Featured Poet: Robert Archambeau

Robert Archambeau is a poet and critic whose books include the poetry collections *The Kafka Sutra* and *Home & Variations* and the critical studies *Inventions of a Barbarous Age: Poetry from Conceptualism to Rhyme; The Poet Resigns*; and *Laureates and Heretics: Six Careers in American Poetry*. Canadian in background, he is now a confirmed Midwesterner, and teaches the English Romantic poets at Lake Forest College near Chicago.

Archambeau will lead a one-day workshop on Thursday, June 8, on *The Non-Metrical Line*.

Description: How can we define, make use of, and find beauty in the non-metrical poetic line? Like the tradition of metrical verse, the tradition of non-metrical verse is long, distinguished, and tremendously varied. In this workshop, we’ll look beyond the glories of metrical lines at some of the many other ways poets have chosen to break the poetic line. From the common workshop vice of using the line break as a kind of ambiguous punctuation mark, to the splendid syllabics of Marianne Moore, the prophetic, booming anaphora of Walt Whitman, the witty games with syntactic doubleness we see in some more recent poets, we’ll make many stops on our journey—including a brief one in which we visit the delightful wackiness of Ogden Nash’s rambling line. If you’ve ever wondered where and why a line should end, you’ll want to take this trip.

Below is one of Archambeau’s poems:

**What Heart Heard of, Ghost Guessed**

You don’t quite notice till you do. Like lately, how I just don’t hear my daughter say the things she used to say. She’s five. And not too long ago, when her tiny top-knot face would go bright red, the frustrations of the twitchy little will all boiled up, the cherry tomato of her head would howl for me to stop. “Never!” she’d shriek, and “I command you!” I’m sure she picked it up from some cartoon,
along with “to the car!” and “to the beach!”—
some superhero talk, some melodrama. And there I’d be,
charmed, and choking back a laugh. Of course she was wild
with anger (What decent parents call “upset”). Of course I’d want to help.

I mean, one cares. But I’d always also think how cute, how not-quite-right,
how much she meant that campy “I command you!”

and wanted it to work, how deep it rooted
in a buried, red-toothed rage, a kraken torn from all its sunken sleep.

And just because I’d combed her snaggled hair,
or taken her to swim, or ride her bike: violations

of unmediated desire. She’s changed.
I feel the thing all fathers feel: we wouldn’t want to hold them back:

they’ll say new things. And mine? She’ll better know what works
when pairing words with what we feel. She’ll know too well,

and work me round, get she wants. I know.
That’s as it should be, right? Okay. But

she doesn’t say the things she used to say. She’s changed—
and something red-faced and unreasonable, balking, some kraken shriek

inside me seeks its words, and wants to shout (to whom?)
“Stop!” and “I command you!” and “Stop!” and “Never! Stop!”