The Night We Set the Dead Kid on Fire, a collection of poetry, is a book chocked-full of characters (both women and men) that don’t receive much attention in Contemporary American Poetry,—the dishwashers, the addicts, the truckers, the card players, the convicts, the boxers, the grave-diggers, the mechanics, the farmers, the blue-collar “others”—and many of these characters are either the victims or the perpetrators of violence. This book’s speakers (both women and men) lie and cheat and drink and fist-fight in parking lots, campgrounds, and dive bars. They get cheap in casinos, broken apartments, hospitals, and hotel rooms. In this book, you will find STI’s, tattoos, and shotguns, rattlesnakes, brass knuckles, and bottles across the face. Assault. Overdose. Suicide.

BUT, though my hometown (A-Town), can get ugly and violent, can hold grudges and punch holes in the walls or set a car on fire, it is also a place capable of great love, sacrifice, and loyalty as its people carve out a meaningful life every day in spite of the wreckage around them, as they wrestle with the shifting space between community and self. Yes, much of the subject matter in these poems is hard to look at, but I believe there is poetry in those dark places too. I seek to celebrate and to elegize small towns and the people who go to work in them.