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The Book of Accident

Akron Series in Poetry

Akron Series in Poetry

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Beckian Fritz Goldberg, *The Book of Accident*

The Book of Accident

Beckian Fritz Goldberg



The University of Akron Press
Akron, Ohio

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First Edition 2006
Manufactured in the United States of America.
10 09 08 07 06 5 4 3 2 1

All inquiries and permission requests should be addressed to the Publisher,
The University of Akron Press, 374B Bierce Library, Akron, Ohio 44325-1703.

Acknowledgments

American Alphabets: Twenty-Five Contemporary Poets: “Nights in the Constellation of the Twin-Hearted Prisoner,” “Third Body,” “Twentieth-Century Children (2),” “Twentieth-Century Children (5): Blood-Kissing.” *The Clackamas Review*: “Darkroom,” “The Last Courtship in the Book,” “Last Erotica.” *Crab Orchard Review*: “Memory on the Shoulders of the Gaze.” *Field*: “Body of the Hour,” “Summer Heats like the Needle in Its Chosen Skin,” “Twentieth-Century Children,” “Twentieth-Century Children (5): Blood-Kissing.” *Hayden’s Ferry Review*: “How He Became Conservator of the Meadow,” “Lightning-Wolf.” *The Indiana Review*: “Life Story,” “The Life and Times of Skin-Girl,” “The New Boy-Wonders,” “Torture Boy’s Watch, Burn Boy’s Boat of Souls,” “Twentieth-Century Children (2).” *The Iowa Review*: “Washed in the River.” *The Journal*: “Nights with the Star-Ladle over the House.” *Lake Effect*: “Annunciation.” *The Massachusetts Review*: “Dialogue: Memory and Forgetting,” “Nights in the Constellation of the Twin-Hearted Prisoner,” “Sudden Masters.” *Manthology*: “Torture Boy at the Easter Confest, Repentance Creek.” *The Onset Review*: “Forest-Body (2),” “Hummingbird,” “Lost Tribe.” *Quarterly West*: “Relic,” “Skin Girl’s Tattoo.” *Washington Square*: “Nights in the Constellation of the Tree Stepping from Its Robe,” “The Set Glistening.”

Some of the poems in this volume previously appeared in a chapbook, *Twentieth-Century Children* (Bloomington, Ind.: Graphic Design Press, 1999).

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING-IN-PUBLICATION DATA

Goldberg, Beckian Fritz.

The Book of Accident / Beckian Fritz Goldberg.— 1st ed.

p. cm. — (Akron series in poetry)

ISBN-13: 978-1-931968-35-5 (alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 1-931968-35-7 (alk. paper)

1. Title.

PS3557.O3556B66 2006

811'.54—DC22

2006002333

The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48–1984. ∞

Cover image: Center detail from Steven Assael, *At Mother*, 2001, oil, wood panel, canvas, and steel, 110 x 156 x 42 inches. © Steven Assael, courtesy of Forum Gallery, New York.

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*My friend, we suffer from the disease
we have not yet contracted.*

—Baudelaire

For Dick

one

Twentieth-Century Children

We were born in the light
of the war of the Gargantuas.
We were born into the picture
as others might be born into the world,
with the bloom of a giant ape foot
over Tokyo, with the blink of
the Lizard Men in New York. Not God,
but the God-hairs brushing close—and the fire
up first like a fat mutant
gold cicada
which had slept in the earth
on the secret installations.
We were bathed
in the glow of the beast
from 20,000 fathoms, the arctic
flash of calving ice,
our bright fur groomed
under a mother's tongue that clicked
like starlodes. We
were created in the image
of the image of the glazed
stare of God, its half-lives,
its dream-kitchens of gold-
flecked tile, its backyard
bottle trees and common wrens, its
television, television
glitter on our faces, other
on our faces, other
falling on our beds, utter
dying we were the picture of,
an eye for an eye,
an eye for a mouth.

Darkroom

Everything is in the process of recurring:
Colts in the darkroom,
those clarifying blots with jaws,
disjointed spines—

The sow from Malinovka
born without eye sockets—

These aren't our children.
Last night, she would tell him,
I gave birth to a son in my sleep.

He was an ordinary wolf boy.

But why reason with the God of Pictures?

And why say to a man, "The accident
was so long ago, why can't you forget?"

Twentieth-Century Children (2)

Everything she finds she drags home:
the cat, the ruined boots, the rusted knife,
the legless doll—

Can I keep it? And the boy is packing
a snowball in the freezer to save
for August. The sisters, no wiser, are
keeping warm

some small blue eggs on a cotton ball
constellation under mother's make-up lamp.
Things will stay.

Things will wait. This child's
America cooks up forever, and the stars
get pasted in their Book of Looks—

This light.
This word.
This favored found stone they sleep with.
And the moth they've sealed in

a plastic pin box and buried beneath
their folded summer shirts, so that someday
when they leave or when

they marry, they will find it
still, thing
and no more
the dream around it—

The New Boy-Wonders

They would have found the place earlier
except the one with *Torture* spelled out on his T-shirt
was afraid of lightning,
the arm shagging after him,
its zag into white time,

Orchid Town:
kids out on the streets blossoming
their cigarette cherries,
dogs staring from the windows like mothers

wondering, What's that year slinking by the porch?

When they reintroduced us to the wild,
one said, we lost track
we forgot our movie stars
we forgot our fire-scars
we forgot poetry.

In the next flash a house stepped
onto the far hill
and the meadow was licked

clean as the face of an object—
the metal crate
the experiment slept in, hush-hush—

the wolf boy left by accident
in the middle of someone's field.

At the Dream Birth

There is a second body:
The palms fill with mud
in the middle of the night,
the mirror takes a bath, the black's poultice
draws poison from the pores. Honey from the pores,
thick as meditation.

In the first,
in its heart,
you remember the birth of the wolf boy
and how, even after you woke to
the light of myth, the upright
spaces, that happiness lingered,
it lingered, black drop,

it will have nothing to do with time.

Dialogue: Memory and Forgetting

Naked and pale, pale as the plucked end of light,
is this your only body, this

you cover with mud, with fur, with sweet oil,
a sheet?

You drive it to work and back. And on the way
it comes to you, wolves

come from the book of snow
of childhood, fur taking in the weak
light, the light so low

it's important
not to know what next,

what goes out—
Here, I said,
it's a world where no one has to love you.

But they do.

Nights in the Constellation of the Twin-Hearted Prisoner

for R.B.G.

Then the body said Did you love me Prove you loved me.

And I said to the notebook Nothing but you, the horizon—

And it was true.

I was thinking of the face
my mother used to carve on the apple
before she gave it to me to eat—

I was, as always, faithful to my memory, my very
last . . .

And then there are dreams that become memories,
my dream of the two prisoners with the same name—
one in his cell, one missing

and I take the one out and put him beside
the cell of the missing one

so they'll think he's there—and so far
this isn't much different from memory, down

to the last detail of the man who wanders
the prison village at night
carrying a lamb no one will cook.

Then the body said Take me with you.

And the childhood knife said I will take you
with me, I will smile

you tenderly with me, I will tend you,

the sweet evening said, I

who wove you and weft you, I will

pour you from one breast to another,

I will feed your missing, and the blue
solaces said, And

where my alone meets your alone, I will,

oh Lamb in Arms,

yes, I loved you, Husband Skin,

husband

like guilt when I came I was yours forever.