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POETRY OF ERICK MERTZ

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Living as Writers

You once said, living as
writers, we'd know what the
other was working on even through a
closed door. One quiet for
poems; another tap, rhythmic tap, more tense,
this for dialogue from the
Royal typewriters. The same we

bought one another as gifts.

I told you this was
naïve, that making up with verse
before fucking would not be
romantic. It was a fool's
notion. Besides, I whispered,
as you were
leaving,

I built that door, impregnable, like a fortress.

We never lived as writers; not
together at least. Now when I read your
verse, there is sadness – my own, shed like skin for where you
are weak. You would have never known
the real quiet of my verse; my dialogue, gone unspoken.
Somewhere in this illusion, three clever lines passed
on the threshold – *sorry, celibate, sorry, angry sorry.*

Those which would have defined us.

The Short History of Hatred

I've watched his crow do this trick
all morning: diving to the median, playing with food
there, stashing away all these newspapers.

Some have heard him talking in extraordinary madness.

His crow will spread the ashes of ancestors
in shit while he circles the mausoleum.
With sacred grip he has taunted; made lines of merciless
verse; left an orphaned litter of broken covenants.

This legacy is simple echo of
wing flaps, flailing in the spare heat without resolution.

There is a man beside a Model A; he wants to
shoot his crow. This man is an old man, tired man,
folding over old tabloid editions to carry onto the street like a more
simple form of the gospel.

Some have heard they are kin; he covets a murder,
because they are joined as parts of gray and February are: indissoluble.
Regardless, he too will shit, taunt, exist without
mirth, break whatever promises:

he will not speak of love, fucking
love – not a word, though he too is locked in its very chamber.

Saddest Woman in the Room

Her mouth, bird's nest; arms and legs, these also only
composite tangles of found twigs and line.
Hands are bird's nests too – like her mouth,
unable to construct simple models of biography.

She was the saddest woman in the room – blue in possession
of her, this sadness, an atrophy which sets in the eye.
No one there could mistake her stare
for anything except the expression of dumb hunger:

for replacement limbs, pangs for
those unbound.
A new mouth to speak of it – her woe, and hands,
those only to confirm its absolute depth.

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Over the years, **Erick Mertz's** work has appeared in numerous publications, from *Stringtown to Fireweed: Poetry of Western Oregon* to *Ink Pot Press* to *The Vermillion Literary Project*. He has placed work in La Palabra Café's *The Cereal Vox* project and in a recent issue of *Pedestal* magazine. His work has also garnered a 2004 Kay Snow Award for poetry from the Willamette Writer's organization. Forthcoming is a chap book, entitled *Semi-Urban Cartography*, from Semi-Urban Press and an untitled novel about social work. Short film projects, *Old Tom* and *Closing Time*, are ready to embark on their round through the festival circuit.