

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

**HATCHET'S
HABIT & ME**

POEMS

CRAIG WELLS

CRAIG WELLS

Copyright © Craig Wells 2020

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law. For permissions, write to the author, addressed to the email below.

ISBN: 9798588127455 (Paperback)

Any references to historical events, real people or places are used fictitiously. Names, characters, and places are products of the author's imagination.

Front cover design and interior formatting by author.

First Printing edition. 2020

craigwellsauthor@gmail.com

craigwellsauthor.com

**TO ALL THE LITERARY AND
SOCIAL MISFITS WHEREVER
THEY ARE HIDING.**

CRAIG WELLS

CONTENT

HATCHET'S

HATCHET'S HABIT

SAINT NICK

GODIVA

HAL

MOLLY

ALISON

BRIDGET

VALENTINO

MICKY

CHUCK

GRANDMA IRIS

BONNIE PLATT

MR. NAGI

SAM OGEL

NED

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

MRS. GOSHIN

DOC ELI

SALLEY BUNTE

BILL FLANDERS

LOLA CHASE

ALISON

MR. SALAZAR

JESUS

PHIL SMITH

SUE SMITH

MRS. FLAP

ANGELA

MR. PHELPS

MRS. PHELPS

ALISON

EMMA LODRIDGE

MR. GIBBLES

MARY

ALISON



CRAIG WELLS

HABIT

IN LIGHT OF A CRACKED CLOUD

FLIGHT OF THE BAT

HARD AS GOOSEBUMPS

TRACKS OF THE GRIZZLY

MASSES OUT TO SAVE THE WORLD

TAHITIAN BLUES

NOT TOO MUCH SUGAR

NOWHERE BUT WIND

A WHALE OF A BEGINNING

DRAGONS IN THE SKY

GRANDMA IN GINGHAM

RED SKIES, BLACK ICE

JUST TOAD TO BE GOD

THOSE WEATHER MARIES

CONTAGIOUS TO THE RED

NIGHT IN BLACK SAGA

IN THE HIGH GRASS

MAYA, MY HEART, MAYA

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

A CHAIR WITH NO LEGS

IN TANDEM WITH WILD HARES

CROSSING THE STREET

AN ANENOME IN LOVE

GOOD SISTER BARRIE

TOO MUCH TOO SOON

LEGEND OF EARTHQUAKE CHARLIE

BREAKING UP

WINGS OF THE DRAGONFLY

WHO IS THIS RODNEY RASCAL?

BEFORE THE HURRICANE, COMES THE OCEAN

AFTER SNOW

IN A BLUE POND

APPLES

AT THE MONKEY TREE

WILDERNESS

ENGAGEMENT

ORPHANS TO A MAUVE ROSE

DESERT DAFFODILS

PEBBLES

MY COURTSHIP WITH THE WOLF

CRAIG WELLS

HATCHET'S

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

HATCHET'S HABIT

Towards dusk
when the grey walls
of Hatchet's
Bar blends into sloppy
handshakes,
our play
rallies
the cold with the
a racket a deer makes
trying to free herself
from a string of
bells; and
in the parking lot, the
headlights stagger
on to reveal
our littlest
brother
who tugs down
his dingy underwear
to his ankles
before he
squats
on an empty paint can;
unconcerned, his
father punches
out his head
and yells.
"Good God
Gus, stop picking
your nose!"

CRAIG WELLS

SAINT NICK

Inside a Victorian house,
windowless, half
painted yellow,
pot induced
boy talk echoes from
schoolgirls
in white gym
outfits,
while tulips
in blue bloom boldly
out of an orange
wheelbarrow
where an
abandoned black
Packard
sifts the dust
from his
eyes as
Nick,
nicknamed Saint Nick
by those
many gals who
know,
stands behind
the tow
truck
and beholds
a chunk of garden
hose jammed
into the gas
tank before
he jacks up the car
too high, and
the trunk

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

scalded with “just
married”
pops open
to surprise Nick
with packages
unwrapped,
twisting his
heart to
give in to a love
not yet met.



GODIVA

Finally, at the
Habit
off the counter
a green apple
falls, hits
the floor
splits
evenly, rocks to
the rhythm
of the wind
funneling
through a willow
next door
that dries the
wet owl
feathers, and

CRAIG WELLS

while the chorus
from the Messiah
distances
the water off
her shoulder,
Godiva pulls back the red
and white striped
shower curtain
before she
tiptoes
out and
past a window
steamed up
by what body is left;
but fooled by
God, she
shocks the light
with a
grace
of a moon
treading through a
fat flock of
clouds.
Unfortunately
all this beauty
falls waste to
a pillow
after Nick finds a
book on
birdwatching
under it.



HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

HAL

His fat
Calico with muddy
paws tiptoes
above the
blur of
Union Pacific
chiseled
into an ancient stone
bench, and
after the
cat rocks it,
the sky strays clouds
from its blue
to daylight
a moon
as dry but brighter
than the white
dots of her
black silk dress
addressing themselves
to a dingy window
of a Greyhound
bus off
to Silicon
Valley, and around
the corner
where he
stumbles into a stack
of Penthouse
magazines, and
before he
falls, a crow escapes
the cat

CRAIG WELLS

and he says
thank you to a world
who never loved
him, never let
Molly love
him. Hal,
who left a
trail of
crystals off her
favorite jelly
donut as he wanders
back home.



MOLLY

From nowhere no one
knew where
she came, except
everyday
until the end
Molly totes
her wishes in the
brown lunch
bag to our
bus stop where
she sits and
doesn't
eat, nor
unlatches her arms
around her

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

tummy;
and this reminds
me of the
bright
girl who once
clutched the huge
blue panda
bear she
held out to anyone
resembling her
father who never
arrives to
explain the baby
inside her,
or why,
inside the Habit
all those
brands of beer,
twisted
into a mobile,
cast shadows on
her table
while she
pleads
for the panda
to take
her home.



CRAIG WELLS

ALISON

All this night
and flight
tempts
Alison
to be wetter than
the water;
but fitful to the
last,
quicker than a
glance
against love
sucking
love from a stone,
lovely Alison
trips
over the moon,
falls into
the color of the
lake where
so much
beauty, as bountiful
as lacewings sweating
air with all their
might trembles
her neck
everywhere her
own green lace
does not
stick
to skin;
but true to
Alison, she slaps
so hard, she

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

mourns the dead
ladybug
floating beneath
her as her
own drop of
blood.



BRIDGET

Here at the Habit at
a table reserved,
vanishes
whatever angst
dyed her eye
red, after
she glances out of
a Bud beer
burp, Bridget
stretches to
let out her
breasts
earlier stuffed into an
orange taffeta
dress
borrowed from her
best, oldest
little
daughter who
watches at a window

CRAIG WELLS

as Bridget twists
and tugs up
sweetly
a slip
to expose a
thigh so
bruised not even
a twilight
with stars can
startle me
away from to her,
wishing
for more
before she
wishes never to
fall in
love, never to love
any man
except those
lost in the
riot of no chance
who stumble
after her
one after the
other,
already trapped to
her laugh as
she dashes
to my car
without a
kiss.



