

Book Briefs excerpts

THE BOATLOADS. By Dan Albergotti. Rochester, NY: BOA Editions, 2008. 95 pp. \$16.00.

Dan Albergotti's *The Boatloads* was selected by Edward Hirsch as the winner of the A. Poulin, Jr. Poetry Prize. Albergotti, a native and current resident of South Carolina, evinces his southern roots through both the landscape and the wildlife that he describes and the Christian heritage about which he has doubts but cannot bring himself to deny.

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"O my lord, my absent God," Albergotti writes in a direct address that both presupposes a listening deity and laments His nonexistence. The move is typical of *The Boatloads*, complicating rather than resolving the central question. Genuine faith cannot be built from easy answers, nor can authentic doubt be built from unexamined cynicism. *The Boatloads* confronts the paradox of the spiritual quest: if there is no God, the world is no less beautiful; if there is a God, the world is no less cruel.

Siân B. Griffiths

TEMPER. By Beth Bachmann. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009. 65 pp. \$14.95, paper.

Beth Bachmann's debut poetry collection, *Temper*, is a murder mystery. Each poem stands on its own, but collectively these lyrics build a narrative arc: the speaker's sister has been raped and killed; the girls' father is the prime suspect. Such material is grisly, but Bachmann rises to the artistic, intellectual, and ethical challenges it presents by employing spellbinding lyrics told from conflicting points of view. Layering her lines with pointed wordplay and allusions, she engages brutality through art.

Dorine Jennette