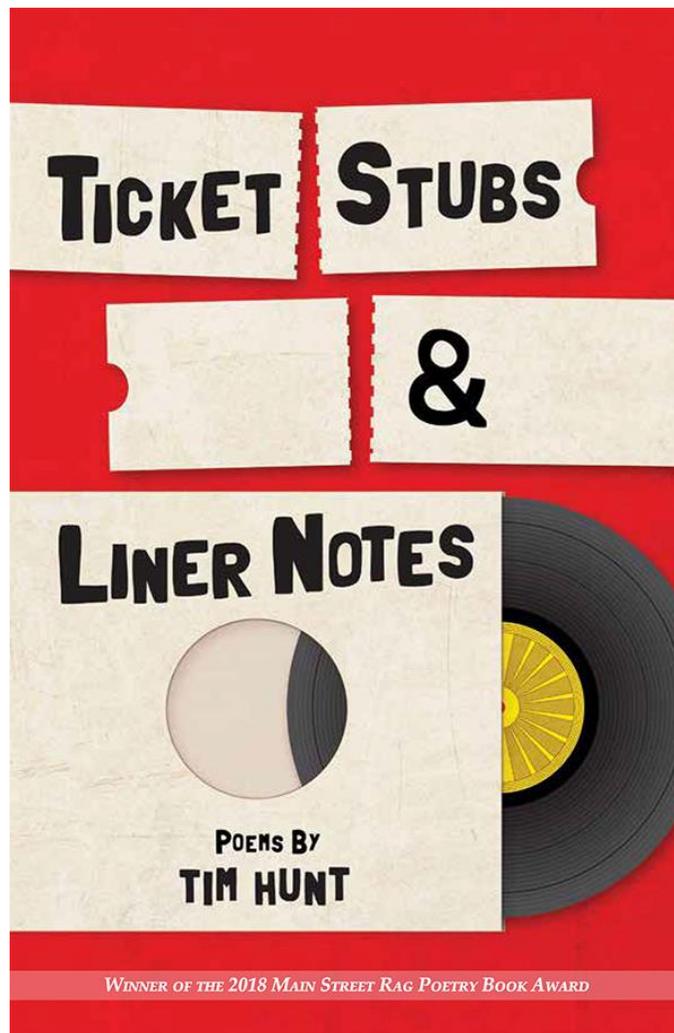


Tim Hunt

Winner of the 2018 Main Street Rag Poetry Book Award

Ticket Stubs & Liner Notes



Press Contact

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www.tahunt.com/poetry/

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A fourth generation native of Northern California, Tim Hunt was born in Calistoga and raised primarily in Sebastopol, small towns north of San Francisco that were, in the 1950s and 1960s, agricultural, working class communities. As a boy, he also identified strongly with the Lake County region of his father's family, an area where quicksilver mining had once been profitable. Educated at Cornell University, he taught American literature at Washington State University, Deep Springs College, and other schools, before retiring from Illinois State University, where he was University Professor of English. He and his wife Susan, a retired respiratory therapist, have two children: John, a visual artist, and Jessica, a composer. For more details, visit www.tahunt.com.

Tim Hunt

PUBLICATIONS

Poetry Books:

- *Ticket Stubs & Liner Notes* (Main Street Rag Publishing Company, 2018)
- *Poem's Poems & Other Poems* (CW Books, 2016)
- *The Tao of Twang* (CW Books, 2014)
- *Fault Lines* (The Backwaters Press, 2009)
- *The Letter Eye* (under consideration various presses)

Poetry Chapbooks:

- *Thirteen Ways of Talking to a Blackbird* (Finishing Line Press, 2013)
- *White Levis* (Pudding House Press, 2010)
- *Redneck Yoga* (Finishing Line Press, 2010)
- *Lake County Diamond* (Intertext Books, 1986)
- *The Circle: The Veterans Remembering WWII* (under consideration various presses)

150 Poems in Journals & Anthologies (including):

ArLiJo, Cloudbank, Coal Hill Review, CutBank, Epoch, Grasslimb, Montana Review, Naugatuck River Review, Quarterly West, Qwerty, Rhino, Rio Grande Review, Sequestrum, Southern Poetry Review, Spillway, Spoon River Poetry Review, Storyscape, & Tar River Poetry

Scholarly Publications (selected):

- *The Textuality of "Soulwork": Jack Kerouac's Search for Spontaneous Prose* (University of Michigan Press, 2014)
- *Kerouac's Crooked Road: Development of a Fiction* (University of California Press et al, 1981, 1996 & 2010)
- *The Selected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers* (Stanford University Press, 2001)
- *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers* (five volumes, Stanford University Press, 1988, 1989, 1991, 2000, & 2001)

