

The Americans

David Roderick

"*The Americans* is a compelling meditation on the ways we go about our lives at this cultural moment, often unmoored from the facts of history though we drift along its shores. Part complicated love letter to suburbia, these poems demand that we consider not only what we are drawn to but also what we fail to see, how the apocryphal feeds our cultural amnesia. The poet asks: 'Must nostalgia / walk like a prince through all our rooms?' This lovely collection shows us a way to confront that question within ourselves."

—Natasha Trethewey, U.S. Poet Laureate

"The mindfulness and torque of this beautiful collection may be judged by the double drift of its epigraph: 'Nous sommes tous Américains.' Words of solidarity, words of aspiration, words (too often) of chagrin or shame. De Tocqueville to Moose Lodge to Trail of Tears: the whole rich mix of it is here, in poems exquisitely conceived and rendered."

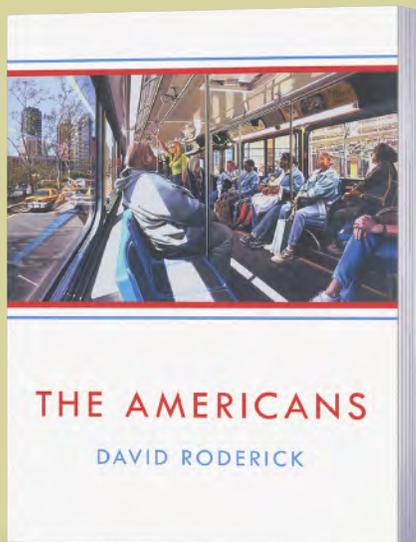
—Linda Gregerson

"Like Robert Frank in his great photo essay of the same name, Roderick has some news for us: not only do we not know where we've come from, we don't know where we are. With care and a restorative watchfulness, he has made terrific poetry out of our drifting in the fog."

—David Rivard

"It's sort of remarkable the way David Roderick makes such gorgeous music of the deep and abiding loneliness of which our lives—and our nations and dreams—sometimes, often, are made. It's the music, the beauty, after all, that's balm to all this sorrow. *The Americans* reminds me of this."

—Ross Gay



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DAVID RODERICK'S first book of poems, *Blue Colonial*, won the APR/Honickman Prize. He has published poetry and fiction in several journals, including the *Hudson Review*, the *Georgia Review*, *Indiana Review*, *New England Review*, *Poetry*, the *Southern Review*, *Slate*, and the *Virginia Quarterly Review*. Roderick is a former Wallace Stegner Fellow and was awarded the Amy Lowell Traveling Scholarship, among other honors. Poems from this collection have won *Shenandoah's* James Boatwright III Prize and the Campbell Corner Poetry Prize, sponsored by Sarah Lawrence College. Roderick is associate professor of English in the MFA program at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Photo by Rachel Richardson



SELF-PORTRAIT AS DAVID HOCKNEY

I craved a place away from the cold,
 where I could Coke bottle
 and muscle-tee and see as Eve's snake
 must have seen: chromatically,
 a torn creation collaged by lovers outdoors.
 I wanted treasure unburied,
 a hint of gold that would finally lead me astray.
 Cheap acrylics. A line's longing
 on the canvas of a body.
 On my patio I fell in love with voices
 cured by cigarettes and lemon fizz.
 Where there are no insects, there are no birds.
 In California I never chased after a color.
 I slept on towels that absorbed
 what I'd tasted: chlorine painted on skin.
 There, in the vent of my swimming,
 afternoons froze the palms,
 and I used quick local movements
 to pull ripples behind me, and under
 the blush of a swimming pool,
 I unslipped from my hole
 toward warmth that never speaks or goes away.