VALENTINO

At the Island
Café where
each fine butt of each
even fresher
waitress
takes
the place of tables,
where he never
eats but only
waits
to be served,
Valentino
in exile
from the Habit,
dreams
himself under umbrellas
opening into string
bikinis before
he returns
home
to each
Playmate who
tightens
the sky
around him until he
no longer
breathes as
he gallops into
the hunter's
heart
and back to
the Mogambo
women who

CRAIG WELLS

sag their
albino breasts over
his meal
he refuses
to order as he
delays
an apron without a
uniform,
just to
tell her.
A good
woman, you know
is like a
good cup of coffee;
you want to
gulp,
but
you sip her.



MICKY

Cherries on sundaes
always have their
way with
Micky
drunk,
who recalls
Daddy as
he tweezered

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

his slim
soap
scrubbed raw
fingers
into the Coke
bottle
and dropped
the cherry
again, and laughter
and still with
laughter,
she retells the
tale after
Micky
hears the eight
ball
plunk into a
pocket by
a man who could
stir her heart
to flirt
even harder
with every man
who kids
her before she
frowns through a
face as powdery pink
as the farthest wall
where she leans
in bay
to be reminded
she must not
forget the
cherry
on Sunday when
she eats alone.

CRAIG WELLS

CHUCK

Up the lane frets
the wind along
with a man
who walks in
unlaced
boots caked
with sand
while he makes
whoosh
with his lips to
idle time
until
the dawn catches
up to him,
and he
returns to the
Habit where
Chuck explains
how he
snuck onto
a trash
can lid, rocked
it back and forth,
fisting nature
itself
to lift him out;
but after he smiles
at me outside,
he snatches
up the moon
in his splotchy
painter's
cap,

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

enabling him
to reflect
on the quarter he
flips up,
then
deciding on tails,
if anyone
other
than me
wants to
know,
he scoots the
coin heads
up on the
Union Pacific
bench above an
abalone
shell
I crush, he
kneels before,
to admire its
colors radiant and
glorious under
our moon to bring him
one step closer
to heaven
before he jumps
off the pier
to ride
a porpoise.



CRAIG WELLS

GRANDMA IRIS

In grandad's dusty
darkroom where
 he died
 making
 pictures out
of stuffed sparrows,
 the warped
 door
sticks to Grandma's
 heart's desire
 trapping her
in the white and
 black; the
 white
light she finally
 switches on
over her head
 to pick
 up her
gingerbread man
 she baked, as
 stale as
 the Bud of
beer next to
 it on the
 enlarger,
and when its hand
 breaks off
she clutches it
 to her
breast before
 she drinks,
then shakes the bottle

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

and giggles
because it
does not squirt
back, in
the black,
in the arms of
making
sunlight out
of Chuck
who never really
held her.



BONNIE PLATT

While her children
in no shirts
and nothing
but mischief
ride on
lopsided trikes and
wobbly wagons
pulled by
their furry grey
funny mutt
who keeps
leaping up and
over, then
into them
before they escape

CRAIG WELLS

up porches
empty of their
neighbor's laughter
because of the
heat; while
splendor to their
mother's skin
breaks the spell
sunlight brings
to waterfalls
against bleached
beach granite,
for in the
chance Bonnie
can be
alone, she
swelters between
clotheslines
until a
blue jay swoops
down on a
sheet, and
before the bird
squawks
she whips
around
to cry, "you
bastard,"
but the crisp clean
white slaps
against her
lips,
forces her to
bite down
on the clothespin,
to wait, to
finally

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

kick off
a sandal.



MR. NAGI

At the busiest
bus stop
from Billings to
San Diego,
his hands finally out
of pockets
Perrier
Pabst, patience
stretch out every
tale about her
into no more nights
alone while he
stands
proudly by
her freckles, and in
defense of their
beauty, he
sides with
everyone's lack of
dislike for
those plastic
red ball
earrings, the Q-9
button on
Habit's

CRAIG WELLS

jukebox,
and a Coke
can cut
into an ashtray;
its ashes
everywhere but
in her hair
redder
than red,
redder in sunlight
where he
runs against the street
light until
his heart
strips the clouds
of their white,
and he stops to
think about color
as clear as
tears
on a sunburnt
cheek he
dashes
after a sun
against his lips
he concedes to
be hers
lost in Island's window
moonlit
with an Uber he
will never
catch.



SAM OGEL

Out of the Habit
and in a dawn
dash down
an avenue for
his youth,
Sam Ogel
yanks an “open
all night”
kite
into a quiver
above Ned
who applauds against
the tin tambourine
rain with black
hands he
wishes were leather
gloves, and
when Sam
stumbles, runs
even harder
than Bridget who
steps on the purple
ostrich feathers
around her
neck, strangling
herself before
she shouts after Sam
who staggers, jerks
sprints even
higher than the
assailant Monarch
chased by a
mockingbird against a
billboard where

CRAIG WELLS

Sam collapses
underneath
to laugh;
laughing still
as he
watches the kite
disintegrate,
tangled in
telephone
wires.



NED

In the
rain,
thunder dead
across the steps
of death; and
near him
the attendant
of spark
plugs
whose hands
wreak of
gas and
tobacco, stares into
headlights until
they fade
into two long lumps

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

of sugar
in his white
coffee mug
cracked,
back into a
moon reflected in
a puddle
stronger than
light from Mrs. Goshin's
window, where
she wiggles
out fully
from her uniform
revealing the
curb Ned
knelt
on
to forget,
nudge an
ant back onto its
leafboat,
to recall the
the pretty
face;
a first love
distorted
behind a windshield
who smiles
but never
returns.



CRAIG WELLS

MRS. GOSHIN

Had been a nurse
on call,
could have
been much more
than
bedpans,
had inoculated
her children
with seven brands of
cereals
against her own
loneliness,
and often
at night after
Doc Eli
returns from the
Habit, she
squirms against
the black TV
tube, squeezes
herself into
rubber
gloves
to massage
her lover's
heart;
even harder
than the uniform
she stuffs
herself
into
on Monday;
always on Monday
she finds she

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

needs
much more;
then why today,
should this
fly smashed on the
vinyl white
and red checkered
tablecloth
smeared
with Mommy
scribbled without
eyes cause
her?
Oh.
God!
Where
has poor
Mrs. Goshin
gone?
Not
dead?
Please.



DOC ELI

In the distance
sirens gape back
the wind
from groaning
through

CRAIG WELLS

holy bloated clouds
while in a sky
hoarse
moan, Doc Eli
in regret
he is not now
an angel
floating down on
his hang glider,
stumbles
barefooted out of
the Habit and
into Lola's
Mustang
where Valentino
as shoeless as
mud without
dirt
wrestles Sally
Bunte down
onto the
convertible top as
stained as old
underwear;
rips it,
her blouse after
she struggles
up to plead
into eyes
hotter than coffee in
crystal saucers
while Doc
steps on a
broken Bud,
and sits,
stares
at the blood

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

even as Sally
shrieks
after she notices
the big mountain
bumblebee
crawl out as
her nipple.



