

# BlazeVOX 2k9

Fall 2009

Clay Carpenter

## Lines

She asks if she can ride her scooter as far as  
Ms. Patty's and when I say yes she smiles  
and heads into the forbidden world  
between our house and three doors away,

this place really no different in my  
estimation than our own front yard,  
but so different in hers

Before this, her life's goal was moving past  
the edges of our lawn, onto the sidewalk  
in front of the neighbors' houses on either side,

and before that she coveted entrance into the  
front yard, the back yard having been deemed  
the only secure place for a 5-year-old

We draw and redraw the lines. They  
seem to move in sync with the lines  
we draw on her doorframe as she grows:

3-foot-8, 4 feet, 4-foot-2.  
Bedtime at 8, then 8:30 and 9.

It feels like a football game, her team tearing off  
chunks of yardage, moving resolutely toward the  
end zone. She collects first downs with the

telephone (no calls after 9)  
television (30 more minutes, then bed!),  
computer (only when I'm home to monitor)

and we are the tiring defense.

I don't like to look ahead to the new lines  
we'll be drawing as Ms. Patty's house  
fades in the distance and the questions  
become about cars and curfews,  
and other places I can't see from here

## **The Eyes Have It**

the first black president  
he is the eyes  
don't lie

no one says tell  
me, I'm from  
Missouri

and hearing is  
believing is  
unheard of

sight beats the  
other senses  
senseless

spit-shine the hub caps,  
they tell you  
and even

if cracked underneath  
choose the  
blonde

the brain writes  
songs the body  
sings but

the songwriter's face  
isn't on the  
magazine

give me the  
delicious  
unseen

## Watering again

watering the yard again,  
pretending it matters,  
water seeping into earth or  
burning off before it gets there,  
disappearing, and the grass  
looking thirsty again in three days

worrying about the grass again,  
constant as the sun, this worry,  
this feeling that the grass is  
important and outsized pride  
when it turns green and thick

attaching the sprinkler again,  
screwing it onto the hose for  
the thousandth time, maintaining,  
always maintaining --

the sprinkler is a rattle  
and I'm a baby, mesmerized

entranced by the meaningless  
shaking thing, the sound of it,

but no matter how much water  
is applied the grass won't come  
up gold. no riches, love, sex or  
even much in the way of  
entertainment in this grass --

palpitating with excitement again,  
over the shirt that will impress

oh, it will impress friends who are

carefully cooking the meal that will be  
forgotten in two days

lovingly scrubbing the car that will be  
dirty again in a week

everyone must be somewhere, doing  
something -- it's a requirement. So we're

pretending again,  
always pretending

and

solemnly, seriously, joyously

watching the rattle again,

watering the yard again