

*This is Not a Skyscraper*  
Poetry by Dean Kostos  
ISBN 978-1-59709-416-0  
Binding: Tradepaper  
Size: 6 x 9; Pages: 144  
Price: US \$18.95  
Pub Date: April 9, 2015



Dean Kostos



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The poems in *This Is Not a Skyscraper*, winner of the 2013 Benjamin Saltman Poetry Award, undertake the lost voices of New York, elegizing a city of phantoms.

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*This Is Not a Skyscraper* examines New York City through a surrealist lens. Like the title of Magritte's painting, "*This is not a pipe*," these poems question perceptions of the metropolis. While NYC entices talents that swarm its stages, museums, runways, and readings, throngs of outsiders live on the city's margins, silenced. Among the grotesqueries of corruption, an African immigrant is killed by police in a case of mistaken identity. His disembodied voice introduces the book. Many of these poems attempt to speak for the "others" existing on the peripheral, whose perspectives have been abandoned.

### **Praise for *This is Not a Skyscraper***

"With craft and acuity, Dean Kostos, as an intrepid and empathetic poet-reporter, sings the teeming city of New York, making the metropolis, with its monuments, museums, crimes, and mutable desires, seem an apt mirror for 'the raucous currents of the self.'"

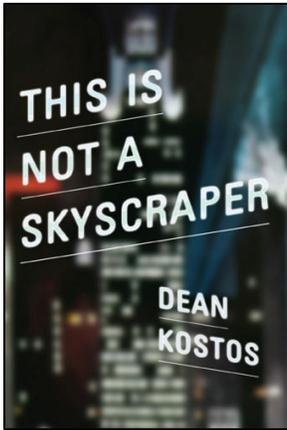
—Cyrus Cassells, author of *The Crossed-Out Swastika* and *Beautiful Signor*

"In *This Is Not a Skyscraper*, Dean Kostos joins the ranks of Whitman, Crane, and Lorca in offering us a vision of New York City that is at once a real place, in all its beauty and terror—a fantastical agora of death and desire—and a living, bustling metaphor for how we all come together to live our lives, find our loves, encounter our fears, make our art, and face our fates. His poems—vividly written and as vital and varied in form and content as the city that inspired them—'block-by-block, / build a bridge' to every reader who is animated by the lure and lore of the metropolis."

—David Groff, author of *Clay*

### **Biographical Note**

Dean Kostos's collections include *Rivering*, *Last Supper of the Senses*, *The Sentence That Ends with a Comma* (taught at Duke University), and *Celestial Rust*. He edited *Mama's Boy* and *Pomegranate Seeds*. His work has appeared in leading journals: *Boulevard*, *Chelsea*, *Cimarron Review*, *Cincinnati Review*, *Southwest Review*, *Western Humanities Review*, and on *Oxygen.com*. Having taught at Wesleyan, The Gallatin School, and The City University of New York, he also wrote a libretto for *Voices of Ascension*, and his poem, "Subway Silk," was translated into a short film by Jill Clark.



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**More Praise for *This is Not a Skyscraper***

“Do you ever ask why, after a fresh hair cut, your stylist can’t wait to show you the *back* of your head? Dean Kostos, in his pithy fifth collection, *This Is Not a Skyscraper*, will likewise twist you in your chair. He lures readers into his hand-held mirror (aka *looking glass*), like a practiced stylist, meticulously exposing what we might have otherwise missed. An itinerate storyteller, his orbit is the city of New York: her museums, her parks, her Coney Island sideshows. He finds metaphor and refuge in tropes like the *cape* as a cover up, unveiling a fantasy of a man disrobed by a barber, then as a mother snaps on ‘a cape to reveal a rabbit,’ and again, in an early lover, ‘his arms a cape / around me.’ Villon, Gorky, Christo—Kostos enlists an army of artists to deploy his sinewy ideas. The title of this gathering of sixty-two poems alludes to Magritte’s “*Ceci n’est pas une pipe*” (This is not a pipe). And *this is not* a collection you’ll want to pass up. His poems are peopled by a ‘hive of voices’ that ‘become one / voice, their mouths the muzzles / of guns’; each will leave you blinking at what you are looking at, admiring its shape, and wanting to see more.”

—Elaine Sexton, author of *Sleuth* and *Causeway*

**From *This is Not a Skyscraper***

“You’ve Been Here Before”

Yes, there were children clamoring  
under artificial shade, selling invisible towers  
to tourists, but there were also bicyclists  
with enameled eggshells on their heads,  
calling, “Watch out!”  
I was not beneath buttonwood shade  
when men with springy necks assembled  
to assess my worth in dimming light.  
I was the “ocean” setting on the white-noise  
machine that sounded like traffic.  
And the fleshy bicyclists  
in sky-blue velour weren’t really angry  
after all. They were just paid to look that way  
by the Department of Commodities.