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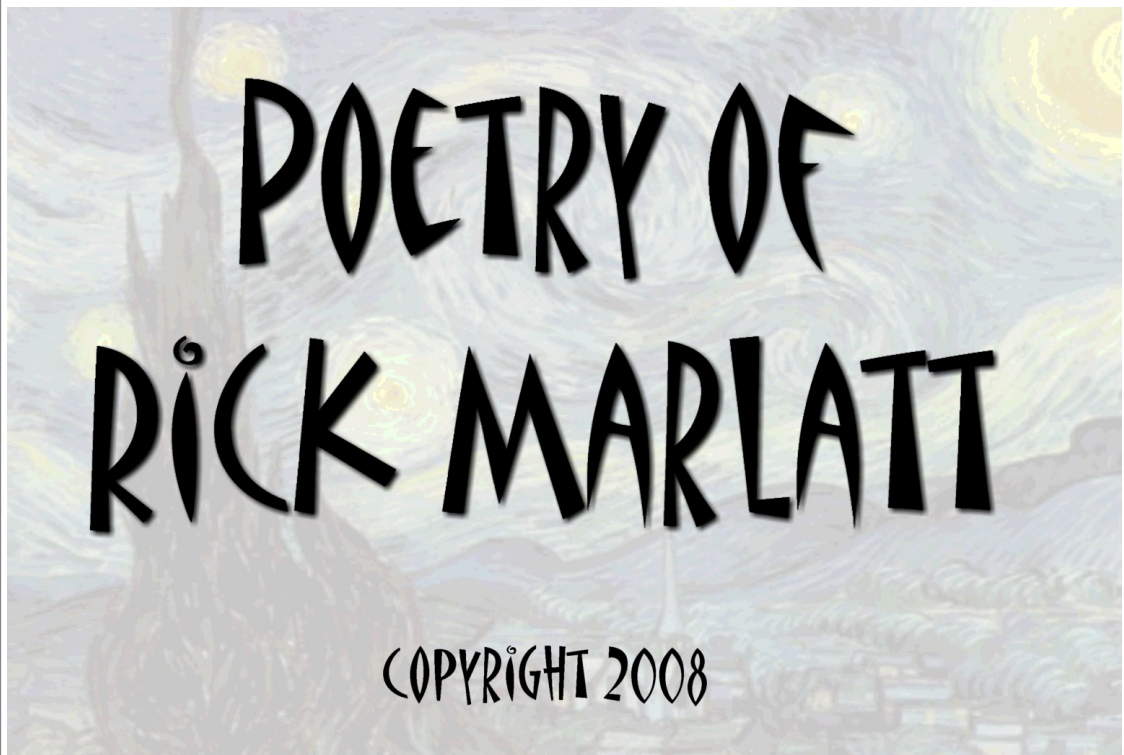
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## **Sausage and Eggs** (For Dad)

Wearing the colors of lost sleep,  
coffee flow black as enamel, he  
entertains sunrise, having beat it  
to the punch.

Must've been an ornery chickadee  
woke him, the morning mist of Marlboro,  
lucid pasture whisperings in dreams that  
got too real.

The wonderful brevity in this blind  
and beautiful light of morning is  
the palatable distance covered in a  
whitetail's hurdle.

You lean novice bones into towers of  
steam he's conjured with blazed eyes  
of sizzling blue worlds that you won't see  
until years have browned your marrow  
in good grease.

## **Heart Pounded When**

i.  
I found my birth certificate

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up in the musty attic, buried  
in a mildewed-Maker's Mark  
box. That strange name was  
not mother's-

ii.  
someone broke into the house  
when I was home alone, I lay  
frozen on the sofa in a sea of  
panic-soaked tremble, praying  
the pitch-black would finally  
swallow me-

iii.  
the moon-blue Pontiac first  
took me from that river-valley  
farm to my mason brick high  
school. Lemon scent danced  
in dawn-light-

iv.  
I drained those two free throws  
in the district final with 8 seconds  
left on the clock, maybe it was 6-  
I forget-

v.  
head of woman first found my  
my lap. Her mouth opened to  
sounds of my stillness. Eyes  
rolled back into worlds with  
no footing-

vi.  
your ocean eyes first felt  
the world, its distance opened  
like a memory you'd known all  
along. That red hair blew us  
all away-

vii.  
I slipped on the staircase and  
you somersaulted from my grasp  
into air open as sky. Roamed your  
supple skin for ruptures with my  
fingers, felt blind electrocution  
as they shook-

viii  
these pictures resurfaced today  
the way ripples level off and  
leave a clear reflection of a face  
you've worn for ages but see for  
the first time.

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## Spring Awakening

Wouldn't you be happier somewhere else? Entranced by Poudre Canyon's rushing creek? Gripped by that first kiss on Stone-Top Mesa? Green Lake's shores embracing your feet? Feel the engine rattle jolt your spine, ether ascend your sinus and breathe on your brain cells in this 1976 John Deer tractor. Is this where you want to be? Sweat another summer away? Are those your father's hands weathering the grease-dried steering wheel in circles of dust? How do you love this land more than others, so flat, sentimental as the plow that rips it open and with so many gods to choose from? If only these gears went to warp speed-you could be in all those worlds and the work would still get done so that tangled graves of men you've never known, whose veins rivered your blood to seas of plains will lie content. You could reverse these aging hands.

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**Rick Marlatt** teaches English in Nebraska. He has BAs in English and Philosophy and a MA in Creative Writing from the University of Nebraska, and he's currently pursuing an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of California Riverside at Palm Desert. Marlatt's previous publications include *Hamilton Stone Review*, *Blue House*, *Trillium*, *Slow Trains*, *Language and Culture*, *Events Weekly*, *The Carillon*, *The Reynolds Review*, *Prairie Poetry*, *The Bumbershoot Annual*, and the *University of Nebraska Research Journal*. Marlatt performs regularly, most recently winning the U of Nebraska Sigma Tau Delta Annual Short Fiction slam this spring.