

SUNY BROCKPORT



**THE WRITERS
FORUM**



Kevin Clark received his MA in creative writing and his PhD in literature from the University of California at Davis. His first full-length collection of poetry, *In the Evening of No Warning* (New Issues Press, 2002), was selected by The Academy of American Poets for a grant from the Greenwall Fund. He has published three chapbooks: *One of Us* (Mille Grazie Press, 2000), *Widow Under a New Moon* (Owl Creek Press, 1990), and *Granting the Wolf* (State Street Press, 1984).

His poems have also been published in numerous magazines and collections, including *The Antioch Review*, *The Georgia Review*, *College English*, and *The Black Warrior Review*. He won the Angoff Award from *The Literary Review* for best contribution in a volume year.

Kevin Clark teaches creative writing and modern and contemporary American literature at the California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo on the central coast of California. He is the book review editor for *Solo*, a poetry journal based in California. He lives in San Luis Obispo with his wife and two children.

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The Assignment

How long ago had she demanded
I walk without her
the length of one evening,
my assignment written on the black sky:
A haunting, I was to repeat her name
as I walked the pitch circuit.
There would be no other test.
A single name, the erotic vocable
my only companion. Breath-
after-name-filled breath, not even dry leaves
spoke beneath my shoes. Days
beneath my shoes, weeks.
Soon, the sea change.
Nerves splayed in silence from my step,
rays on the invisible plain.
Did I hover on the buoyant, salted sea,
a skinless body? I grew
weightless, like a pioneer
come to measure
the distance of his soul
under the lightless dome
of the deprivation tank.
Years swept by like protons,
white shards on silver.
Once you enter the pinhole, she warned,
space expands like a womb.
Do you want this, she warned.
I aspired in air, my breath
no longer her name.
I was a possession, a word-sheath.
I was the infinite next.
In the next town a caution light
matched my chant. The word
as inversion, as changeling.
I followed, as if on a road.
As if homeward.