SALLY BUNTE

The yawn from
a lion cub
beneath
the shell of a
chaparral
tree
could not have
been anymore
casual
than hers
as Sally
continues an
afternoon mission to
the Seven-Eleven
after milk
and things
to put
in her red
wagon
where she thinks

CRAIG WELLS

she had
snuck all
the Sunday comics
under a blue blanket
her Mommy
warned her not
to forget;
so when
Sally Bunte
strolls past the
Habit and
unleashes her charm
upon five men
with no
pockets, who
act like boys
with balls as
hard as little green
apples, they
listen as
if they let her wish
she is that
pretty girl next
door; so
no one
notices what is in
her wagon
until the little blue
bundle Sally
called Joan Jet
crawls out into
traffic.



BILL FLANDERS

Big
enough to crush
an oil barrel like a
beer can, Bill
after he
breaks out
his best soul
on Sunday
with the grace an
otter slides
down
a muddy hill,
did not
mind they
challenged him to
balance the
pool table
with one
hand
above his head,
and dammit
Bull Flanders
could have held it
all night
except he
spots little
Joan Jet
on the counter as
she sniffs
her curiosity
closer to
a fan;
with ease he

CRAIG WELLS

reaches
back and grabs
the cord.
Except
Bill,
those are bare
wires,
as he burps
he says
“oh,
shit,
the table.”



LOLA CHASE

Under the white picnic
umbrella hat,
in the heat
of a Sunday afternoon,
Lola staggers
through
the asphalt like a
huge partly
deflated
beachball alone on
sand, and
at every corner
she plucks
out a man

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

before he logs
his last face
into Hatchet's
to hand
them a
single
dry
daisy red-tagged
with "Jesus
is Lord"
and being
hospitable, Lola
reminds
herself of all
the ladies
caroling "praise
the man"
as they sip
champagne cocktails,
so she does
not mind
accommodating these
men on the trunk
of her purple
convertible
'52 Buick;
as long
as they can be
taught to
sing
"Behold the
Lamb of
God"
from Handel's
Messiah.

CRAIG WELLS

ALISON

Too much light
makes her
work
hard
at the bra
strap
cutting her out
of love and
out of a
wind that blows
an orange
off the tree,
shatters
a half moon into a
window to let
the rain escape
across a
warped
record of Janis
Joplin sing "Me
And Bobby McGee"
while above,
a lamp
scars
the ceiling, shimmers
it with
stars
as Alison
slowly
slips off the
rubber band from
around the cup
fat with vanilla

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

custard; but
too fast
it pops
off,
bunches up
into a
lump
in her throat
before she
giggles.



MR. SALAZAR

Ever since his
wife died,
the fig
tree she loved so
much because
the wind
caught all the
sunlight in
its leaves applauding
her red dahlia
buds into
bloom
growing greater
each year
until he can chat
with its limbs

CRAIG WELLS

rapping
against the window
as if she tells
him to get
out, go
for a walk
put a
dahlia in your lapel
and stroll,
which he does,
past The Habit and
up to a suitable
used car in
Ralph's
supermarket parking
lot where he
circles
and observes,
ponders and disagrees,
so formidable
with himself as he
decides on the
best offer;
but the sudden
disappointment of
no, sends
him back to
Hatchet's
where Mr. Salazar
realizes she
would never
let him
buy
a convertible.



JESUS

In Balboa Park
he sits on
a picnic table as
green as a
toad shriveled
on the road
and shares a fear
with other Latinos
who have no
mother either;
neither
does he mind
waiting for work,
for in it comes
a freedom
from water,
houses
vans jammed with the
sweat of
the Virgin Mary;
then thinking
Christ
in a bad
way, he
watches Phil, an old
man in oily slacks,
beckon him
as Jesus
stands
to offer a hand
in weeding
out his garden;
but Phil

CRAIG WELLS

smiles that way
and touches
his zipper, and
Jesus
imagines boys
who drink pee out
of paper cups,
and as he
wishes for one
clean sheet,
one prayer, a
Mary of his own,
Jesus
sits back down
muttering
in a bad way,
“you son of
a bitch.”



PHIL SMITH

Who is
this man
of mouth and
lies clogged
like a bathroom
trap
who picks
his teeth to
reveal a life

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

flushed by
bits of tissue
paper
bloodied
with Sue's
tangerine
lipstick,
hairs
sweetened with
another night's
vomit, and
buttons of jeans
and blouses
salted with
flannel
lint for taste
he swallows
like the drain
to choke
out this life
so Phil
can disguise
his true lust
for his
daughter
after he walks in
on his wife
sitting
on the toilet,
and tells
her how
much
he loves her.



CRAIG WELLS

SUE SMITH

The shot
from the hose
sopped Mrs. Flap
good in her
convertible Cadilass,
and even Sue
smiled;
Sue nicknamed The
Raccoon by
the chance a
five legged toad
might hop into
another,
entertains the
kids with
spooks in
sheets, and gangsters
in floppy hats
without brims
while
everyone gathers
around the
Helms
Bakery truck,
Sue steals
donuts to bandage
up their frowns;
but instead
escapes
to the old tree house
where she eats
too many
herself

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

after she plucks
off the sloppy
pale purple
puckered
dress;
but unable to
see herself
in the sheets
of rain
made into a
mirror
against the
sun,
she smiles:
“Fuck,
the bastard.”



MRS. FLAP

At dinner, Mr. Flap
shakes a mean
asparagus spear
at her, and
when it
flies off his desert
fork and smacks
her Gucci
gown,
Mrs. Flap watches

CRAIG WELLS

it slide down
into memories of
sunny fat
white
puppies
with brown masks
who poke their heads
out of
holes chewed
through moving
boxes, and
she remembers the
summer of 1969
when even
kisses through
a screen
door caused as
much laughter
as a lemon slice
slipping
out of Ned's reach
between ice cubes
melting into
a last lemonade
before his cold
fingers skipped the
buttons on
her yellow and
white
striped dress
and skimmed across
her nipple;
at least
for now,
after dinner
Audrey gets through
the night by

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

pulling the
moon
over her head,
to watch
days in
and gates out
waiting for this
man; the
mother she
married, where
she leaves all
those varied smiles
between the
tender inside her
thighs before
silence stands up
for memories, and
all those diamonds
get harder to
swallow.



ANGELA

At the Island
Café as
far from the sea
as her crusty
wetsuit at attention
in the back
of her closet,

CRAIG WELLS

her skin
thicker than sunlight
strips the
wrinkled black T
shirt of
its heat, seems
washed of its color
under the
fluorescent lights
where Angela
sits on a red
leather seat
cracked,
watches a
ceramic white mug
cracked,
then her hands
cracked,
stained with
coffee, manhandles the
fork to
poke, pick
prod the icing
on the dry chocolate
cake she forces
down with squatters
on her heart
all around her,
whether in
the before or after,
anywhere she
walks,
stumbles, flies
spins, hops,
dances against
the air, into it, far
from it to

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

a child, a dream
of being on
stage with James Brown;
to be him in
her body, finally free
of it, lucky to wear
a thinner
T-shirt
a lesser bra,
a blacker skin,
to be
black, too
hot to taste,
and left
alone
to dance.



