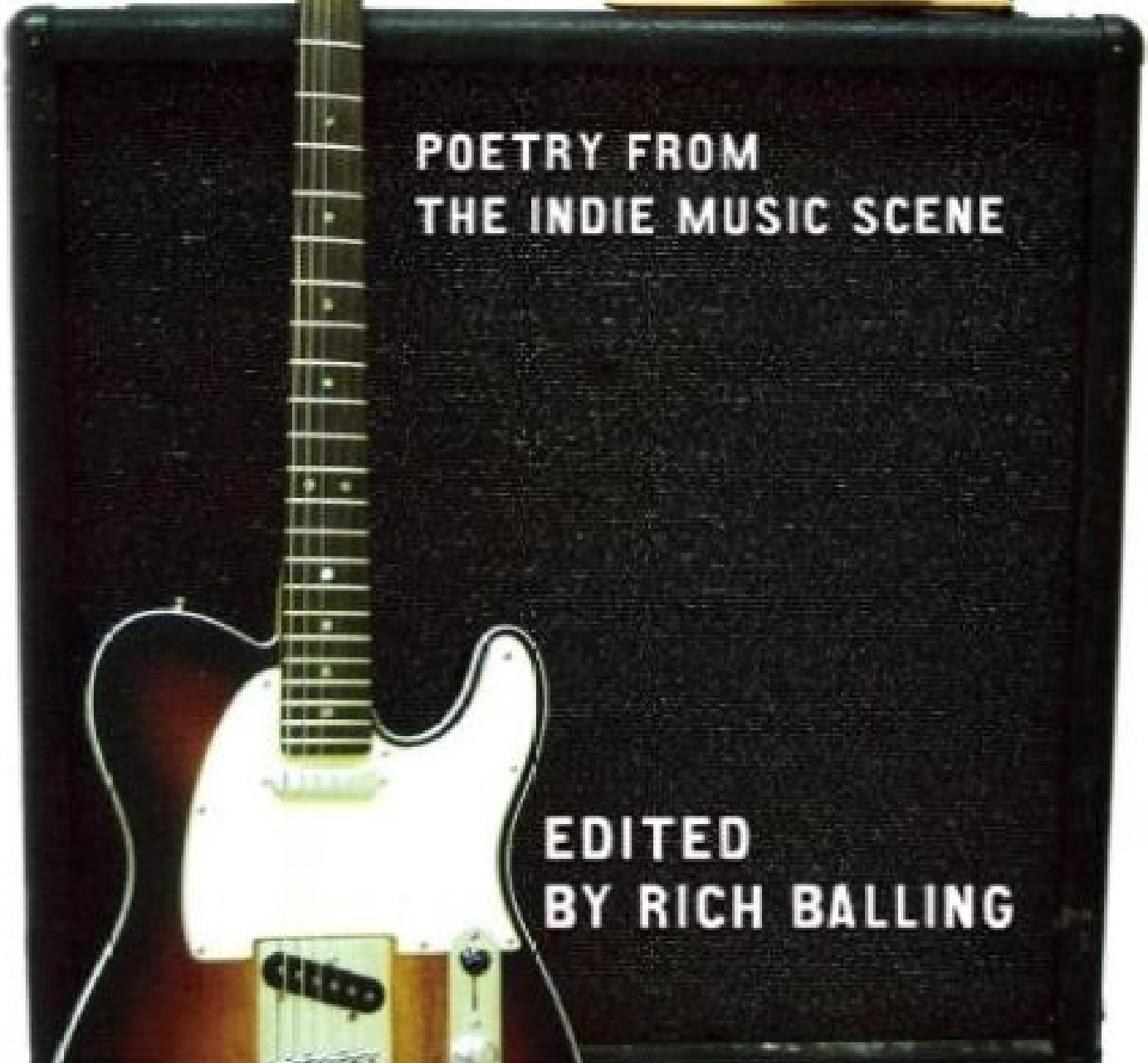


# REVOLUTION ON CANVAS



POETRY FROM  
THE INDIE MUSIC SCENE

EDITED  
BY RICH BALLING



*For Charlene Rogers*

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# Copyright

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Grand Central Publishing Edition

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**“one of these days, I’ll learn from my mistakes and not rush to opinions before I have given my works in any medium the time and full attention they deserve.”**