RECOGNITION & HONORS (selected)

- 2018 Main Street Rag Poetry Book Award (for *Ticket Stubs & Liner Notes*)
- First Prize (\$1,000), National Poetry Competition, the Chester H. Jones Foundation (judges: Carolyn Forché, Dave Smith & Diane Wakoski)
- 3 Pushcart Prize Nominations
- Honorable Mention, the Able Muse Book Award (Able Muse Press)
- Finalist, the May Swenson Poetry Award (Utah State University Press)
- Finalist, the Frederick Morgan Poetry Prize (Story Line Press)
- Finalist, the Nicholas Roerich Poetry Prize (Story Line Press)
- Finalist, Off the Grid Prize (Off the Grid Press)
- Finalist, the Saint Lawrence Book Award (Black Lawrence Press)
- Finalist, the Holland Prize (Logan House Press)

- Finalist, Bright Hill Press Poetry Chapbook Competition
- Semifinalist, the Able Muse Book Award (Able Muse Press)
- Semifinalist, May Reading Period (Word Works)
- Semifinalist, the Washington Prize (Word Works)
- Semifinalist, the Richard Snyder Award (Ashland Poetry Press)
- Semifinalist, Off the Grid Prize (Off the Grid Press)
- Semifinalist, the Cleveland State University Poetry Center First Book Prize
- Semifinalist, The Frost Place Chapbook Competition

EDUCATION

AB cum laude (1970); MA (1974); & PhD (1975) in American Literature, Cornell University.

EXPERIENCE

- Illinois State University, 2003-2016 (Professor of English / University Professor)
- Washington State University, 1990-2003 (Professor of English)
- Deep Springs College, 1987-1990 (Academic Dean & Professor of English)
- Indiana University-Purdue University at Fort Wayne, 1985-1987 (Assistant / Associate Professor of English)
- University of Washington, 1984-1985 (Acting Instructor of English)
- Nova College of Nova University, 1982-1984 (Director of Communications and Humanities)
- Deep Springs College, 1981 (Professor of English and Speech)
- Colby College, 1980-1981 (Visiting Assistant Professor of English Department)
- University of Delaware, 1976-1980 (Lecturer, Freshman Honors Program)
- University of Utah, 1974-1976 (Assistant Professor of English Department)

PRESS RELEASE

Main Street Rag Publishing Company

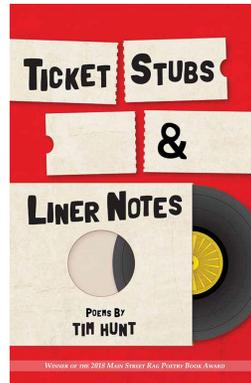
PO BOX 690100

Charlotte, NC 28227-7001

Phone: 704-573-2516

Winner of the 2018 Main Street Rag Book Award

Main Street Rag Publishing Company is pleased to announce the publication of



In these poems, recalling the 1950s and 1960s through the music of Chuck Berry to Sun Ra by way of Jefferson Airplane, the way things were and how we remember them shimmy, twist, and slow dance until the actual and remembered collide with the fabled and maybe should've been.

In this “marvelous book,” David Kirby finds both “a soundtrack to the dawn of the present day” and “a vocabulary essential to our understanding.” For Wendy Barker, these “mesmerizing” poems are “not only *about* music; they *create* it!” And David Rigsbee declares *Ticket Stubs* is “an American soundtrack” that “aligns Whitman’s freedom with Wolfman Jack’s.”

Tim Hunt is the author of three collections: *Poem’s Poems & Other Poems* (CW Books), *The Tao of Twang* (CW Books), and *Fault Lines* (The Backwaters Press). He has received the Chester H. Jones Foundation’s National Poetry Prize, along with three Pushcart Prize nominations, and been a finalist and semifinalist for a number of awards, including the May Swenson Poetry Award.

Hunt’s academic publications include *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers* (Stanford University Press), *Kerouac’s Crooked Road: The Development of a Fiction* (University of California Press), and *The Textuality of Soulwork: Kerouac’s Quest for Spontaneous Prose* (University of Michigan Press).

