



Kevin Rabas, an Assistant Professor, teaches creative writing and literature at Emporia State University, is co-editor of *Flint Hills Review*, and writes for *Jazz Ambassador Magazin (JAM)*. He has also taught English and Creative Writing at the University of Missouri at Kansas City, K-State, The University of Kansas, and Johnson County Community College.

The 2005 winner of the Langston Hughes Award for Poetry, Rabas' poetry has appeared in *The Malahat Review*, *Mid-America Poetry Review*, *Mochila Review*, *Coal City Review*, *Prairie Journal*, *Red Rock Review*, *River King*, *Rockhurst Review* and many others.

Rabas has led creative writing workshops at the Wyandotte County Juvenile Detention Center, and has been the host for reading series at nursing homes and assisted living centers in both Kansas and Missouri; some of the reading events include music--poetry + guitar. In the summer of 2007, Rabas' first book of poetry was released, *Bird's Horn & Other Poems*, published by Coal City Review Press (Lawrence.)

An Exam

I watch for that fire
the eye might be kindling
when a student looks up and knows—
pencil perpendicular to the paper,
or at a slant, pencil raised,
a thought at work, then wicking
through the wood
and into the lead.

The answers are somewhere above us, rising
somewhere near the surface of the faces
of the honeycombed fluorescent lights,
or traveling through
the winding tunnels
of the brain, arriving now
in a synapse flash, now jotted
on college ruled paper,
something I will read later
as the crows glide by
out the window, diving sometimes,
landing and congregating,
picking at something
struggling in the road.

Forthcoming in *Poetic Hours*, Summer 2006

Clothes Left in Washer

I'd go at once to meet you,
only I'd check
my eyes in the mirror
to make certain they pierced,
to make certain they could go absolutely cool—
as smoke, as brushes on drum head,
as breathy ballad,
or in the way John Coltrane
played the tune *Naima*
for her for the last time.

Red dress,
frog-buttoned in back,
geisha dress
that stopped your rival's wedding,
dress that kept you
from being invited to mine;
red dress,
I forgive, I invite you.
Parade on in.
Hold every curve
as a hand would.
Palm and lift up.
As you pass, know I will remember
that last hot bath you ran me,
when I returned
through the thunderstorm
for the clothes we left
in your apartment's quarter washer,
that afternoon when you told me:
You can stay. We can love.

Originally published in *Kiosk*, Fall 2005



Kevin Rabas

Distinguished Kansas Poet

- [E-mail](#)
- [Website](#)

Eden or Lucas, Kansas

...as told by my uncle, Charles Keller, who gives tours of the place

***“You know where I live? I live right next door to the Garden of Eden.
Up the way’s Paradise, and you go down about a half a mile and you
end up in Hell Crick.”*** --My grandmother, Bertha (Keller) Rabas

Your father’s mother’s people lived not far
from where old Dinsmoor lies now.
Your grandmother
fed old Dinsmoor’s badgers gingersnaps
Sunday mornings while Dinsmoor mixed cement.

Some called it sacrilege,
some sacrament.

But Dinsmoor was 64,
and figured the Lord
would forgive,
knowing he had so few
flexible years left to live.
Already he was stiffening.

Evenings, before turning in,
Dinsmoor worked
backyard aloe balm
into the cracks in his hands,
fearing his fingers just might crumble
under his wife’s pillow during the night.

He’d spent his whole life
planning the place,
the cabin stacked and mortared
using concrete logs,
the ziggurat for his body
and the body of his wife,
the shed, the garage, the planter,
and Eden above.

Every year,
while Dinsmoor built out back,
we had to borrow
just to put the wheat
back into the ground.

I thought what he built
would last forever.
However, at the start of autumn
when it rains
you can see the faces
of Dinsmoor’s statues
erode so slowly
it pricks your own skin
to watch.

No one knows
how to mix the mortar,
no one learned the secret,
so the arms are falling off of Cain,
the legs off Abel,
the breasts of their wives
are crumbling, Adam’s cane is crooked,
Eve’s hair has fallen,
and the snake’s in need
of complete repair.

Originally Published in The Malahat Review, 1999

Continued at right

All poetry on this page
Copyright © by Kevin Rabas, 2006