

KATERI KOSEK

Sweetness

It was good honey, local honey, the kind you take home with you and give away, honey that held the crush of desert flowers and sun beating on mesas, but when the TSA officer holds up my backpack, says *Whose is this*, I know they've found it, the two jars I bought for nine dollars in a gas station on the Ute reservation, not because I had needed honey or gas, but because it was the first building all day I could go into and I'd been driving around the rez for hours, looking, but all I found was sagebrush and ranch houses slung low against the sky, the usual proportion of moldering Chevys and picturesque abandonment, horizons riddled with well pads and pipelines and white guys from oil companies driving around like just any day at work (later I hear the tribe is rich from it)

and at the adobe post office in Marvel, with the heap of junked couches out front, they fly our flag and stock the local paper, and the drill heads bend up and down like patient prehistoric beasts, the snow-veined mountains behind them, heartbreaking. Naturally, I want to poke around in the gas station, but though there's an Indian guy outside working on his truck it's just a white girl and her mom behind the counter, which throws me off, but now that I'm here I have to buy something, and there's nothing I want but the honey.

I wish I had poured it into my mouth right there on the spot, as she had jokingly suggested, or forced it into the arms of some stranger, anything but watch her throw it out—a liquid, though anyone can see it is thick like oil and just as intoxicating. I should have known I would have to turn it in, a real steal for such a price—all of that sweetness mined from blossoms and bedrock and anyone who's ever called us sweet, we will have to turn in, give up what has made us rich, that which we want the most.

Kateri Kosek's poetry and nonfiction have appeared in *Orion*, *Creative Nonfiction*, *Terrain.org*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Profane*, and other journals. Her poetry has recently been a runner-up in contests at *Flyway*, *Writers @ Work*, *Rosebud*, and *Arts & Letters*. She teaches college English and mentors in the MFA program at Western Connecticut State University, where she received an MFA. She has been a resident at the Kimmel Harding Nelson Center for the Arts in Nebraska and lives in Western Massachusetts. She's working on a book of essays about birds.

PAMELA CARROLL

Rock and Roll
Oil on canvas, 24 x 18



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