

Lucktown



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Author:	Bryan Penberthy
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"I can't believe I live anywhere," the poet says in this remarkably dark, quirky, sad and surprising collection of poems. But he does—in Expatiatetown and Elegytown, in Endtown and Doubttown, on and on in his solitary travels. Bryan Penberthy's brilliant guiding metaphor goes past conceit to the multiple worlds within us, going past homage and question and complaint, back to a source radiant and genuine. A toast to this fine first book " -Marianne Boruch "If there were one American poet that the work of Bryan Penberthy most resembles, it might be the late Richard Hugo; but Penberthy is a far better poet than Dick was, with a wild sense of humor and none of the oppressive self-involvement that all too often freighted Hugo's poetry. The mind behind these poems is obviously brilliant, and the personality engaging. Friends, meet Bryan Penberthy." -Jonathan Holden "These poems are a work of multiple, ongoing scenarios, which beguile the reader each time one starts up again: 'This could be the best place you've known.' These approaches to viewing the world—Quiettown, Pooltown, Sleptown, and so on—seem actually human rather than simply mechanically humanistic—that is, we live through them, and that sometimes is all we can do. Possibility exists, but truth follows a pattern just beyond one's control. Free will exists, not that it ends up doing us all that much good. So we tell our stories, these stories, and get on with it: 'We're only as real/as the landscape that shifts around us.'" -Alberto Ros, 2007 T. S. Eliot Prize judge "Bryan Penberthy's Lucktown is smart in its unflinching: 'the dead / can't be accurately counted, their ends are miserable and use,' and smart too in its hope for art. .

And smart yet again in its hope hope for love triumphing over the persistent failure of love. . . . Lucktown believes in luck simply because sometimes your number has to come up on the roulette wheel or people would stop gambling.

Lucktown itself, though, is a winner." -Andrew Hudgins "Reading Bryan Penberthy's Lucktown is like looking through the facets of a well-cut prism to see a sometimes blurred, but rainbow-edged world come into sharp focus. He inhabits the end towns of his imagination, which become surreal topoi for different psychic states. The poems' titles are themselves a prose poem: lucktown, tigertown, pooltown, expatriatetown, oceantown, sleeptown, quiettown, doubttown, crazytown, smoketown, goodbyetown. The mood is indigo.

All the world's randomness, melancholias, self-delusions, hopes, yearnings, woundings, desires are given voice through a book of great formal rigor and variety.

Yes, Penberthy is mining Richard Hugo's boom-and-bust silver towns, but his small towns have the inconsolable dolor of his own Midwest. As Penberthy says, 'there's been some minor / talk of sending out a party // to find out what makes the world burn.

/ There's been this kind of talk before.' Yes, but this talk, though minor-keyed, is not minor. These poems do tell us what makes the world burn." -Donald Platt