



Nomads with Samsonite, Timothy Bradford's first book of poetry, was published by BlazeVOX [books] of Buffalo, New York, in July of 2011. The poems in this collection roam through eclectic subjects and forms in a quest to find a temporary home amidst the detritus of cultures, languages, experiences, and relationships. Along the way, readers encounter the omnivorous nature of dogs, the "volcanic love" of paleoanthropologist Meave Leakey, Bim's Love Kitchen with its "multifarious bric-a-brac," Amazon tribes, the Atacama Desert, the "warm, silty waters" of the Ganges, the "liver-gray" Seine, Ophelia in the Marianas Trench, grizzly bears, polar bears, horse stall mucking in Oklahoma, a family gathering mussels from the Pacific, and much more. *Nomads with Samsonite* explores worlds, and how we shape our worlds, with courage, wonder, and humor, as in these lines from the title poem:

The earth itself, phenomenologically stable,
hums and bucks with constant movement.
Even the universe opens like a tulip
or closes like a fist, I forget
which. Moreover, the study molders,
the bedroom is a wreck, and the scenery
around here's gone thin.

There's no question we should
light out at first light. And what to take?

Two of the poems in the collection received Academy of American Poets Prizes, two were nominated for Pushcart Prizes, one was a finalist for the 2005 Poetry Society of America's Lyric Poetry Award, and one received a 2007 Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Poetry Prize. The wrap-around cover features *Excerpt (suprematist evasion)* by internationally-renowned artist Julie Mehretu, courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, Private Collection.

Praise for *Nomads with Samsonite*

Timothy Bradford gnaws on the big questions: Should I run with my pack, or should I go it alone? Where to find enlightenment? What is a dead animal? What is the spirit's realm? The mind falls into its quandaries, and the body, drunk with it, tags along. These poems, roving across continents, restlessly seek to locate consciousness in the world, a universe which "opens like a tulip / or closes like a fist," where the poet is not afraid to admit: "I forget / which."

—Eleni Sikelianos, author of the National Poetry Series-winning poetry collection *The Monster Lives of Boys and Girls*

I have not been so moved by a collection of poems in a long, long time. I thought I was turning into the character Anders from that Tobias Wolff story "Bullet in the Brain," but *Nomads with Samsonite* saved me. It's heartbreaking slash heartwarming, smart, and enthralling. I found the book "settling on me like an x-ray apron" and transporting me back to a time of poetic innocence I had seemingly lost the instinct to yearn for.

—Jerry Williams, author of *Admission* and *Casino of the Sun*

Deeply ruminative, with the collision of both an expansive & a recitative logic system, *Nomads with Samsonite* populates the world with exactly what it is already full of. But in this naming & numbering, in these poems of questioning & wondering, Timothy Bradford has presented his readers with a new language for living carefully, with love & attention.

—Nate Pritts, author of *Big Bright Sun* & editor of *H_NGM_N*

Nomads with Samsonite is available through BlazeVOX [books], Small Press Distribution, and Amazon.com

For further information, or to schedule readings and workshops, please contact Timothy Bradford at tgbradford@gmail.com or (405) 819-4008.



Biography

Timothy Bradford is the author of the introduction to *Sadhus* (Cuerpos Pintados, 2003), a photography book on the ascetics of South Asia. In 2005, he received the Koret Foundation's Young Writer on Jewish Themes Award for his novel-in-progress based on the history of the Vélodrome d'Hiver, and he was a writer-in-residence and visiting lecturer at Stanford University. From 2007 to 2009, he was a guest researcher at the Institut d'Histoire du Temps Présent in Paris. His poetry has appeared in numerous journals including *42opus*, *Bombay Gin*, *CrossConnect*, *DIAGRAM*, *Drunken Boat*, *ecopoetics*, *H_NGM_N*, *Mudlark*, *No Tell Motel*, *Poems & Plays*, and *Upstairs at Duroc*. Currently, he is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Tulsa and lives with his wife, two sons, and an ever-changing menagerie just outside of Oklahoma City.

Sample Poems

MIDDLE SONGS

Acrid odor from green pecan's fuselage

My youngest son collects them and deems

Good, bad, good, good

A man with one leg delivers a child
to the waiting bus

The __ank of _____ is missing
its *B*

Flint striking on the emptiness of all,
the fullness, and consciousness fuel

Hula forbidden here, no island

Sky a ring that holds us center, a friend
once suggested the clouds as mountains

Disbelief in this, what is what is not

What is and is not, such as the baby changing
table in the restroom, which the Spanish
makes clear is not a place for changing babies
but merely their *pañals*

I'm alive like the metabolic potential of
Walmart-shopping middle America

I thrum like an emu

JERUSALEM EVERYWHERE YOU GO

—*from the spine of National Geographic, August 2003*

To everyone's surprise, the prophecy of Nostradamus is fulfilled by Amazon tribes who, with the ferocity of clubs and facial tattoos, destroy Paris, render it as jagged and dry as the Atacama Desert.

These tribes never consider Alaska, are beaten to the punch by centuries in regard to your average Maya City, but in not-so-distant Africa, soldiers go on alert along the border of Zimbabwe.

Robert Mugabe, President of Zimbabwe, will not abide "enemies of our people" or Amazon tribes. In his office hangs a 3-D five-color plan of a Maya City, inspiration for the New Harare, which will outshine Paris. Meanwhile, Stellar sea lions keep barking and mating on Unalaska Island, the gray fox hunting in the Atacama Desert.