Publication Date: November 2018

ISBN: 978-1-59948-712-0, ~84 pages, \$14 (+ shipping)

Online orders: <https://mainstreetragbookstore.com/product/ticket-stubs-liner-notes-tim-hunt/>

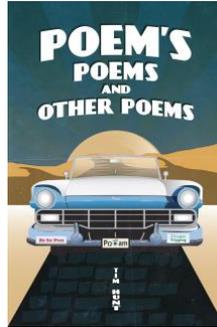
Website Companion to *Ticket Stubs & Liner Notes*: www.tahunt.com/ticketstubs/

1309 Courtland Avenue, Normal, IL 61761 (309-452-6002 / byrdhunt@gmail.com)

PRESS RELEASE

CW Books
P.O. Box 541106
Cincinnati, OH 45254-1106
Phone: (513) 474-3761

CW Books is pleased to announce the publication of



In Tim Hunt's *Poem's Poems & Other Poems*, the collection's hero, Poem, is a figure turned literal who too often can't tell the literal from the figural. Perhaps that's why he thinks the Rolling Poems were an actual band and may explain why he can't get no satisfaction.

Poem's "quest for self-definition," as Joe Amato (an actual poet) characterizes it, pits "folksy wisdom" against "literary fashion...as Poem cuts the rug of aesthetic idioms from the past century while the new century's selfies lay siege."

Poet James Bertolino suggests that the poems of *Poem's Poems & Other Poems* "never fail to energize, challenge, and amuse the reader," adding that the collection (Poem blushed when hearing this) "deserves an award."

But as scholar and poet Deborah Geis notes, Poem "is always asking the 'wrong' questions" and "is always somewhere he doesn't quite belong." Yet Poem "ultimately charms us," she adds, "with his love of both illusions and allusions."

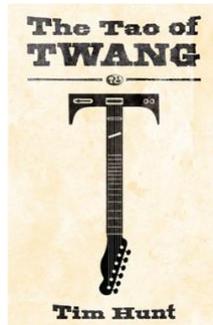
Tim Hunt's poetry has appeared in numerous journals, including *Epoch*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Quarterly West*, *Spillway*, *Rhino*. His publications include *The Tao of Twang* (CW Books) and *Fault Lines* (The Backwaters Press) and four chapbooks. He has received the Chester H. Jones Foundation's National Poetry Prize, received three Pushcart Prize nominations, and has been a Finalist for the May Swenson Poetry Award, among others.

Hunt's academic work includes *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers* (Stanford University Press), *Kerouac's Crooked Road: The Development of a Fiction* (University of California Press), and *The Textuality of Soulwork: Kerouac's Quest for Spontaneous Prose* (University of Michigan Press). He is currently University Professor of English at Illinois State University.

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Cincinnati, OH 45254-1106
Phone: (513) 474-3761

CW Books is pleased to announce the publication of



From our largely urban and suburban reality, it is easy to laugh at the backwardness of those who do not ride a train to work clutching a laptop and latté: Every “us” needs a “them.” In the poems of Tim Hunt's *The Tao of Twang*, “them” talks back, both to return the laughter and to search for things we might need and even want, whether we imagine ourselves as either “us” or “them.

In *The Tao of Twang*, says the poet Sharon Doubiago, Tim Hunt’s poems “put the Holy Writ of academia’s canon under the same lens as it puts the culture of his roots.” Through these poems, she adds, “You will know why redneck Western poets write the way we do.”

Novelist Keith Abbott observes that *The Tao of Twang* ranges from “Bakersfield to Nashville,” hitting “all the E string pit stops in between” with “some imaginary heavens of those perfect gigs” mixed in for good measure.

In *The Tao of Twang* Poet Brett Eugene Ralph hears “echoes of Richard Hugo in the hardscrabble heart that animates these poems” and “the places and people they celebrate.”

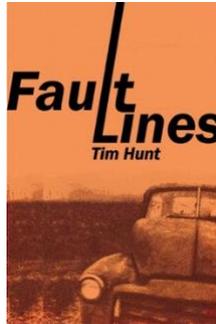
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Hunt’s academic work includes *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers* (Stanford University Press), *Kerouac’s Crooked Road: The Development of a Fiction* (University of California Press), and *The Textuality of Soulwork: Kerouac’s Quest for Spontaneous Prose* (University of Michigan Press). He is currently University Professor of English at Illinois State University.

PRESS RELEASE

The Backwaters Press
3502 North 52nd St.
Omaha, NE 68104-3506
(402) 451-4052

The Backwaters Press is pleased to announce the publication of



In *Fault Lines*, Tim Hunt's collection of poems, place still matters. The rocks and thistle rooted into the red dirt are not yet digital. There are no ring tones.

Fault Lines presents "a west we have forgotten how to see," says poet Michael Davidson, in poems that "photograph a landscape of resilient individuals, family members, and friends, who at times, seem to be made of the landscape they inhabit."

Poet Robert Morgan writes that Hunt is not only "a poet of the American West, of the coastal mountains and the desert valleys" but "also a poet of the landscape of language," where "the fractures underneath the surface, of the land, of speech, of habit, and family connection, threaten to jolt us into new perspectives, deeper recognitions.

