

## *Preaching to the Converted*

He claimed to have seen an owl on the train bridge at night perhaps with a hurt wing because it didn't move when he approached, but turned its head one hundred and eighty degrees then hissed like a cat or a mute expressing pure hate, and then it perched quiet and repeatedly winked. He said that during one of his many cross-country trips for who knows what reason he stopped his car in what was maybe Missouri or Kansas, got out, and walked long and steadily into a weed field unable to see what he was actually stepping in, getting into, due to darkness and thickness of vegetation and the off-key whistling of the wind probably masking the rattle-shake of rattlesnakes, partially hypnotized by the smell of pollen and fertilizer and soil soaked by humidity, to see, surrounded by darkness and obscurity, a full moon pulsing in blood red. He described in an amazing lack of detail the duration he sat on a desert denuded bluff at sunrise and watched the sun arch over Shiprock so that its shadows gave it a movement and the dry plains around it shivered in waves of heat. He claimed to have swum with a catfish that was as long as his own body in a rare deep part of the Mississippi river and that its head whiskers felt him, touched him, and he in turn stroked its smooth white milky underside. He told us these stories and more because he knew they were true and that, like him, we were so eager to simply believe.

PHILIP KOBYLARZ lives in the East Bay of San Francisco. Recent work of his appears or will appear in *Tampa Review*, *apt*, *Santa Fe Literary Review*, *New American Writing*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Poetry Salzburg* and has appeared in *Best American Poetry*. His book, *rues*, has recently been published by Blue Light Press of San Francisco.