MR. PHELPS

With the dignity
he sits at the
piano,
Mr. Phelps waits on a
park bench
and notes the retreat
of all those
little mouths who grope
at the drinking
fountain

CRAIG WELLS

 jammed
 with a peanut,
 unsalted;
 then
to the delight of
 three sparrows
 and himself,
 he slices
the lemon in wedges
 as precise as he
 once carved
those nouveau Congo
 giraffes
he made in Mexico
 while escaping
Viet Nam, the war,
 clap,
 his mother and
 the hunt
for Poncho Villa who
 escaped Teddy
 Roosevelt
 as he did, as
he remembers
 with each slice
 becoming
more fragrant after
 he sniffs
 the pine needle
 he pulls
from the Tequila
 he sips from
the aspirin bottle turned
 to the sun
 and warm to
 his throat
 undressed,

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

to embrace
a mist tight
against oaks where she
strides out, as if
a crescendo,
beautifully punk,
through
and through,
hard as
rock in her stiff
turquoise
skirt, black
hair, black lips
hard as nipples;
and when
Angela smiles
she smiles
at him,
walks past
him into his
past where
he made
love to her
as in '32
while Gershwin's
rhapsody
vibrated in
blue veins through
Emma's
very
white breasts.



CRAIG WELLS

MRS. PHELPS

The fortune of a
puppy towards
love is
wine
to grapes
when the drapes
are drawn
to keep
out Christmas lights
tangled up in
the wind
as Mrs. Phelps
sits in her
best purple bra and
bikini underwear
worn to
every thread
and white to her
thin skin,
while she cuddles
Rags, old
and grumpy in a
coat as game
as a mustard stain
and as wet as
the rain
welled up in
Mrs. Phelps' eyes
melting like
frozen
grapes just
as Rags
jumps off her

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

lap and
bruises a leg,
hobbles to
Santa, who
drunk
with her wine,
leaves her
a leash
and takes
Rags.



ALISON

In the farthest
corner of
her bedroom,
before
the sun finishes
bringing up
the underbelly
of the ocean,
all the
waves
counter a moon's
reprieve to the
beach while
light heartbeats disturb
the flesh of a
flat breast

CRAIG WELLS

as she
parts her lips
and pulls
apart white from
sand, tongue
from strawberry,
its juice
from seeds to
grains swept away
by her sighs
to free
a turtle egg;
only to crack,
to startle her eyes
skimming across
the seam of
her white down
comforter
where the line of
the pelican
brought
depths
of drowning to
stop her
heart, to get her up
into the mist
bombarding
her belly with
goosebumps
where she
wishes she can
tug up her
red and
white striped cotton
socks before
Christ hides
them.

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

EMMA LODRIDGE

Through the sun
sometimes
comes sunlight,
and through
the dirt
then dust
never comes anything
but the heat
and a clankity
fan next to
where Emma
sits and
listens to her
memories as
sweet as cigarette
butts in
a wine goblet
while she
watches
each fly land on
the ragged
electrical cord
to be electrocuted;
but never
once
does Emma
think of herself
as she
stands and
straightens the
fawn dyed
from too much care
housedress before

CRAIG WELLS

she walks to
the Habit
to face
the candy machine
where unable to find
her quarters
lost in
the two Hersey
bars melted
in her
pocket from
before, Emma
waits,
too polite
to eat in public, she
forgets her
way
home.
Momentarily.



MR. GIBBLES

These silver
charms,
an antique sewing
machine, the
Valentine,
the Yosemite wigwam,

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

as tarnished as
the cage
where their
yellow parakeet
pecks them
as incessantly as
the hamster
drives the
wheel,
inspires him
to pin playing
cards
to bicycle spokes
just to hear
them after
Constantine, her
calico cat,
scratches the
pie tin
he offered her
as the litter box,
and he is
reminded he
should have
watched how Mrs.
Gibbles did
things;
so he sits on the
edge of
their bed
with his pajamas
she had folded
on his lap,
and he
doesn't budge
even after
Bud the

CRAIG WELLS

bulldog jumps
up.
Martha
is not here
to switch
off the
light.



MARY

Up those wooden
steps, Mary
lugs a black
club foot,
while she talks to it
like she
found Jesus
who helps her
smile
up her courage
with the enthusiasm
she can ignore a
crumpled bra
strap clinging
to a bruised
arm, rather than
hear Gus
underneath her
whispering

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

“no undies”
so Mary rushes
out of Christ into
her devotion
for Bill,
her pimp,
and into Lola
who breaks
out of her apartment
and her rubber
thongs to
sip whiskey out
of a Jim Beams
bottle that
slops out as subtly
as sunlight
against her
lavender nightgown
to shower a body
with age, near
Mary who places the
hoarse voice that
sweetly remarks “pretty sun
dress, but honey,”
which strikes Mary
back to
Christ Who
reveals her
breast as her savoir
to be bared,
enabling her to
rub off the
Ajax Cleanser;
it foams,
won’t fade
anymore than how
Mr. Phelps

CRAIG WELLS

blushes
after he stares
at the club
foot, and weeps
for himself
to come to
this. He
can't
send her back.



ALISON

In the chain of
withdrawal
fat, grey
squirrel
fights an acorn
trapped in
a chain
link,
twirls the swing
swinging back
to snow
under feet
when caught in
the throat,
its cry
shivers the wind,
denies laughter

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

to the raven
on her
back
flapping wings
to beat
gravity,
the nature of
white wind chimes
faraway in clouds
as light and
lyrical as
lips
underfoot
trembling with
love, with
sun in
the rain puddling
on the palms of
oak leaves,
in the sunset of
pink dogwood petals
driven from her
by three
drops;
each drop
ripples
the lake, each
breath harder than
the last; and
too fast
Alison
twists the neck
of her yellow
and white
striped
T-shirt she
dunks

CRAIG WELLS

deeper
and deeper
into never having
to love
me
again.



HABIT

CRAIG WELLS

IN THE LIGHT OF A CRACKED CLOUD

Atop the tall
willowy
lamppost with its
flakes of
rusty paint like dry
oak leaves
that hold
to my tears,
the crimped metal
bowl of light
stutters,
infuriates the
heart to
beat at the
lightning to rain;
but being this
high, and
in love.
What
love?
I jump up and
punch out
the lightbulb after
she crosses
her legs
nonchalantly
around my
lust,
chokes out
the rain,
drips off
my chin.

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

Under the waterfall
wetting my
lips with the
sting of
her perfume,
this mist
with a wail
erupts
with steam
from the madrone
bark after
she peels away
eyes,
freckles, toes
mole, buttons
hair, to
put me under a rainbow
without water, light;
only heat
hot against the stones
glued against my
feet tangled up
in her
jeans.



About to beg but
better off
than a snail
stuck to
a stone
stuck
turning to suck
life from its tail,
I claw

CRAIG WELLS

loose the
berries while the
blackberry
vines scratch
me where
she had not shaved
since Wednesday,
and beneath
my fingernails
juice sweetens her bite
splattering
it on her teeth
until she
frowns. I
lick the stone
to keep myself
from
raining.



On call
from the owl
fluttering
to land
on a twig caught
in the throat
of the wind,
I dance
faster to please
her, to
stomp
out the sun,
stop rain harvested
into the night
as sealed

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

against
her skin as her
nipple flushed against
my embarrassment,
finding out
she does
not love me enough
to stain my
breath
with the pine
needles,
which lets me
know she does not
howl with the
wolf hanging
from the fir where
the moon wets
her fur with
my tears.



