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Poetry

**Missing You, Metropolis**
Gary Jackson
Graywolf Press
978-1-55597-572-2
(October 31, 2010)

Gary Jackson's poetry collection *Missing You, Metropolis* boldly takes readers where few poets have dared to tread: inside the world of comic books. Echoing the framed narratives from which he drew inspiration, Jackson presents graphically-intense poems that never waver in the face of desperate situations and bad people. Everything is exposed in full color and exacting, sometimes raw, language, but with astounding empathy, showing how human the villains who inhabit those pages can be.

In the first poem, "The Secret Art of Reading a Comic," Jackson hints how readers might understand comics and his book as a whole. Comics are, he writes, "delicious 22-page / snacks we swallow, never questioning / the action between the panel's gutters / and how similar that world bleeds / into our own." So begins Jackson's gradual erasing of the line that distinguishes "real life" from the characters and situations of his beloved comic books.

Jackson seamlessly weaves narratives of the speaker's life, often lifted from the pages of adolescence in Kansas, with comics, first by immersing readers in various fantasies—from innocent, childhood games of pretending to be married to raunchy (and hilarious) dreams of having sex with a superheroine. Further along, Jackson reveals that the struggles of comic book characters look a lot like the struggles of real people. In "The Dilemma of Lois Lane," Lois waits for Clark Kent's hand to bleed after he accidentally cuts it, hoping to see that he is more human than he appears to be.

Poems in the last half of the book often place readers right inside comic book adventures. Many of these poems are persona poems, inviting readers to experience, through voice, the quandaries and perspectives of the characters. Readers stand witness to the man who confronts and kills his mutant son. Luke Cage, the first black superhero (created by a white person), tells listeners that everything isn't as it seems on the page. And an aging comic book reader, out for a drink with Superman, leans in to readers, sharing his realization that the young

stud with the superhero is the new reader now being courted.

*Missing You, Metropolis* was selected by the Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Yusef Komunyakaa for the 2009 Cave Canem Poetry Prize, awarded to outstanding first books by African American poets. Gary Jackson's poems are inviting for their conversational tone and use of gritty language and humor to intimately immerse readers in the lives of friends and enemies alike. Although knowledge of classic comic books may ease reading, Jackson's carefully-selected images and accessible language widen the book's appeal beyond its comic book roots.

*Jennifer Fandel*