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**—Gerald Locklin from “lars jansson: ballads”**

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# FOREWORD

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**W**hen I first heard Dead Kennedys' "Too Drunk to Fuck," I thought, "This is great! Someone using the F-word in a song." I remember slam dancing around my government-subsidized apartment punching holes in the walls. It was the next best thing to saying, "fuck you" to your boss, your teachers, hell, even to your parents. At the time I didn't even know the complete meaning of the song. I was hooked on the fact that the catchy chorus kept repeating the word fuck (it wasn't your average pop radio love song). On closer inspection, I became more aware of the sarcasm and irony in the lyrics. It was a frat boy chant denouncing stereotypical frat boy behavior. I had a Punk Rock epiphany.

I thought to myself, after years of AC/DC and Rush, there was finally music with a lyrical content that went beyond telling stories about fantasy worlds, and bar room bravado. I wanted to hear more. Instead of getting "shook all night long," my brain and value system got a wake up call. These Punk Rock poets were speaking out about the ills of government, the shortcomings of a Napoleon complex, and the hierarchy of economic classes in our nation's capital. I learned about politics, psychology and sociology by reading the lyrics of Jello Biafra, Ian MacKaye, and Steve Polcari from Marginal Man. Here were prophetic, pro-active speakers using music as a tool for change.

Twenty years later, the values that I learned about growing up in the D.C. scene still hold true. Actions speak louder than words, but it was those words that inspired action. Too many bands out there underestimate the influence their lyrics have on people, and that irony can be a double-edged sword. Responsibility is literally in your hand.

Rusty Pistachio

H20

# INTRODUCTION

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If you're reading this book, you've probably seen them—in a library or a bookstore or on a subway—posters of Shaquille O'Neal or Cameron Diaz or Al Gore (holding favorite books) and telling you to do one thing: Read! Somberly clad actors on the big three networks say the same thing. And so do I. And so does my 17-month-old son (about 219 times a day)—“Read, read, read, Da Da!” And so I do. He crawls on my lap and off we go into lands of primary colors and levitating fruit and numbers dressed like people and farm animals. It's not sophisticated stuff. He's not yet ready for Hamlet or Camus or even a standard-issue Grisham novel. But by reading these little books now (these books whose A-B rhymes invade my sleep and whose monosyllabic words cloud my lectures at school), someday he will be. Admittedly, I am lucky. I was brought up with books, frequently read to, taught to read well by both teachers and my parents. My son will have the same luck as Shaq and Cameron and Mr. Gore and me. So the statistics say. Reading parents produce reading children.

I am always deeply affected—saddened mostly—that so many of my students come from homes where there are no books. Most of them will attest to this, when asked, without hesitating—some of them, oddly, with a bit of bravado. Unfortunately, it's no wonder that these students are the ones who struggle with even basic writing. It's no wonder that the source of their struggles (those with learning disabilities not withstanding) is of course the lack of exposure to reading materials, and often reading parents, at home. Obviously, the students to whom I refer here have at least basic literacy skills or they wouldn't be able to survive even the first semester of college. Of course there are those far worse off than those who can eke out a C- in freshman or even remedial composition.

So what about those who can't read a sentence? How can they be helped? And who will help them? There are innumerable reasons—individual and systemic—for illiteracy and weak reading and writing skills. Economic issues of course come to everyone's mind first. How can a child learn to read and appreciate books if there is no money for books and no one to take the child to the library or to sit with him and sound out the word “ca, ca, carrot” or “butterfly”? Many parents are simply not available because of second (and third and fourth) jobs. This combined with the simple fact that many parents can't read well themselves makes the origins of illiteracy far less mysterious. Illiteracy, like poverty, is hereditary.

But there is hope and help. And there are people who care. The musicians whose ideas and words that are featured in this wonderful book are committed to making people aware of the problem of illiteracy in the United States and of the programs available to combat illiteracy. Programs like the National Center for Family Literacy ([famlit.org](http://famlit.org)), to whom the proceeds of this book will be donated, succeed in improving the literacy skills of both kids and their parents by bringing them together in a supportive environment and teaching them side by side, so that they learn together, improve together, and encourage each other to work toward a common goal—the goal of making their family a literate one. How beautiful.