In the beam of
a cracked
cloud, in the
ruin of a
tempted
trail,
I cannot
protect her, stop
the tiger
lily from shedding
its spots
floating into
her dimples
after she smiles to

CRAIG WELLS

gather up
my thirst again,
to bury my hands in
the rain. I pull up
the moon
to look
back at me,
and see
all the water in
the green,
tree in the water,
and her breasts
I cannot
cover
with all I can
gather;
not
the moon, the
mud,
nor the green,
any flower,
my
hands.

I walk away.
In love.



FLIGHT OF THE BAT

At the edge of
a cliff, the
turkey buzzard
steals the
calm
of the night from
the flight
of the bat and
into an
afternoon of
sunlight
while
on a chair with
no back,
I lean back
further than
forward
than the thought
of never to be
loved,
but tried,
tempted, relieved
to feel the
lines in
her lips as
elusive
as lightning.



CRAIG WELLS

HARD AS GOOSEBUMPS

Atop a rock
steam
shows up
with its texture
hard as
knees; and
near me
where she bathes,
baiting
another lover's
sweat,
goosebumps
bring up
dreams, upstage
clouds warm
as cracks
escaping the
snow, and
I dare all
this
for one
kiss,
to free
the sun from
the moon,
bring night
to the
rock,
not her
lips.

TRACKS OF THE GRIZZLY

Bring death
to me
in buckets bulging
with toads
ducks
and trout
that ponds up
in me
constantly
because I walk
no other
place
but to bands of
sunshine to
rouse me
with tunes I
follow in
the tracks of the
Grizzly as
black
as treacherous as
a night
without
stars, where
in city lights
cascading off the
mountains like
an owl
hovering over a
mouse squirming
back into
its hole,
I wait,

CRAIG WELLS

and listen;
listening
still.



MASSES OUT TO SAVE THE WORLD

Do I cry when
black and green
teeth talk
themselves devilishly
out of smile
into the night
and guts
sweating love
out of a toad under
my foot
for a taste of all
that is wild
in tree, grass
and moon
while mooning
about the fat around
a back black bra strap
meant to cure
the masses
of their sensuality?
Or do I weep
when she wipes off
my kiss

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

with the back
of a twenty
dollar
bill
tasting of the coke
I sprinkle
on the toad
to see
how far
she
will
go?



TAHITIAN BLUES

Out of mist
suddenly
lost to a robin
scampering
into a log,
across grass
frozen to
last night's moon
hidden in a
meadow,
to the white
of clouds
shouldering back
the blue;

CRAIG WELLS

in the distance
and longing,
lightning led
the thunder
to my
heart, to
her green eyes
lost in the
delicate
brown skin,
to a
desire to
draw all
the lust for
mud from
my tongue
and float me
into the
flesh
of her nipple,
as warm,
wild
as raindrops
tossed
against the back
of my neck.



NOT TOO MUCH SUGAR

Those bleached

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

bones of
a chicken picnic
wonders me
into a
paper plate to
meet the
moon, at sea
at the same
place I
wish the light to
titillate sandpipers out
from shadows
until
she comes back
like hot
coffee;
not
too much
sugar.



NOWHERE BUT WIND

Under the eclipse
of a moon
cradled
in a signal stuck
on red
the hummingbird
watches

CRAIG WELLS

all flight
empty into a
dead end
street stripped of
its skin by
the wind
where all my
desire
catapults
me to the egg
carton
flooded with rain,
jeweled with
oil leaked
from a Mustang as
blue
as her freshly
pressed jeans
suddenly
slumped over a
tumbleweed
rattling
against the blackest
night I
chase
as well as
tire tracks back
into the
moon, into
the signal
of no
light,
no
bird,
no
flight,
but love.

A WHALE OF A BEGINNING

Above Los Angeles
while lost
in the middle
of the Santa Monica
exchange,
I stare at a
flat tire
until it collapses into
condors circling lower
around a hump
of a whale
drifting farther
out to sea,
and after
they descend into
the blowhole, a
spray erupts
into a thunderstorm,
a downpour
against the hubcap
after the
black CHP boot
stomps on my
hand, to
kill my
obsession with
speed; but
the jack slips,
slides all
my questions into
the sound of
wheels that
brings me away from

CRAIG WELLS

sweat, carbon
cardboard,
sky, and to
the sun
cresting to create
a white
leopard
checkered by
foliage
in a Mexican
rain forest more
breathtaking
than the law, than
being able
to stop her in
her green
and white gingham
dress more
beautiful than
my chivalry
after I
take the gas
can from
her,
take off
across all those
lanes as
evolutionary
as any whale
walking
out of the forest
and into the
sea,
into my heart
hidden from
me as her
green eyes

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

even deeper
after she takes
off her
dress, and I
bump
free of
a traffic
jam
I caused.



DRAGONS IN THE SKY

Clouds
across the
pool in her palm
have been
asking,
whose coffee
too hot,
christen her
mouth with fire
and rain like
dragons in
the sky
at sunset;
humiliate themselves
next to her
touch
that touches no one

CRAIG WELLS

but the
moment I
discover
I cannot feel
myself
without feeling
her.



GRANDMA IN GINGHAM

No one
I remember
as a kid
ever wore gingham
as any American
would; expect
grandma
who carried her
breast under her arm
like a kitten
asleep
ever since
her mom cried
“wolf”
“traitor” to the French
Dynasty and
grabbed meat
shears to
cut out the blue

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

orchid in
grandma's hair on
her wedding
day to our WWI
pilot; and
before
death,
she knelt in the
snow near
our apple trees
dead from
too severe
pruning, and
coaxed the
wildest
wildflower
into moonlight;
but being too
far from
spring,
flakes of
snow stuck to
her tears,
tumbled around
her dreams
until she
tumbled out
of bed
with tiny green
apples
tumbling after her
and into the
body mark left
frozen in
the white lace sheets
where I sit
and count each

CRAIG WELLS

apple before
the last snowflake
melts into
the last
cracked lightbulb,
into stars
everywhere I
walk,
leading me
to her by the
flashlight
buried
under snow as
deep as
a full moon
where I clutch
her hand
to discover her
fingers
molded around a
round stone of
sandstone
glittered by
the evolution
of blood,
visited by badger, by
mouse,
by licking,
burrowed out
a world planted
by grandma
with
a red fir
as small as
today
where I wait
until I can

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

show it
to any woman
who may
fit her
fingers.



RED SKIRT, BLACK ICE

Into another
inevitable night
when no cars
sink
into dreams,
dreary
winds across a
cow pasture
lick the salt from
my wounds
and near
where I hitchhike
guided by stars
without light
like breasts without
nipples,
her pretty red skirt
shatters
the windshield
while wiper
blades

CRAIG WELLS

scrape back the
blue into
my eyes, and
the quail high
into snowdrifts
cascade
down
my back, and
across black ice
where I crawl
in search of
clouds, those
pearls of
hail that tumble
down her neck,
leave me
chilled by her
beauty.



