

MATT SCHUMACHER SELF-INTERVIEW, March 2008

How did the fantastic streak in your poetry originate?

Another poet and I at Iowa used to call ourselves “the unacknowledged spokesmen for the midwestern fantastic.” I suspect the Wizard of Oz happens in Kansas because Dorothy and Toto need real, stable earth to leap away from and return to after their encounter with the Wicked Witch of the West and her legions of flying monkeys. I love and value Iowa’s green, rolling hills, but from an early age, I believe the landscape itself encouraged me to dream. *Spilling the Moon* configures and records these dreams and daydreams.

I’ve since come to love Tzvetan Todorov’s *The Fantastic: a Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, and much of the literature mentioned in that theoretical work. For me, the best literature attempts to brush up against or simply glimpse the ineffable.

What other themes or tendencies make their homes in your poetry?

Some kind of trickster wants to run amok in the poems at times. I have an interest in spurious literature, literary hoaxes and subversive experiments, and admire the audacity of dada as illustrated in Tzara’s manifestoes, Pessoa’s heteronyms, Hakim Bey’s temporary autonomous zones, the Oulipo experimentalism of Canadian poet Christian Bok’s *Eunoia* and *Crystallography*.

Donald Revell, who was kind enough to write a blurb, called the poems “travelers,” and I suppose, too, that *Spilling the Moon* is also a blueprint of my own travels—travels both of the mind and as a vagabond professor. Certainly in the poems many different states of mind and states of the union are mentioned.

What about your influences?

I deeply admire American poets like Whitman and Wright, but the surrealist and fabulist vein remains definitive. Influences include the French Surrealists, Tomas Tranströmer, Henri Michaux, and the writers of the French Fantastique, particularly Theophile Gautier and Villiers de L’Isle Adam.

What other projects do you foresee in the near future?

I’m attracted to the notion of poetry as architecture and by the theoretical cities of the avant-garde, as well as the Emerald Cities, New Babylons, “haunted cohabitations” and “honeycombs of wandering apparitions” of the text, according to Jed Rasula’s wonderful qualifications. Another book of poetry due out later this year is called *Fire Diary*. Its fractured narrative explores the architecture of burning houses and buildings. Another project, *The Book of Impossibility*, is a speculative exploration of impossible processes, and yet another project I’m working on promises a written portraiture of Oregon ghost towns.