John Payne

Associate Professor of English, Cypress College



In an attempt to preserve the integrity of the work, we have chosen to leave the text as it was when we received it. It's not our business to decide who meant what where, and we don't want to insult anyone with blanket editing that might sacrifice what was meant by the work in its original form, whether it be on a type-written page, or a drink-stained napkin.

# WILLIAM E. BECKETT

---

*The Academy Is...*

Realization.

Enter The Author.

Home. Security. Illusion. Ego. Self. Lust. Blame. Sloth.

Betrayal and Fear.

Enter Panic.

Journey. Road. Quest. Reflect. Chaos. Discover. Condemn.

Adjust and Change.

The search has begun. This is Page One.

Men meet your maker, I give you "The Author".

He may look familiar because he looks like your mirror.

You've lied like a lawyer, but don't deny it when you're

face to face with demons dancing off of mirror images

reflecting all that you wanted. So far from perfect.

Enter The Mirror.

Onward, we will strive for betterment.

Take it for what it's worth, this truth that you've realized.

You're not who you thought you were, it's time you see the other side of what you have become...

Nothing but

Single serving selfish chapters of sacrificial moral standards.

No stranger to apathy in Bold situations. Take your time to make it happen.

Bring your mirror, and spare your excuse for a self-serving mystery.

This is a drastic endeavor. Desperate times call for desperate measures.

Take it, or leave it, if you will.

From this point on, it's Courtrooms and Battlefields.

The way you thought it would all work out... we've hit

Autumn.

Just follow the storyboard. The Fall of The Author.

From this point on, it's Exposure and Recovery.

take it, or leave it, if you will.

Exit The Author.

## **The Spokes of a New Tyranny**

we've set our mark upon the baron shade we've made,  
with the taste of our mistakes and the heat of our decrees.  
the broken sped throughout into the air of distant plains,  
i'm holding up your prudence and betting further dares.

still rusty with subjection and fruitful in our march,  
you're downstairs and i'm here spinning clever fate in the dark.  
with the hate in your remarks when you've spoken only love,  
i'm praying for health and you're praying from above.

so we danced and we laughed at the normalcy of good fortune,  
her eyes ever glowing in sickness and in health.  
with focus and chemistry we took the world alive,  
sorting through musings of a life i cannot provide.  
she's in love with ideas i'm in love when she cries,  
her neck gently bending and shaping the night.  
the morning is begging us awake yet holding softer,  
she's the taste of a millionaire, and i've the wallet of a pauper.

## **The Butcher/The Barber**

Cinnamon glowing the vices that I want to be bound to. The calming breaking down the rain on the asphalt. Wet with fever like I'm missing the better. And I know this is just the beginning. Still I wait with suitcase.

With the math of you and I aside... it's the skin on your jawbone, woven into you. One more pausing in silence. Two dimes on your eyelids. Third time's a charm, and the fourth time is too far. I adore my amor. I am the patron shaking and you're only dreamed. Pure and Golden, here are gifts from the thousands before. To HEAR the voice of the angels, "Raise anew!"

I'm recovered because you're warm in truth. Still I wait, with suitcase.

With the math of you and I aside... it's the skin on your jawbone woven into you. You are my serenity, when I think of you, I forget to breathe.

# NATE BARCALOW

---

*Finch*

Veins coarse, wet, abrasive. Dimwitted  
Happiness  
On and on about the neverminds of Me  
Scratch your bloody itch-

This is The Tourniquet-  
One more for Innocence, with a sad face  
Looking at this...  
Well, what's left of It.

Never a dull moment  
A Lonely Desert Night to build a Fire  
Warm this abandoned meat-  
Reckless and ignorant

A Victim of black and white.

## What It Means to Travel the Straightest test Line:

placed, so out of focus  
somehow i find myself inside the frame  
within this concrete empire  
i  
swear  
to  
leave  
stand and absorb all the scapes of the land  
stare harder, with intentions of figuring it all out  
and then held for ransom,  
who would make this trade?  
the blurring rails and power plants  
have me thinking that ive lost the way.

