Throughout my writing life, I have been haunted by a character called “God,” feeling compelled to recount his fantasies, adventures, and mishaps. Whether shrewd observer or feckless spectator, shady ventriloquist or seedy voyeur, omnipotent invalid or crass Boss, he is a protean figure whose transformations reveal “a universe riddled with insatiable sinkholes and inexhaustible sources.”

The two poems that appear in the current issue of the *Notre Dame Review* are recent additions to this series. “The Gig,” which appears below, is an earlier “God” poem.

*The Gig*

Attired in a tuxedo, God  
Stood with the microphone snaking into  
His hand and a mane of blow-dried hair  
Crowning His countenance, and crooned  
Uncutuous love-songs to the vast  
Audience while His brilliant cuffs  
Kissed the air like the wings of angels  
And waiters circulated, abiding  
Always by the Second Law.  
It had been like this since the beginning  
Of the gig—just once had He spurned the mike,  
Dropped the bullshit, and sung like Caruso,  
Whose voice He had always wanted to be.  
Otherwise it was Las Vegas tempo,  
With the audience being born and dying,  
Kids collapsing from fatigue  
And marrying a few years later,  
And always the cheap love-songs plying  
Their ears—so ubiquitous they didn’t  
Even listen, said there was no singer,  
Claimed not to be an audience.  
After all, the back-up band was less  
Manifest than the woodwork, muter  
Than the music of the spheres. So people  
Habituated God’s pleading insistence  
Haplessly camouflaged under this organized  
Disorganization called nature.  
And who is God anyway? He has been  
Around as you can see by the bulge  
Under the cummerbund, and His face  
Radiates the false and gorgeous  
Glow of perpetual middle-aged youth,  
His song a seduction which disavows
Itself in the singing, I can imagine
Him at the end of the show pretending
To be gratified, coming out for the last
Curtain call while a gaggle of ladies
Clap the joke to oblivion.

[from Early/Late: New and Selected Poems (Salmon, 2011)]