

PARLOR PRESS

EQUIPMENT FOR LIVING



Jennifer Atkinson, *The Canticle of the Night Path*

2011 New Measure Poetry Prize Winner

Selected by Susan Stewart

The poems in Jennifer Atkinson's *The Canticle of the Night Path* tread the paths of darkness and dream, finding their zigzaggy way by lightning flash and firefly. From *A* to almost *zilch*, from Hart Cranial, and Hopkinsesque, word-crazed lushness to the rich austerities of the non-canonical Gospel of Mary [Magdalene], Atkinson's sequence of canticles explores a range of lyric possibilities—love song, elegy, parable, prayer. Evoking Giotto, Dora Maar, the Song of Songs, the fragrance of braised fennel and ripe pear, she follows the legends of Magdalene into Provence and the mysteries of erotic and divine love—there at the borderlands of the spiritual and phenomenal worlds.

Christopher Kondrich, *Contrapuntal*

In music, “counterpoint,” or “contrapuntal” refers to the relationship between two independent melodies that sound harmonious when played simultaneously. The poems in Christopher Kondrich's first collection allude to contrapuntal composition by sustaining two voices and two distinct, but overlapping narratives. As described by Mark Strand in *Boston Review*, the first is allegorical, in which a piano-playing guru, a pharmaceutical cure-all, and the laboratory where it's produced are all elements in the formation of a self seeking unity. The other concerns two versions of a self—past and present—who merge in the voice of the poet. As it dismantles the wholeness of life to create the wholeness of art, *Contrapuntal* presents readers with a unique, challenging experience.

Parlor Press's poetry series, Free Verse Editions, is pleased to announce the fourth annual New Measure Poetry Prize, which will carry a cash award of \$1,000 and publication of an original, unpublished manuscript of poems. Jon Thompson, the series editor, will judge this year's competition. Up to four other manuscripts may be accepted for publication in Free Verse Editions. Submit a manuscript of at least 54 pages with a \$25 entry fee between May 1 and June 30. Visit the Free Verse Editions website for complete guidelines and for access to our submission manager: <http://www.parlorpress.com/freeverse/>

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Announcing the winner of the New Measure Poetry Prize 2011 & Fall 2012 Free Verse Editions

Ethel Rackin, *The Forever Notes*

The Forever Notes, Ethel Rackin's debut collection of poems invokes ancient traditions of love song, incantation, and meditation in poetry while balancing a wholly contemporary lyricism marked by wistfulness and whimsy, all the while asking what is recoverable within the flux of time. Rackin's poems have the characteristics of humans—shyness, interest in daily activities, precious held beliefs, a personality. The speaker pursues a rhythm and syntax somewhat strictly while the overall result and the steady music of the line is flexible. *The Forever Notes* seeks to recover the palpability of lived experience through the rhythmic march of its lines. The result is a memorable poetry that reverberates in the mind.

Aidan Semmens, *The Book of Isaac*

The Book of Isaac is a sequence of 56 'distressed', or damaged, sonnets in which Aidan Semmens endeavors to distil something of the Russian-Jewish experience from the history of his own family, in particular that of his great-grandfather, the economist, lawyer, journalist and socialist Isaac Hourwich. Drawing material from the apocryphal *Book of Esdras*, from FBI files and other historical sources as well as from Hourwich's private and public writings, Semmens produces a fractured narrative running from the pogroms of the late 19th century, through the beginnings of the American diaspora, to the Revolution and beyond. Employing a deliberately roughened language, Semmens pushes the sonnet form in a new direction, making the past and present converge in poetically startling ways.

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