With new soil reports in hand, President Mugabe orders sand from the Atacama Desert. The agricultural crisis in Zimbabwe isn't a matter of overzealous land reform but soil drainage, as in Alaska. He views war room maps on the movements of Amazon tribes, who are headed straight for the Strait of Gibraltar after decimating Paris, leaving it looking like Piedras Negras, a ruined Maya City.

Spondylus, a prized, prosciutto-colored sea shell, comprises the mosaic body of a ballplayer in that Maya City. Sand dunes imitate the twisted, bloated bodies of the dead in the Atacama Desert, and the silent, dry air betrays nothing of moisture or Paris, still burning as something arcs across Africa like an arrow toward the heart of Zimbabwe, where Mugabe directs the just-delivered sand to be bagged against the coming Amazon tribes.

Dilapidated gun mounts, reminders of WW II, remain on Attu Island in Alaska,

but not even these, refurbished and sent to Mugabe from the people of Alaska, can assure the citizens that their newly won land won't be sacked like a Maya City. They beat plowshares back into swords and stand ready to face the Amazon tribes, harsh and deadly as the Atacama Desert.

All eyes are on Zimbabwe as everyone forgets the fate of Paris.

Near the front line, soldiers drink beer, smoke, and listen to a static-laced broadcast of
Charlie Parker's "April in Paris"

while Unisea processes its 2.2 million pounds of pollock a day in Alaska.

Then Mugabe breaks in with a speech that rouses even the baobabs to fight for
Zimbabwe.

Sleeping in pools of sweat to the roar of howler monkeys near a ruined Maya City,
an archaeologist dreams of a great battle, like a sand storm in the Atacama Desert
or the elaborately tattooed and pierced faces of certain Amazon tribes.

But the assault never comes. The Amazon tribes remain as remote as the ruins of Paris
or the sands of the Atacama Desert to the permafrost of Alaska.

They disappear like certain Maya Cities, never to deface the New Jerusalem of
Zimbabwe.

—*for Julie*

HAMLET'S LETTER FROM EXILE

Dear Ophelia, I miss your ways with scrimshaw,
the delicate play of wrist over dull walrus
tusk for months till gleaming white fetishes
fell into our bed like solder from acetylene.
First, a school of Ozark Mountain fish to recall
your home: O Minnow, O Emerald Shiner, O
Missouri Saddle Darter, O Common Shiner,
O Hornyhead Chub. Then, the effigy of me. Finally,
a dinghy in miniature, an ivory-clothed ivory man
reared back with his impossibly thin spear
aimed at the heart of a whale. We were a circle of three
in the gloam of the oil lamp there by the looted
sea—you, me, our sculpted life in ivory.

ARBOREAL

The trees planted in
the median
follow me. They

could be a kind of peppertree
given the narrow,
delicate leaves, like

children's fingers, the milky-white
sap, and berries
with a spicy resinous smell.

I try not to look at them,
but there they are,
flaming red and asking

for my attention. The mind's
luminosity
adheres to such things

and makes the world leap
into being.
Without the world, consciousness

shines in the dark cave of
your skull
and can implode or enlighten

depending upon your ease
with such light.
But the alternative—perception,

parsing things up, then labels,
and finally,
the schematic diagrams of the brain—

so often seems an ego trick
to make the little
you feel essential, or in need of

a new car. Or an education.
A friend
is reading Ricoeur in translation.

(Ricoeur's words denser than daylight
is long, so he could
still be reading, though I suspect

you understand "is reading"
as "read."
Don't you know we grow old

through such interpretations?
Couldn't it all be
present progressive?)

I'm dubious about anything
in translation,
especially French

literary theory, and wonder
about the hours
he spends grinding his mind,

delicate blossom, through such
machinations.
Such precious time could be

better spent in the parking lot
contemplating
the essential red

of the trees, manifested
seemingly
without translation.

NOMADS WITH SAMSONITE

Eels are catadromous, salmon
anadromous. Swallows leave for Capistrano
from the south before the cold constricts
their narrow pink throats,
and dogs, left intact, roam
hundreds of miles
for food, sex, the sheer pleasure of motion.
The earth itself, phenomenologically stable,
hums and bucks with constant movement.
Even the universe opens like a tulip
or closes like a fist, I forget
which. Moreover, the study molders,
the bedroom is a wreck, and the scenery
around here's gone thin.
There's no question we should
light out at first light. And what to take?

Decorum dictates we pack light.
Bernoulli's principle
depends on it. So we'll take
your long hair, like a russet kaffiyeh,
to keep us warm, and my long arms
to serve as sundial, compass,
sign flags to the locals. A bit of rouge,
a sundress, a burnoose, we will go
like this, loose, at day break when
dew sparks on spider's radar.

And we shall take our tongues, all
six tongues—your deep, southern
French one that says, *J'ai besoing du paing*,
and your educated, scientific,
standard American English one.
Who knows when we will need to diagnose
mural folliculitis or order sulfamethoxazole
from the local *farmacia*. And we'll take
my tongues: thimble of Bulgarian, clay cup
of Hindi, water pitcher of Nepalese,
and plate of French, preferably with
my foot in it. Nothing is so necessary

to the alchemy of good travel as
miscommunication or the misreading of maps.

And as for my long, mendacious,
poetic one, let's bury it in the garden
in hopes that it will grow into something
edible while we're gone, or feed it to the dogs
on our way out the gate so they will *bark*
onomatopoeically at neighbors, burglars.
And where to go?

North, south, east, west,
it matters not, just that we move.
Cold is good for health, warm salt water best,
but step by step by step, we're bound to improve.