# DAN ARNOLD

---

## *A Static Lullaby*

...Of course I hear you!  
You're the taste upon my lips when I wake.  
Sometimes you're the only faith I have.  
Searching...always searching for more.  
I'm enslaved by you, but you make me feel as free as can be.  
I want to touch you.  
I'll catch your scent on the air and my feet don't  
stop, they can't stop! We must keep dancing in your name!

MUSIC  
The only air I breathe.

## Perfect Teeth

i taste your wife your kids your new car.  
accessories.  
i taste your game show grin. your perfect teeth.  
i reach and miss. i spit at ceiling fans and sundowns.  
your name under my pillow. your eyelash on my lips.  
make a wish.  
you sold me everything.  
i taste your new home in flames.  
i taste your calloused typewriter paws.  
oh so television.  
success.  
your secretary is the mistress i never had.  
glowing.  
i smell your teenage daughter's tears.  
she reeks of sedatives.  
i need this.  
i try to become you.  
anything to escape this sk(prison)in.



## Your Name Ajain?

ok

you just walked out the door with the won't-ever-happen-again

ok

it was supposedly *incommunicado*

ok

not that I'm jealous or upset or feel strange in any way

well ...ok

## **A Poem About Love and Hate in the Information Age**

10010111000101101001  
10010010101010101001101010  
1010010110LOVE101001001  
100101011010010010101001  
11010010100101010101010  
0101100101HATE0101001010  
01001010010101001010.

## Logic

Four commuters are riding in a train car. One gets up to use the restroom. Upon his return he finds another passenger has taken his seat. The woman next to the passenger that took the first passenger's seat is wearing a red overcoat. The man across from the woman wearing the red overcoat is not the passenger carrying the briefcase. The man with the briefcase was there from the beginning and has not moved. Seconds later they were all killed when the train derailed.

## Three Haikus

irony of chance  
on the corpse of truth I dance  
bitter end romance

...

honestly I'm not  
nothing happens fast enough  
words confuse the thought

...

seconds tick away  
the illusion starts to fray  
je suis désolé

## **The Tragedy of the Human Condition**

I'm still waiting for the news dad,  
That she's gone and never coming back.  
I can't go on because the strength I had is gone  
And I find it hard to get out of bed

Oh yeah, don't you know it's true son,  
You can't really know someone.  
Even though we sleep together we're alone  
And I find it hard to get out of bed

And we operate but  
I still feel alone  
And I can't complain  
Cause she's so beautiful  
Yes we all have made mistakes

# GABE SAPORTA

---

## *Midtown*

Everyday the same joke  
I never think it's funny  
Nothing's ever what it seems  
The truth becomes a dream

And we reach for what we're missing in ourselves

I fought away this desperation  
I made attempts to quell temptation  
I swear to god I tried, but we could never compromise  
You could never change me

And we reach for what we're missing in—  
We don't know how to let love in  
Don't you cry  
For me  
Because I'm already dead.

# BOBBY DARLING

---

*Gatsby's American Dream*

## Industry, the Age of Dinosaurs, and the End of Civilization

they call this the badlands baby  
but it used to be bayou  
the shore of an inland sea  
and i can still hear you coming  
what foul beast stalks this way  
the night is dim  
but i catch the scent of your arrogance  
as you rear your head i can see your eyes gleaming  
catching light from the moon  
like a pair of knives  
to cut me down  
yeah there is a hole in the world  
and the light is leaking out  
spilling like water  
and i can still hear you coming  
what new devilry is this?  
i saw you rise  
and creep across the sky  
and all night as i fled  
you came behind  
eating all the stars  
we dig to find  
why the light left  
skulls and bone  
rock and stone  
whisper stories  
tales of glory  
and a tragic fall from grace  
we're still falling  
just like the dinosaurs  
what makes you think we'll end up any different

## Wet Dream War Machine

Stop talking politics  
Rephrase, Rephrase  
Hibernating phantom friend  
Witness, Witness

There's a hotbed of isms around here.

All hail the chopper,  
the blitzkrieg,  
the tank.  
Never mind the ethics involved.

Stop talking politics.  
Calculate, Eliminate  
Witness, This mess

Who's got their nightmare glasses?  
It's time to go diving.  
Prime time is  
crime time is  
nuclear might.  
All hail the chopper,  
the blitzkrieg,  
the tank.  
Never mind the ethics involved.



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