its slick tap into his mouth,
gurgling foam through giggles,
depressing the pump with soft palms
like a nipple, tastes its crucible.
Dinged and emptied,
tossed to weeds or car trunks
when dry and burping froth,
it longs for young lips
and a full belly.
These make the small talk
about the parade, the cluster,
and the pressure, calibrated
like whistles into the night,
their meandering conclusions
around the strong silver body,
worth a thousand beatings.
If the keg, patron saint of sinners,
were the well we meet over
in the village square,
oak buckets and tin pails
replaced by plastic cups,
dipping our lives into darkness
and lifting from it amber light,
the act of drawing together
would confound what is drawn.
The mouths that gather there
would write a swallow's history:
from the lips and tongue

Kestrel

the throat gathers the keg's advice.
Well and vessel, it asks only drink
and return, to show one's hands
before receiving the gifts of others.