

# Entropy's 16 Best Poetry Books of the First Half of 2014

written by Entropy | July 17, 2014



Here's Entropy's list of our favorite poetry books from the first half of 2014.

## 1. [The Dark Cave Between my Ribs](#) by [Loren Kleinman](#)

This is an intensely moving collection of poetry that explores, prods, and tears open the emptiness and recesses of the human condition. A candid foray that is both poetic and visceral, the words drip with ventricular panache and Kleinman's words will leave you shaken to the core.

"A desert opens in my room.  
I reach out to touch him,  
but I'm pricked by a cactus.  
I shrink to tumbleweed  
and roll away.  
The world slows down around me."

"The world gives itself away  
in small whispers"

"The last remaining  
memories of our skin  
turned into clothing  
to keep us warm"



## 2. [Scarecrone](#) by Melissa Broder:

Melissa Broder is a fiery poet, her words a pyre of emotion that burn into conflagrations of desire, anger, and the whole gamut of feeling. Prepare to weep, love, reminisce, and tremble.

"The universe is vacant  
because I am  
here"

"I am in the hotel of bodies  
temporarily. Love is  
millions of needles but really  
none."

"This is a fire, a fire of learning  
to die. Fuel the fire with no objects  
specific to one generation."



3. [Zoonosis](#) by Kelly Boyker:

A stirring collection of poetry by Kelly Boyker, there is fable-like lyricism in each piece, monstrosities coated in beautiful language that is deceptively gruesome.

“An African Chameleon crawled down my throat and lodged in my lungs. It was merely trying to contact its dead. Now if my body is placed between the discharge tube and the screen, the outline of a prehensile tail is visible within the shadow of my lungs.”

Like the chameleon, Boyker’s poems will crawl down your throat into your belly, your psyche, the core of your being.



4. [“E! Entertainment”](#) by Kate Durbin uses transcription to illuminate, like a ghost orb, interactions on reality television. “E!” includes astonishing dispatches from the Playboy mansion, the Amanda Knox trial, and the memory of Anna Nicole Smith. The book feels so haunted: everything depicted is so remote, but Durbin’s focus is so unshakably intense.



5. [Things To Do With Your Mouth](#) by Divya Victor (Les Figues):

In *Things To Do With Your Mouth*, Divya Victor repeats, recants, and relentlessly echoes a textual meeting place for the psychic and corporeal implications of this “fear of women with excessive powers of speech and discourse,” creating a cacophonous movement towards the feminist purpose of poetics. Culling language from texts as diverse as nursery rhymes and contemporary pediatric health websites, the biblical Song of Solomon and Freud’s “Analysis of a Case of Hysteria,” Victor confronts this long history of the “silenced mouth.”



6. [MODERN CAMPING](#) by Tyler Flynn Dorholt’s:

“Things between coming & returning seem not to be anything but a part of.” A book about embarking, the difference between looking and observing, language as both lubricant and obduracy, the paradox of a self in conversation with the synecdoche of its own erotics (broadly conceived). Which is to say, these are love poems, but of a most unconventional sort: Stein-ian, Badiou-esque. “I move alongside bodies with the decision of leaving the narrows, where I’d begun to care for her initial void. I thought I heard somebody right where it abandoned her, the voice of mine that said it could not do that.”



7. [Like a Beggar](#) by Ellen Bass: These poems contain the irony of being luxurious because of their gorgeous language, have great intelligence and

heart. Bass does not shy away from the humble or the luminous. I've re-read this numerous times, and will continue to do so.



8. [Hustle by David Tomas Martinez](#): His poems contain speakers who steal cars, run away with canyons, father a child before seventeen, and work welding frigates, all with no reverence for literature with clean streets. A brave, gritty and apt guide through the circles of modern urban existence.



9. [3 Sections](#) by Vijay Seshadri:

This collection is a benchmark of contemporary poems that obsessively, and with amazing wit, evoke the metaphysical. The speakers are accessible and amiable. There is an experimental risk inherent, which might be the key to why this won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry.



10. [I'm Just Happy to Be Here](#) by Mark Cugini:

This chapbook begins with two epigraphs: one by Dorothea Lasky and the other by the rapper Drake. This sets the tone for the whole collection as it bounces between exuberant pronouncements of love ("you are a hundred / helium balloons knotted / around my ribcage") and quiet contemplations on long nights playing NBA Jam with friends, dreaming about getting

more from life. Cugini writes:

I am Alt Lit.  
I am right now.  
I am ready, I am ready,  
I am ready to fucking kill you.  
and it's true.



11. [Backup Singers by Sommer Browning](#)

\m/ \m/ \m/ \m/



12. [Sorrow Arrow by Emily Kendal Frey](#) (Octopus Books): No titles, no problems. The poems in Sorrow Arrow are text without the label, mostly one-line images interwoven to form a sometimes surrealist, sometimes hilariously quotidian fabric of complex and compelling vision. And man, they're a lot of fun to read.



13. [THE NEW YEARS](#) by HANNAH BROOKS-MOTL

“Brooks-Motl’s formally compelling debut comingles these “coterminous” elements, fomenting a “moment of danger” which, like a watch ticking down the seconds to midnight, is both seductively concrete and unrelentingly ungraspable. ”



14. [Sorrowtoothpaste Mirrorcream](#) by Kim Hyesoon (Translated by Don Mee Choi)

Poetry. East Asia Studies. Women’s Studies. Translated from the Korean by Don Mee Choi. “Her poems are not ironic. They are direct, deliberately grotesque, theatrical, unsettling, excessive, visceral and somatic. This is feminist surrealism loaded with shifting, playful linguistics that both defile and defy traditional roles for women”–Pam Brown.



15. [Blacken Me Blacken Me, Growled](#) – Cassandra Troyan (Tiny Hardcore Books)

IN THESE SLUM GODDESS STATIONS. “in this fuck her / in her mentality.” In these Decreations / Pulsations / Ceremonies or Sacraments of Rupture. Shouldn’t it be possible to leave the body / shelter? Shouldn’t it be impossible? In Cassandra Troyan, there is so much beating / in the world / so much beating / so much feeling / twisted up in an unleashing.



16. [Rain of the Future – Valerie Mejer](#) trans. By AS Zelman-Doring, Forrest Gander, and CD Wright (Action Books)

I return and return here. To the quiet dark here. To a unraveling pause / that rages / or quivers / of a powerful drowning / of a powerful placement (place met). “In the space, something yes. A piece of cloth. Sounding like flags.” A brain of dreams / that is fruit and altitude / a desert ash. I think of sleeping / in the sound / in the trajectories of rain / of course. The spreading of pain. “I / know that I am a prisoner of the surf. Little Havana, stern girl, float back / chameleon-like towards the black tree: until you waken, until we waken.”

---

*Entropy Contributors: Carrie Lorig, Dennis James Sweeney, Janice Lee, JoAnna Novak, Joe Milazzo, Kari Larsen, Michael Seidlinger, Peter Tieryas Liu, Quincy Rhoads, Robert K. Vaughan, Sueyeun Juliette Lee,*