

## Bike Race

*The Dirty Kanza 200*  
*Emporia, Kansas, 2014*

At 2 AM, you are the last rider  
and you rattle into the chute  
through the roadblocks here on Main.  
You've been gone since early yesterday,  
before every business on the street  
lugged out fresh-painted pianos  
for passersby to plunk on.

Your hands are liquid on the bars now,  
and the day's ghost-songs  
force you forward  
down the chute. You shake  
the announcer's hand,  
mount again,  
peddle back  
down  
    the length  
        of the empty  
            dark.

~ Tyler Sheldon

## You Write

while you listen  
to a train lowing like cattle  
for miles across the plains

until it reaches in your window,  
where you burn night oil, relish  
the tired burn behind your eyes

as you empty your pen at 2 AM  
into all the pages of every  
notebook you own.

The whistle shuffles the pond  
before your window  
like dog-eared playing cards.

You can hear each little wave  
fold neatly into place.  
Morning finds you

at your desk, your  
eyes, face stuck to pages,  
pen empty, dreaming

in words.

~ Tyler Sheldon

## Home

The kitchen window I looked through  
after first moving in to this breaking place  
has recently become host to a large black bird,  
and none of us know its name.

It makes the old frame rattle  
like a smoker's broken lung in the evening  
as I carve sweet potatoes for tonight's dinner  
to fry with other like vegetables

and I wonder whether this bird  
would taste any good if I added garlic  
or olive oil and invited it, featherless,  
into the frying pan.

This morning I saw the frame sagging  
away from the house, found the entry point  
where the bird had inserted a telephone book  
and folded a paperback bible

somehow for a nest. Later, I watched it  
fly up through that larynx of rotting wood.  
No doubt it will be back to stay.

~ Tyler Sheldon

# Watching Sky

*for Thomas Fox Averill*

Mornings, this farmhouse  
echoes dusty silence  
up to where the air  
is papery as onion skin,  
and every cloud  
shudders like a gong.

We wait  
for our myths to subside:  
ancient prairie bruin,  
Fenris, the goat chariots  
no one rides. We hold  
our breath. The world  
starts to turn.

~ Tyler Sheldon

## Notes:

Bruin: *Arctodus simus*, a species of bear appearing in North America during the middle Pleistocene, some 800,000 years ago.

Fenris: A monstrous wolf in Norse mythology. Foretold to cause the death of Odin upon the occurrence of Ragnarök.

Goat chariots: In Norse mythology, two goats—Tanngrisnir and Tanngrjóstr—pulled the god Thor's chariot.

**Tyler Sheldon** is a graduate student in English at

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