



poetry into evening-length concerts—begins with the recitation of a precursor, a poetic listing of non sequiturs. The sleightists, the live performers of the form, then navigate the architectures, polyhedral constructions of either blown glass or fiberglass that are nearly invisible on stage. Troupes hire sleightists in a parallel to the traditional dance company model, which are managed by directors who shape the sleight. And it is this insistence on portraying the characters through the body, through physical experience and performance that makes Kaschock's freshman effort as a novelist so unique.

She introduces Lark, a former sleightist, disgorging her Needs, beetle-like entities that are desiccated, their vibrant color eventually forming the palette for the Souls Lark sells to support her family. Clef, Lark's sister and star of the sleight troupe Monk, is presented through her bruises and achy joints, through the reciprocated pain of Lark's pregnancy (the sisters connection goes far beyond emotional attachment, literally sharing the pain of each other's physical traumas). Byrne, the unlikely Hand (a practitioner of sleight whose job is to develop the precursor), is shown with rock in hand, the egg-shaped stone rubbed smooth from years of use and switched every New Year to the opposite appendage but never removed. Kaschock rounds out the quartet of central characters with West, the coolly detached brain behind the ingenious creations of the celebrated sleight troupe Kepler. It is West's drive to produce a new sleight performance that binds these four characters together, their fragile and fragmented lives intersecting, and forever changes the art form to which they have all, in their own way, devoted their lives.

Within the text (and contained largely in the footnotes) lies the history of sleight: from its questionable origins on the island of Santo Domingo through possibly schizophrenic French Jesuit Pierre Revoix, to the Isadora Duncan-esque figure of Antonia Bugliesi and her formation of sleight from Revoix's original drawings, to the codification and board certified standards of later years. It is in this period that we find West negotiating these precedents, pushing at the seams of regulation to fashion a work that moves beyond the regimented and into the profound, into the revolutionary. And through West's struggle Kaschock illustrates the underlying challenge of any creative process, to not only create but also create anew, to shift the rules from what was to what is. We see West's seeming failure, even after breaking nearly every convention in the sleight rulebook, until the final pivotal performance when his desire is made manifest, but with far-reaching implications for dark and stormy Lark, red-headed sister Clef, and Byrne the rock-handed Hand.

I not only recommend reading *Sleight*, but suggest several readings, as the copious connections, the links of character, thematic elements, and description, are so finely knotted as to be nearly imperceptible. Kaschock provides a clear pool for the reading, but like a favorite childhood swimming hole, there are surprises under each rock, each cranny a possibility for shock or trauma, and it is this submersion into the unexpected that led me to delight in the electric world of *Sleight*.

More information on *Sleight* can be found here: <http://kaschock.wordpress.com/>

*Sleight* is available through Coffee House Press:

<http://www.coffeehousepress.org/authors/kirsten-kaschock/>

By Beau Hancock

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