



Shift Work

Poems

BOBBY C. ROGERS

"These are the songs of those we have neglected to our peril, people who do 'piecework / on top of small farming to bring in a little pocket money' and rely on 'the providence of a / distractible God.' Now these forgotten Americans have achieved immortality in poems that are somehow both pitiless and as comforting as a country breakfast on a cold morning."—David Kirby

"*Shift Work* is utterly American. Meditations on cars, land we drain and work and hunt, factories, laundromats, diners, baseball, school, all show the decline yet persistence of the small town is not so different from the noble aging of the body. Rogers sings to us in a distinct, long-lined blues of our beautiful failures and honorable gestures."—John Poch

"In Rogers's third book, we hear many vivid, unforgettable voices: distressed, tender, raucous, dreamy, sardonic, sorrowful, nostalgic. It's very rare to read a collection that inspires you to read it and reread it—to savor, think over, and relish it—as this one does."—David Biespiel

Shift Work gathers a chorus from the storytelling working classes of the Upper South. In narrative poems made of sinewy, Whitmanesque lines, Bobby C. Rogers composes portraits of dwellers in the small towns, unincorporated communities, and hard-edged cities they have flown to, always packing their past with them, an inheritance as ephemeral as vapor, made mostly of memory even as it was being lived.

BOBBY C. ROGERS is the author of *Social History* and *Paper Anniversary*. His honors include a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and a Witter Bynner Fellowship at the Library of Congress. He teaches at Union University and lives in Memphis.

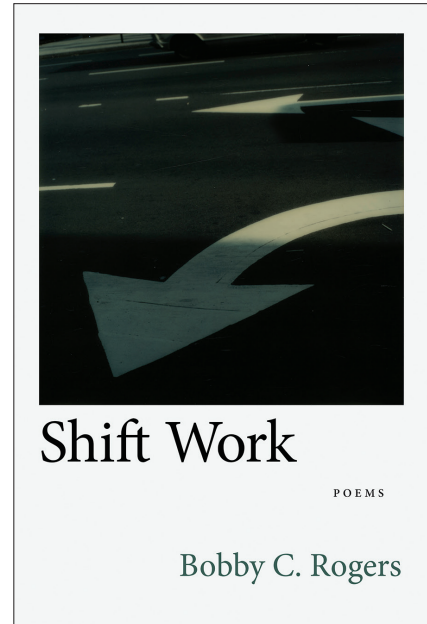
The man in front of me looked like he'd lived here
forever, too old to go into the office but still dressed for it,

immaculate suit and cashmere topcoat, his hat in his hand. I'd been taught
to predict the past, but he could tell you the present. It was this way

every year, and he would have been worried if it wasn't. His serenity was
as formal as a hand-written thank you note addressed to the harried woman

who weighed out his orange rings, half-dipped in dark chocolate, then
wrapped them in last year's pink paper gaudied with blood-red hearts.

—from "Valentine's Day Eve, Dinstuhl's Fine Candies, Memphis, Tennessee"



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Poetry

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