

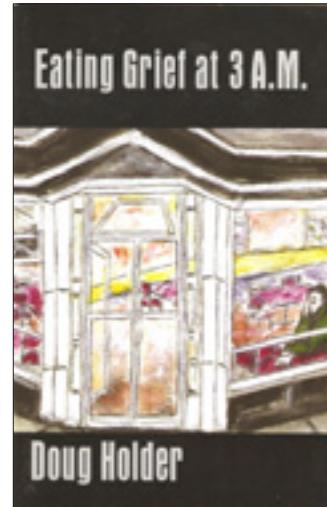
Wilderness House Literary Review 8/4

Eating Grief at 3 A.M.
by Doug Holder
Muddy River Books

review by Robin Stratton

*Sometimes you must follow
The rat's path
The vagrant,
The scrawled invective of the graffiti
The flow of some muddy, godforsaken creek
Before you can truly
Speak*

~ "Abandoned Warehouses"



When you open a volume of poetry and the first one is dedicated to Allen Ginsberg, man, you know you've stumbled onto something great. That's why it should come as no surprise that *Eating Grief at 3 A.M.* by Doug Holder is one of those rare collections with every poem as delicious as the stack of syrup-saturated pancakes you used to tuck into at Bickford's in the wee hours of the morning. (You were just a kid—in your twenties—and didn't get indigestion, and the coffee didn't keep you awake all night or make you get up ten times to pee.) On the menu are poems that nail the groove of those days, from admitting to ourselves that we wanted just a little to kill the brutally well-meaning father in *Father Knows Best*, and the cat who abruptly interrupts a languid existence to venture out to the street (and gets run over) to a bloody mugging in Times Square, a final showing of *Rocky Horror*, and the lament of a stockbroker chained to his office in a high rise. I had to laugh at Holder's frank chagrin at the "cloying cheap chirp" of an early morning songbird (secretly, I share his helpless rage.) The writing, of course, is breathtaking; stylish and elegant, like the cook himself, but with the unexpected bite of an otherwise polite terrier. But poets beware! You will be jealous! Possibly suicidal! Remember how Beach Boy Brian Wilson was partway through what he envisioned would be the greatest rock album of all time when he heard *Sgt. Pepper*? He ditched *Smile* and went into seclusion for about a decade. Reading *Eating Grief at 3 A.M.* is kind of like that. So yeah, Mr. Holder, we sort of want to kill you just a little, too.