



Daniel Spees teaches writing and literature full time at Hutchinson Community College, Hutchinson, Kansas. He was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, grew up in Oregon and Washington, and has lived in Kansas since 1992.

Spees received his BA in English from Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington in 1989, his MA in English from Emporia State University in 1994, and obtained an MFA in Poetry Writing from Wichita State University in 1996. He lives in Hutchinson with his wife and children.

Spees' poems have appeared in the Piedmont Literary Review, Quivira, Double Entendre, Mikrokosmos, Mississippi Mud, Thorny Locust, Coal City Review, Big Hammer, Poetry for the Masses, BlueLine and others. A chapbook, Michelangelo's Snowman, was published by Oil Hill Press, Wichita, Kansas, 2006.

The Snowman

I wonder how my town,
there, brown and away
in fading light,
looks to the falling snow.
Gray arms of trees
reach into the sky.

Yellow lights flare
one by one as the flakes
spiral toward town. I can think of my body
as disparate crystals,
each one as carefully filigreed

as a Tiffany lampshade. My body sifts
through vaults of air,
alights everywhere, silences the streets,
stretches out along branches,

on the tops of walls.
My girlfriend says
that though I am deep
and quiet,
I am cold.
Like the snow,
I don't answer.

Originally published in Double Entendre

Beyond Matfield

All the leaves
are down, dead trees
like lightning
among the living. We listen
to afternoon lyrics

and walk a beach
littered with beer cans, Thanksgiving,
and arguments. Our eyes are beads,
wooden in a loop
of subject/object like the hill,
a cheek dotted with kisses, with graves.

Breath wears a glove
of fragility, a creek bed
lined with wool. We cross the hay
field to the gate, kissing ice
off the rocks.

And later,
as we ascend the bridge's shoulder slope,
the moon a superabundant buttermilk balloon
above the silo, isn't it
the dead who are awake?



Daniel Spees

Distinguished Kansas Poet

- [E-mail](#)

The Garden Begins To Open Itself

I. Tilling

From the nest, hastily built of dead grass,
hanging like a beard, the finch vanishes
in a convulsive racket of wings.

The hoe turns up rags and margarine tubs,
a porcelain insulator, a gear, a bone.
Trees have grown the wire fence into themselves
and wear it like wings.

II. Tarot

The iris leaves stand transplanted
like tarnished swords. In the mower's wake,

upright but headless dandelion
wands shiver, and a cup in earth
remains where the rosebush once was.

Coins of sunlight drop through new leaves
of Maple boughs as the drowned man
rises under the prodding

of the rake. When the flood waters
reach the feet of the wheel-barrow
the empress will walk the south side

of town dressed in the withered skins
of last harvest, the gardener knows.

III. Furnace

Last frost subtracts into zeroes of rain.
The patch upturned for sunflowers, picked clean
by robins, holds broken sod like a tray

of loaves: under its cold skin the earth burns.
The gardener pulls on soil-crusting gloves
when the rain stops, and though the air is black,

his face blazes under the unearthed light
as he digs. Sweat leaves black tracks on his cheeks,
and the sunflowers grow already.

Originally published in Mikrokosmos



Daniel Spees

Distinguished Kansas Poet

• [E-mail](#)

Seeing The Last Sun

Ben will be reaching into his breast pocket
for a Marlboro.
I will get my arms around
the curving architecture
of his solid trunk,
broadened from labor,
and hug him back.
We'll walk from my apartment to my office
without one memory of silence,
two alcoholic brothers
being sober together a little,
thinking of this or that day,
laughing at some of them,
doing it all with charity,
pausing to stand with the same angel,
skirting the edge of the Catholic school,
finding a Pre-Mycenean bottle cap,
recalling eight different women,
embellishing six dirty tricks,
raking our bosses a bit,
his foreman, my director,
being almost tolerant of them, almost serene,
criss-crossing the streets to avoid dogs,
digging graves along the way,
picking a place on the gazebo steps,
the only one with any sun left,
climbing a ramp, frail and noisy,
narrow and cracked, boardwalk across train tracks,
incised eight times by the rails themselves,
gleamingly oblivious like our hands

as they dance with lit cigarettes--both of us thinking
the same thing, each of us hopping
our own freight, both of us telling
the same lame jokes, the city lights blurring,
fences zooming by, like being drunk,
both of us walking to the front steps of my building
so we can sit on a bench, so I can
show him where the gargoyles should be, so we can
look for monkeys in the tame sycamore
branches, the wildness lost--
trees inoculated and trees sedated--
wrapped in the center of a spreading quilt
of barnyards, pastures, hay fields, and towns
laid out in grids regular as the chain mesh
marking a playground--the baler patrols
the field in a constantly diminishing circle
just over the tree line and fifteen streets
from the campus where we sit, leaving one
package after another, bristling and hot,
to be hooked onto the flatbed and stacked
in the mow in heart-lurching heat, we sitting there
paring our nails, he with penknife,
me with stainless clippers, standing up
and smelling the hay, walking single file
until we reach the library, singing The Doors
all the way back, grasping at rain patiently,
grasping at wind, walking into the shadow,
seeing the last blue, seeing the last
crow, last sun.

Continued at right