JUST TOAD OVER GOD

Whose love,
this baby boy's
love, a baby
scratches
the mud
for the eyes
of toad looking up,
looking back,

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

backing
his morality of
no touch,
no
eat, be my
love
friend
forever.
Why are you
green and
I am black? Lesser
than the lilies
waterlogged
in the color
of too much
sun where
you sit.
Why are
sitting
so faraway?
Are you
God?
He eats the
mud
anyway.



THOSE WEATHER MARYS

In a line, getting
darker,

CRAIG WELLS

hotter, longer for
an Indian disguised
as a bride in
waiting,
“cross of blue
due me”
chimes Charlie
Tracking
Earth.
I am as much
a Christ
as any of
you,
bastards. So
why do I
let your
weather marys
on channel 3
blind me
to the
sky? Why
must I squint with
eyes like the
red circles
in Princess
Moonie’s
Massage and
Spa sign? I fail
to answer
Charlie so he
hustles inside to
to change
the temperature
before I can
stop
the earthquake.

CONTAGIOUS TO THE RED

This hair
then no hair
but color
in her eyes,
a hazel contagious
to everything red,
especially her
hair; not
curly enough
but too
curly
where I catch
myself dreaming
about the angle
before we kiss
and after
she wakes
with the clarity
of breath
and skin
restraining the lines
of her departure
as light as
a blade
of grass dampened
to her cheek
with less than
my tears
which
I remove as
delicately
as each raindrop
stalls the

CRAIG WELLS

dust on
the doe from
giving birth under
my suspect,
suspecting her
heartbeat
under
her breast
if I
can leave the
other one.



NIGHT IN BLACK SAGA

Without Earthquake Charlie,
under the spell
of feathers
caught on shingles
and fluttering
like a butterfly
in mud,
toad
watches the
night in
black saga
that traps me
still;
as a kid
dreaming I could

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

excavate a
gopher
hole deep
enough
to bring up
the pirate treasure
of Balboa, an
explorer
like me
who burned down
the world
in '58 in
search
of adventure,
where I
once caught the
most imagins
to feed me
until I
stoop
to stroke the
toad's back
only to
discover it
bumpy
and cold like
the night
where I assume
all must be
well.



CRAIG WELLS

IN HIGH GRASS

Finally toppled by the
pull of a full
moon, the
windmill's blades
struggle
towards a crawl across
black earth flat
as a back
under covers,
where sitting on
the edge
of the bed, I
watch
the light
gradually let rain
through a broad oak
to knock
apart
high grass
to reveal my body
where she
touches me,
lets me
believe.



MAYA, MY HEART, MAYA

At first furious
and young, I
surrendered to
all the fashionable
Buddhas
who convert
every skirt
into a
night
of sparkle and
spite;
at once,
always
in love with
flesh in
the light of her
retreat,
where I laugh
at prophets who
predicted
every blizzard into
a mixture of
snow and
flight; then
flying from
love, I meet
Maya,
and as a
prayer to
the world,
to love,
a trio of snow
leopards

CRAIG WELLS

as long as
learning
to love,
meets me
as they fall
down, claw a
trail of stars
into the night
where I witness
all my
lovers in
a line
with other lovers
ever better
than my
love; and
leopards slowly
leaving take
my place
as a recluse to
the loneliness,
so I follow,
let them
lead me
across a trail of a
single leopard
to my heart
stirred as lightly
as pebbles
trembled from a
mountain
into the midnight
by his tracks
out of the
sky and into
snow,
where his long

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

tail buried
under an
avalanche
breaks through
to my sleep
where suddenly an
elbow falls
against my chest,
a leg across
my stomach,
a memory
to forgive the
leopards
for the morning
and bless
the woman I
love. Maya
who sweats her
body into
a boulder,
leaves me a
snow leopard
to stalk me, stop
atop the boulder
to see me
as prey. I
wait
for love or
rain,
water
to wet the rock
become tears,
a tongue
alive. Make it
talk, you
prophets;
boulder,

CRAIG WELLS

make it tell me
of Buddhas.
Where are you
now? I
will be killed.
This leopard
will know
but I
will not. Lies
lying to me
like this
boulder.
If you return
Maya, I
will not
befriend
this leopard
who
like your
love
wraps his tail
around his
face and
sleeps. Maybe
I am safe now,
I do not
need
Maya. I am
free to
love,
to disturb what
is learned.
Why love
then?
Will this
love
not be extinct

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

if the snow
leopard
dies. Maya?
Maya,
where are
you?
Charles, tracking
away,
wait.



A CHAIR WITH NO LEGS

This is my last
sanctuary;
a chair with no
legs, the
waiting without dreams,
a meadow chopped
to stems
by deer not looking
back, not
seeing me against
a sun,
a heart lost
from the
light
to lock my fingers
between her
toes,
stopping her

CRAIG WELLS

before
I am
buried
deeper.



IN TANDEM WITH WILD HARES

When moments
are good
with her, wild
hares
stamp
orange footprints
across snow
to call up
the sunset;
then
even these
lie
because the love
dies after
I see the hare
hop
in tandem
to nowhere, to
leap from
bottle
to beer
bottle to

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

can
only to stumble,
miss the feel
of the raw
field,
as I do, as
I cheer him on
because I know
she will never
part with
those wild
strawberries
she picks
one by
one
by hour
knowing I
must eat them
all like her
love; but
I learn too late
from the
hare who learns
too early
at the road
when headlights
best birth
even better than
juice bests
passion.



CRAIG WELLS

CROSSING THE STREET

Like lightning or
its absence,
imagining sun up
at sunset,
a gunshot
wound
does not distinguish
between heart
and soul
nor the absence
of Charlie
before I cross
the street
to buy
another lock
to guard against the
thunder.



AN ANEMONE IN LOVE

Wanting to swim
beside the
dolphin,
dream upon a

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

liquid sky as flushed
as her blue
eyes without
sunlight,
I am born
to be the pelican,
to misjudge the
weight of
the catch and
drown with
my words
bubbling to the
surface
of her lips
as dry as a
dead anemone and
as talkative as
a juniper
exposing its
needles
to the wind
against these
wings
stretched out into
my arms holding
up the sun;
and all
this harm,
all this
fortune, because
fortunately
love
during starvation
accelerates
the hunt,
returns
the pelican

CRAIG WELLS

after we kiss;
wanting to stop
her, I chew
on my mother
who tastes
like seaweed
around
my ankles.



GOOD SISTER BARRIE

In a line
outside
the old Ajax
Theater
where once an
afternoon
with popcorn could
be idolized
into a lifetime,
I stare at
the marquee dimmed
by sunlight
flashing
“THE PUREST TALE EVER
WITNESSED,”
while I consort with
my soul to
approach like a

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

rollercoaster
off its
tracks and
into the sea,
I hold a
ticket,
a seat as
fervently
as any Bible
as I sit,
while a
preacher in mime
black maker make-up
of a tap dancer
tugs on a
rope,
and instead of
bells, I
hear
cheers, howls
and hoots
greet the parting
of the maroon
curtains as
good Sister Barrie
steps out on
stage to
pause
like eating
biscuits dipped in
milk, before she
sweetly, slowly
slips from
her habit
into prayers, breasts
bombarded
by God, by

CRAIG WELLS

hundred
dollar bills just as
I get
thumped to the
floor by the
mime's cane
after I try
to borrow
a quarter.



