



## CHAPBOOK CONTEST WINNER AND FINALISTS

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From the fingers and mind of guest judge/genius Joe Milazzo:

"It's a truism, but only because there's a measure of truth in it: the task of choosing the most commendable from among a collection of creative works is never easy. Certainly, all the finalists selected for this prize are worthy of recognition. *LESSONS IN SEEING* salvages a lyric sensitivity from the toil and thrust of narrative while somehow (alchemically?) also managing somehow to wrest a narrative out of the indexical impressionism of a lyric sensitivity. *DEAR JOHN / HIGH HOLIDAYS / HELLO SAILOR* is pure detonation, its polyglot perseverations a kind of shrapnel, yet its violence is indistinguishable from an urgently homeopathic attempt to revive whatever integrity remains in the very notion of subjectivity. And *LOVERS' CONVERSATIONS* is what it says it is; its dialogic cooperations and spats evoke traditions as disparate as the Socratic and the Beckettian.

All that being said, I am happy to choose *WE'RE HAPPY OUR ORIGINAL DANCE* as the winner of the Zoo Cake Press Chapbook Competition. A manuscript of shapely exuberance, *WE'RE HAPPY OUR ORIGINAL DANCE* is full of subtle music, which is another way of saying that it isn't fearful of being ostentatious when it needs to be. As the reader is told early in these pages: "we swallow / the garden / singing on our tongues." *WE'RE HAPPY OUR ORIGINAL DANCE* is ultimately most remarkable in the attention it accords to this "we," this modest if necessary, non-Edenic yet germinal fact of our existence. As an elaboration on the free cadences and unrehearsed grace available to us in collective experience, *WE'RE HAPPY OUR ORIGINAL DANCE* offers us a way to reconnect with "each beat / of what's left / of the plenty of us" as well as the means to remember "the distance / between experience / and our framed / remaking of it." Imagine, indeed, an ecology of each other in which we have no qualms about chorusing "we deserve to wobble freely." In *WE'RE HAPPY OUR ORIGINAL DANCE*, we do."

Finalists:

LOVERS' CONVERSATIONS \*\*\*\*Tammy Ho-Lai Ming & Reid Mitchell

DEAR JOHN / HIGH HOLIDAYS / HELLO SAILOR \*\*\*Nicholas Grider

LESSONS IN SEEING \*\*\*\*Naomi Washer

Winner:

WE'RE HAPPY OUR ORIGINAL DANCE \*\*\*\* Curtis Perdue

1 Note

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