

an excerpt of

THE WORLD CUT OUT WITH CROOKED SCISSORS: SELECTED PROSE POEMS. By Carsten René Nielsen. Translated by David Keplinger. Kalamazoo, MI: New Issues Poetry and Prose, 2007. 103 pp. \$14.00.

*Reviewed by Nicky Beer*

It's impossible not to read the opening poem of Danish poet Carsten René Nielsen's first English-language translated collection, *The World Cut Out with Crooked Scissors*, as an *ars poetica*. In "Spider," pandemonium erupts in a schoolroom when "the fat boy of the class" unveils his all-spider revue of *Macbeth*: the audience of students and teacher, in their hysteria, cannot appreciate the macabre marvel to which they are witness, nor that "he controls with fabulous precision, a cool passion, and he does all the lines himself in different voices." The image of the diminutive puppet theater and the boxy form of the prose poem chime especially clearly here; subsequently, on page after page of Nielsen's book, a curtain rises on abbreviated scenes and tableaux that are by turns absurd, witty, disturbing, and delightful.

Contemporary Danish poetry runs the gamut from the charismatic experimentalism of the younger generation—see Slope Editions' 2006 anthology *The Other Side of Landscape* for an extensive survey of new Nordic poets—to the understated, reflective lyricism of elders such as Henrik Nordbrandt and Pia Tafdrup. Nielsen's *World*, comprising selections from his three latest books, represents work from that theoretical space that often marks the transition from "young" to "midcareer" poet—work that seems to straddle the distance between the stylistic extremes of his peers and predecessors with élan, allowing glimpses into an often fragmented but hypnotic poetic interior.