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Core Memory: Teddy Macker on Raspberries

Teddy Macker. *This World* (White Cloud Press 2015).

Before anything—before craft consciousness, writers filling rooms, language like "torque" and "undertow" to name what poetry does to the body—a poem about a raspberry found me. "Ruby thimble, afternoon's navel, ceremonial hat of the / cricket shaman" opens Teddy Macker's "Raspberry," and so too opens the way poetry can pull you in, right to ground-height. The poem is morsel-sized, tactile and deeply-tasted, and like a certain angle of light conjures a distant afternoon in my parents' backyard that might be my first memory of life, this poem in all its wakefulness recalls a revelation in poetry I had at age twenty-four or twenty-five.

It appears in Macker's only collection, *This World*, which I didn't discover until much later when I went looking for that poem about raspberries—the only phrase I remembered with certainty was the last: "crumbling / chalice of July oblivion." Still the rest remained. A diffuse image of fruit plucked. The "soft unhold[ing]" was a felt sense. The bright color, "roe of dawn," was inside me like shapes which whirl on the back of closed eyelids.

And looking for proof of that old memory, I discovered "this world," a refrain throughout Macker's collection that beats like the inside of a chest. Life-affirming, Macker's eye lingers on the smallest moments until they're swollen with importance: an "insect wing nickeled with sun." The "matterful backs of cattle" as light plummets in his poem, "Noon." These poems—especially those few-lined and pebble-small—function like rare memories that stay & stay. They're olfactory, intimate, and surprising, like discovering "red thunder" inside a watermelon, or a perfumed peach with a "taste so sudden a sitting man / stands." The sweetest revelation of reading these poems now is that these whole-bodied glimmers are not memories, but our world, this moment.

Seen through Macker's eye, this world can require a bit of weaving, effort, and meditation to make some sense. In longer works like "A Poem for My Daughter," it's Macker's mind regarding life that is "Wily, everycolored, unpindownable." Turning to the spiritual teachings of Christianity, the Navajo people, and Buddhism, this mind's enterprise is not to provide answers, but rather to revel in common, honest divinity: "All is grace," concludes Macker.

Looking for that raspberried memory, I also found Macker, or

what there is to find of him which is only on the page. He is without a public social media account or an author website. To spend time with his eye & mind, one must live like Macker, return to the solid books, un-neglect this real world, go slow so as not to miss those certain things—ripe fruit, small poems—that "make one's soul tilt," that have a current, that tow you under.