TOO MUCH, TOO SOON

Where the lightest
sun makes
emeralds of cliff
moss, a
tiny
auburn crab
scampers
out from peddles
scattered
against a torso
of driftwood,
while near me,
her toes
curled, her
blue jeans hang
from its
limb,

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

her lips
wrap around the
mystery
of suddenly
having the sea
urchin
submerge into
shadows where her
fingertips
kiss the light;
but too
cold, bringing
her nipples
to the surface, I
dive into her
thighs
camouflaged by burls
down my
back.



LEGEND OF EARTHQUAKE CHARLIE

In the wind
the blanket flaps
Sioux red and
oranges,
yellows, blues
against the blizzard
as well as the

CRAIG WELLS

turkey buzzard
fighting a
walk far behind
Charlie
whose eyelids
close as
he clutches
snow,
feeling white
ice, not
her sleeve of rein
deer hide,
button,
or a goosebump
as I did
taking me back
to a memory
from the stream
I hold to
warm
my fingers
before I catch
her knees
above toes
melting
snow
where her skin
seals the
cold around me
the longer
she struggles
against our destiny,
the faster the
sun sweeps
the blizzard away,
the wilder
she comes to

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

me under
the cover of
death,
asking Charlie
to crawl
atop her;
his veins
crack
the earth,
splitting sidewalks
before I can
reach her, to
tell her
I love
you.



BREAKING UP

Grass
stains bruise the
stone bench
where I
hold
the soccer ball,
which turns to
talking
to sunlight squeezing
contour into
her breasts
and face, while

CRAIG WELLS

light tears
wet the
tangerine lipstick
down to her
chin
where I
catch the breaking
up after
her kid kicks
me in the
shin.



WINGS OF THE DRAGONFLY

With wings
of a thousand
mists the
sun swells to
christen the butterfly
darting and
retreating around
me, while
the brush
of silk
guides me across
the film of
moon
across a road

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

sprocketed
with faces
telling
me they hold the
stars that
can reveal
the sky;
through the
wings of a
dragonfly
I see they
have
no faces
except in
flickers of light
like button
noses on
a Santa
you pin near
your heart,
pull with
a cord.



WHO IS RODNEY RASCAL?

Who is this
Rodney Rascal
who showed up at the
Grizzly Bar and Grill

CRAIG WELLS

in a two
lane town of
no exit, no
haircuts,
and nothing but
sky and an
aspen tree turned
dead into a
flagpole?
Is he
one fat bad ass
bud, a
muscular mug,
a stud
with suspenders
clipped to
his balls,
able to
keep off his toes
by a broad
with a butt as
bountiful as
any buffalo
who lets
him stomp all over
her tongue as
she ties the
shoelaces to his
black steel
toed boots no more
scuffed,
scratched
or muddied than his
face jammed with
teeth like a
drugstore
harmonica whistling

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

grisly epics of
boxers and
brawls, hunts
and torture,
of cowboys and
Indians while
a Native American,
Charlie,
he never met,
points out
to him
that the badger
he holds by
the tail
has already
chewed up both
balls; and
not yet
done,
Rodney
finds out
who
he is.



BEFORE THE HURRICANE, COMES THE OCEAN

With Gauguin
behind me,
the colors of birds,

CRAIG WELLS

boobs and
blossoms whirl
into paints
that batter my back
from the soul
of the hurricane,
while the drew
of draw
drags me
back to the
braggart,
back
to a canvas
to paint a
mouth
twisted into
words of
the jungle that
rain life,
love
lessening the
chill of the ocean
into the ice
of space
without color,
where she kisses,
nurses my
bruises
she made
trying to
start
my heart.



AFTER SNOW

The gesture
as pure
as the night
after snow
loosens the moon
light around
her face
to be
everywhere
she
shows herself to
me; and
after I touch
her
there,
she falls against
the skinless
bark
of an old
madrone
blushed against
her back
reminding her
of children,
time and
wrinkles;
bones
to mimic the
tree, as if
I hold a stale
marshmallow.

CRAIG WELLS

IN A BLUE POND

In a circle
precise
and lyrical like
boulders
rippling a dry
pebbled
pond, I
turn from
where I
pound in the
steel fence
posts around my
garden plot
after I
see my
Japanese
neighbor
roll up his hose,
and when he
rises high
into the summer
sunlight like
dry bamboo
reeds
splintered and
shivered by
the wind
into bone, his face
brought
me back to brown
leaves and
lives crumbled

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

by the same
hands grasping
the sledgehammer
made to intern
generations
in a California
camp, and
when he
smiles, I drop
the hammer so
bewildered by
the Geisha
he dreams
to me
warm and
beautiful like
white koi in
waters
still as heat in
our sky.



APPLES

Why love
when the white
of apple blossoms
falling slow
like snow
bruise

CRAIG WELLS

the cheeks, freeze
the tears
bleed
the heart
to dry
as hard as apple
skins; the
chocolates even harder
I rattle in a white
box swaddled
in a tattered blue
denim shirt
we find
in her attic,
without buttons
but with
stars wrapped
in a sky
she wishes
to unbutton,
unleash
the nights when
the white
of our bodies
alarm
the steam of
apples crushed under
us in the sun,
under the
window.



AT THE MONKEY TREE

Far from a dawn
thundered
with shadowy
apes I
cannot watch as
they tenderly
tear apart
clouds
to suck the juice
after an
orange monkey
with a bushy
beard as
funny as tufts of
meadow grass combed
by the sunset,
hangs by
the lightning
and waits
for it
to rain,
drench out
the laughter from
trees falling
down along boulevards
riper than a green
banana where
bare
breasted babes
from the
bikini beaches of
San Banarama

CRAIG WELLS

balance
on their heads
baskets
of floppy fish so
they don't
drown in this
heat cracking the
trunks of
marvelous mahoganies
with leaves curled
like old shoes
discarded
near a fire
hydrant
where a woodland
snail squeezes
underneath,
careful to
leave
blue spots
as little lakes for
tree frogs
to learn how
to swim;
before tomorrow
hen too much
torching to too
many trees
for too many
years are
scorched, and the
sky smokes
out millions of
locusts that
take flight to
to feast on themselves
with a clash of

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

wings
louder than
a fire
wrecking the sky of
its water,
surfacing as
breasts
as dry as
her eyes burned
by gunshots
distilling the
moon into a wine
for the flash
footed
who drink the
blood of
mountains pooled
into sunsets
where they float
their railroad
tracks on the bloated
boars belly up on
the edge of
gold mines
before wingless
bees shimmer like
stars against
a night
black
and rotten as
bananas,
while they
crawl up and
over other bees
swollen
against a wind
swirling with the

CRAIG WELLS

feathers of a
parrot whitewashed
over minutes
of evolution to
survive the
slow trek
across snow
plains bright with
the breath
of leopards with
no tails
as they hunt
the jungle
for balance, but
fall; and being
as light as
whiskers,
cannot hold up
the falling
mahogany tree
where the bushy
monkey,
afraid to let go,
tosses the
fruit of the sun
to us in
L.A.



