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Review

Reviewed Work(s): Michelangelo, Drawing, and the Invention of Architecture by Cammy Brothers

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young poets collected here are varied in their aesthetic and thematic obsessions. Perhaps one of the most exciting additions to the growing new canon of Northern Irish poetry is Matt Kirkham. His series of "Museum" poems ("The Museum of Trash," "The Museum of the Afterlife," "In the Tea Museum") are the highlight of the anthology.

—Lilah Hegnauer

***Satin Cash*, by Lisa Russ Spaar, Persea Books, August 2008. \$14 paper**

Emily Dickinson mused that her price was "A petal, for a paragraph." Lisa Russ Spaar's *Satin Cash*—inspired by that Dickinsonian sentiment and phrase—allies itself with such radical economies of beauty and pays in subtlety. The brushes with lush language characteristic of Spaar's work are immediately apparent in a poem like "Ouija"—"Fob, gaud, tinsel / of winter stars, / cosmic bijou"—but quickly the lucid lyric questions and existential quandaries emerge: "what am I seeking / when I extend / my soul's yes yes / toward you . . ." The interplay between linguistic bewilderment and psychic clarity draws Spaar's poems within reach of both wonder and wisdom, in carefully alternating focus. Exemplary of this effect is the situation of "The Ice House," as the speaker overhears her daughter's garbled phone-fight with a boyfriend. The poet's mind—at once sympathetic and self-restrained—wanders to an antiquated, subterranean ice storage shed, pondering its purpose: "so that, in the heat / of rage, or age, or passion, / what shivers of sweet sorbet, / what unlikely shocks of whine-numbing joy / issue from its galaxy, its dipper." The movements between mother and daughter, between rage and numbness, between shivering pain and cold are exquisite layerings; they make the ice house its own odd stronghold, a cold comfort from some lost age. Persisting images of secure enclosures—wombs, rooms, gardens—are often passages outward in Spaar's work, to a more strange, dangerous, and heartbreaking world. When the dollar's down, the creative can find new coins of the realm. Invest in *Satin*.

—Kevin McFadden

**GENERAL NONFICTION**

***Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan*, by Kim Phillips-Fein. Norton, January 2009. \$26.95**

After decades of neglect, it is now official: we are being pelted (if not bombarded) with studies of modern conservative politics. These studies range from Rick Perlstein's books on Barry Goldwater and

Richard Nixon to historians' soaking-and-poking of grassroots conservatism in Mississippi and Orange County, to attempts to develop a master key for explaining this unforeseen development in American politics. Many of these studies rely on an interpretive framework developed by liberals in the 1960s and 1970s, which suggests that conservatism eroded and then exploded the New Deal coalition by using cultural or identity issues—religion, cultural populism, and perhaps especially antiblack racial animus—to undercut a liberal consensus on economics. Phillips-Fein challenges this assumption, arguing that using culture as an explanation may be unnecessary, since the consensus on moderately progressive economics was not that strong to begin with. This is an intriguing and potentially important possibility. Unfortunately, the rest of this book is not designed to explore and test that thesis. Instead, it is an account of the daily activities and strategizing of free-market writers and activists who wanted to turn the tide of statism in economic matters in US policymaking. The discussion of figures like William Buckley, Clarence Manion, J. William Middendorf, Lewis Powell, and William Baroody is interesting, but it cannot determine how extensive the liberal economic consensus was in the Democratic party or the American public more broadly.

—Gerard Alexander

***Michelangelo, Drawing, and the Invention of Architecture*, by Cammy Brothers. Yale, September 2008. \$65**

Michelangelo lived in a world dominated by classical ideals, ruins, antiquarians, and Vitruvius. This study of his drawings focuses on his formative years, 1505–1534, from his plan for the tomb of Julius II to his design of the Laurentian Library. The author, associate professor of architectural history at the University of Virginia, puts Michelangelo's sketches, drawings, designs, and buildings in sequences, showing how the artist's ideas developed away from models and moved through copying, analyzing, distorting, rescaling, fragmenting, and reorienting to create ideas. Rather than capture what was in his head, Michelangelo thought and researched on paper, drawing different versions and aspects of an object right on top of each other. We watch him embrace eccentricity, manipulating the traditional triad of architecture, ornament, and figural sculpture until the architecture becomes sculpture, producing great art in somewhat difficult spaces. The author plays all this against sketches by contemporaries, bits of Michelangelo's verse, excursions into Petrarch, and the artist's experiments with depicting the human body. This fascinating volume lets us watch genius creating itself.

—Don Fry