



# Surface Impressions: A Poem

*Stephen Sandy*

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## **Surface Impressions: A Poem** Stephen Sandy

A poem of eight parts, Stephen Sandy's *Surface Impressions* offers a stunning burst of invention, capacious enough for its grand themes of ecology, religion, and mortality, yet intimate and flexible in its constantly vibrant voice. The narrator, who resembles the poet in some respects, moves through a widening landscape from New England to the cosmos itself, ruminating on the relation between his obsolescent, Romantic love of nature and the emptying of the cup of wildness in our time.

American writers such as Melville, Poe, and Thoreau form a backdrop to the narrator's thoughts of his children growing up in a world of technological change foreign to their father -- "this global shopping spree we're getting to be." In addition, he considers faith as it pertains to religious belief in three generations: his own, his father's, and his children's.

At once impudent and elegiac, ironic and dignified, the voice that carries readers through this brilliant poem moves freely between the antipodes of mind and universe -- from the narrator's back porch to "the cluster of galaxies my galaxy is sitting in" -- observing, "How cliché / to acknowledge being infinitesimal in / a system that, in its own way, is infinitesimal! / Can't do it; nor can you." Sandy triumphs in showing the significance, fragility, and unity of all life on earth.

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