WILDERNESS

At a distance
cool
light rain
and a snowy wind
whistles
the wilderness to a
heart still true;
while I
sit on a back
porch in
time
to the sigh
of chimney smoke
circling
the night with
thousands
of stars
without sky,
I pray
the old Union Pacific
will scar tracks
doomed by
orange poppies
sucked
and cut
metal to metal,
by wood to
wood;
but
behind me
a window drops,
crushing an orange
against its sill,

CRAIG WELLS

catches
my breath, and
I wonder
whether I should
be an admirer
of panes
without the light
to disrupt
the image
of her green eyes
lying to
end our
love.



ENGAGEMENT

The limes lip
glistening
from rain
like eyes anxious to
know whether I
love her
lasts
in the tree in
sunshine stripping
brown into
leaves,
into her
hands as I

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

recall peeling
away the corner
to release
the butterfly
from its cocoon
trapped
under
a tablecloth;
storms me to respond
to the baby stroller
she argues to be
a rotary
lawnmower the
other woman
pushes
towards me;
but I
cannot
answer her
except
with a sorry
to kiss the
grain stains
on her
cheek.



ORPHANS TO A MAUVE ROSE

Down to her

CRAIG WELLS

toes wet
in navy blue sandals,
moonlight kisses
the lust out
of her body
as long as
the rain slaps
against my window
trembling
it; but
the wind
stops
and upon wild
waters, the
sky strikes
a rock,
clouds form
a line to a
dream
swifter than a bare
butt skidding
across ice
while out of reach
of a mauve rose
cut from a night
alive with
orphans
of the moon,
beside a pillow laced
with sunshine, the
color of the
rose disappears
into old
bleached jeans
as wet as sky
echoed with
raindrops;

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

then into those she
no longer wears,
and from the
sweet
urgency of dry
lips, she kisses the
breath of my
heart from
saying
no,
brings me
to the moment
when I wait
for the line of
underwear
on skin
to fade; and a
light line, imagining
a rose dusted
from a red
clay pot
kisses
the sweat from
her breast
while the wind
of my heart
passes
through the white
of a summer
sun, into
footsteps gone back
to the earth
green with the ardor
of her lips all
over my
face
with love.

CRAIG WELLS

DESERT DAFFODILS

In Little Saigon
where giant
pagodas
replace Bob's Big
Boy's giant
stance,
the mutt with a
coat as gold
as daffodils
befriended
accidentally in the
desert, laughs
at his coyote
ancestors
while he
laps cautiously
the runoff
from the lawn
before the pudgy lady
in a drab
apple dumpling tan
housedress
can whack the
cat pinning
a mouse to
her prized cactus,
and Rags,
the best dog ever
to retrieve a
tennis ball beyond
the waves,
ignores
it; races

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

through a
rainbow from where
the oscillating
sprinkler
is stuck on
waterfall, and
follows
the sign from
the arid
air, where he
nuzzles his
snout over the
orange blanket
strapping
Charlie, adopted by me
by the soul's
consent,
to the
wheelchair
where he stares
out from the
sky with the
same face
that smiles after
his lens
falls out and
ripples the
sea in
his white mug,
cracked and
stained
like his eyeglasses,
as he wonders to
me. How soon,
old dog
will they come
and take

CRAIG WELLS

you away?
I can only answer
for myself.



PEBBLES

Old stellar jay
older
than a sky
with
no prey,
as blue as
its heat,
pecks at bits of
popcorn and
unravels
loops of a white
terrycloth
robe dumped into
a marshmallow
melting, erupting
into tiny
bubbles
of the pebble
to the bottom of the
pool; louder
than goosebumps
budding on
her thighs

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

that rise across
concrete
where her bare feet
suction
sensuality from
her breasts,
sweats
freckles from her
lips, squeezes
rain from
a grey sky,
makes me want
to tap the
tip of
her nose,
touch the
cold below
where I fear
I never
loved
her enough.



MY COURTSHIP WITH A WOLF

Atop a mountain,
lightning
strips the
sky of

CRAIG WELLS

its blue, and
the eye of
a moon shelters
Charlie's granddaughter
wrapped in a
reindeer hide still
warm from
the massacre
at Christmas when
candy canes
came too
abundantly from the
general store
to conceal
the soldier's ambush
at dawn, at
her first blood
where I weep for
"Girl Who
Follows The Moon,"
who's afraid to
squat among
high reeds,
too shy to run,
nowhere to hide,
left to die
with hands too
frozen to
peel apart her
legs stuck
together as
if burned
into sweat lodge
stones;
she sits
and waits to die,
for the snow

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

to fill her
breath with
death, but
when she closes
her eyes
hard like black
walnuts, she
cries out
for sun,
a dream
approaching with
the chill of
dawn,
for a bald eagle
to land as
silently
as the blue in
sky, which
startles her, lets
her know
life before she
returns to
into her dream
to witness the eagle
shattering through
ice, that brings
her skin
a shiver where
she hears
her great
great grandfather
who approaches
disguised
as a timber
wolf
trotting across
snow with

CRAIG WELLS

strides long and
steady,
lightly like a
blue heron across
Two Tongue
Lake,
now Cast Off
Canyon where the wolf
left his family
far into fasting,
to endure a moon
that stirs his
fever for the hunt;
even hungrier
he buries a howl
deeper after he denies
the white man for
a hunger to
be even wiser
than a pup
being fooled by a
mother mallard faking
a broken wing
to lead him
away from her
ducklings,
even farther
away to a stroll
in and around pale
pink columbines
as if swimming
after a duck
he rejoices he will
catch, where
he discovers water
after the
sun melts ice

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

crusted to his
eyelids
he rubs
against an
aspen after he
slips on an
old injury,
a paw
shattered in
a trap;
but he tracks onward
and tastes the
blood of reindeer
as his own
from his nose as he
grabs
the hide before
he sees it,
drags
it before he
tastes it,
back through the
snow, to
Two Tongue
Lake, and
Charlie's
granddaughter does
not stir
when he
tugs,
because she
ventures back into
her dream,
death,
back to her
grandfather who
guides her through

CRAIG WELLS

snow to Dead Red
River solid
with ice, sunlit with
with the blue of
a stellar jay
she suspects to
be dead as
it hops
towards her,
squawks
full of the
wolf's breath
he pants
against an ancient pine
with a trunk
split wild and high
in as many directions
as the wind,
with roots
stuck out swollen
and crooked
like the body
of her
great, great
grandfather, "Raven
After More Tricks"
who was
trampled
while stealing a
calvary horse
once his
own,
as much a legend
counting coup
as the wolf
if he can pull
the reindeer over

HATCHET'S HABIT & ME

roots that
snags
the hide, causes
him to
fall back,
falling like
snowflakes whirling
in moonlight,
that never
land as he claims
the deer
under a sky far
to the north
where he
tries to warn his
sisters and
brothers
who toss and
tussle on
an iceberg he
lunges onto,
claims it as
his own,
as it breaks
off, as well as
his death, his
last look at
a sun bloodied by a
helicopter that
shoots bullets
into the wolf
already
dead; a
bullet
pumped again and
again;
and each time

CRAIG WELLS

the wolf
shudders
out of death,
I shudder
each time I make
love, and the more
I love, the more
I know
the wolf dying;
dying with
the wolf
I can
no longer
love, no longer
make love,
live
without
the wolf.



HATCHET'S HABIT & ME