In *Fault Lines*, the poet Lucia Getsi notes, Hunt "makes language out of the silences and images out of the absences to recover invisibles that make the present make some sense."

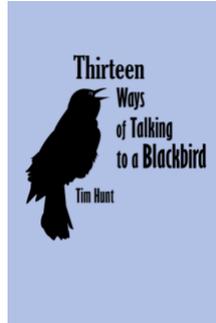
Tim Hunt's poetry has appeared in numerous journals, including *Epoch*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Quarterly West*, *Spillway*, *Rhino*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*. His publications also include the chapbook *Lake County Diamond* (Intertext) and two forthcoming chapbooks, *Redneck Yoga* (Finishing Line Press) and *White Levis* (Pudding House Chapbooks). He has received the Chester H. Jones Foundation's National Poetry Prize, twice been nominated for a Pushcart Prize, and has been a Finalist for the May Swenson Poetry Award.

Mr. Hunt is Professor of English at Illinois State University. His academic work includes *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers* (Stanford University Press) and *Kerouac's Crooked Road: The Development of a Fiction* (Southern Illinois University Press).

PRESS RELEASE

Finishing Line Press
Post Office Box 1626
Georgetown, KY 40324
www.finishinglinepress.com
859-514-8966

Finishing Line Press is pleased to announce the publication of



In *Thirteen Ways of Talking to a Blackbird*, Tim Hunt explores a series of “what ifs,” re-visioning and re-hearing commonly taught American poems.

“In *Thirteen Ways of Talking to a Blackbird*,” notes poet Susan Terris, Tim Hunt “reinterprets, from his own, singular point of view, a group of famous poems.... His work is quirky and original—sometimes lyrical, sometimes with the informality of everyday speech but always intense, moving and joyous.”

Poet Gabe Gudding declares, “It of course isn’t easy to write as elegantly as Williams or with an invention and lexical density the equivalent of Stevens, or with the deft political insight of Rich, but Tim Hunt does.”

The poems of *Thirteen Ways of Talking to a Blackbird*, suggests poet David McAleavey, “take on large issues as well as familiarly canonical American poems.” “Sly, witty, ironic, and satirical as well as impassioned and earnest...these poems side with reality, against narcissism.

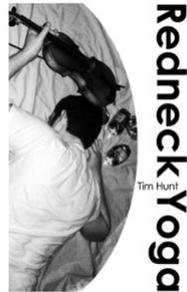
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Mr. Hunt is Professor of English at Illinois State University. His academic work includes *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers* (Stanford University Press) and *Kerouac’s Crooked Road: The Development of a Fiction* (Southern Illinois University Press).

PRESS RELEASE

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Finishing Line Press is pleased to announce the publication of



In *Redneck Yoga*, Tim Hunt offers doublewide poems that celebrate the difference between “thing” and “thang,” which can be “as much as everything.”

Larry Joe Campbell, who played Andy on *According to Jim*, asks, “How can something be so genuine and at the same time smack you upside the head with its sarcasm? Tim Hunt's collection of poems,” he adds, “tells it like it is with a pure American tongue.”

And the Beat composer David Amram comments, “His affection and understanding of the hidden beauty of the American underground vernacular of the 1950s honors the voices of those long-gone denizens of the night whose scattin stretched the language and whose special energy changed America.”

Tim Hunt’s publications include the collection *Fault Lines* (The Backwaters Press), the chapbooks *Lake County Diamond* (Intertext) and *White Levis* (Pudding House Press), and poems in numerous journals, including *Epoch*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Quarterly West*, *Spillway*, *Rhino*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*. He has received the Chester H. Jones Foundation’s National Poetry Prize, been nominated for a Pushcart Prize, and has been a Finalist for the May Swenson Poetry Award.

Mr. Hunt is Professor of English at Illinois State University. His academic work includes *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers* (Stanford University Press) and *Kerouac’s Crooked Road: The Development of a Fiction* (Southern Illinois University Press).

PRESS RELEASE

Pudding House Chapbooks
3252 Parklane Ave.
Columbus Ohio 43231
614-638-1379
puddinghousechaps@gmail.com

Pudding House Chapbooks is pleased to announce the publication of



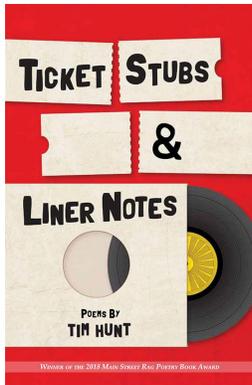
Writing of Tim Hunt's previous chapbook, *Redneck Yoga*, the noted composer and jazz musician David Amram observes,

Just like Dante in his *Terza Rima* and Kerouac in his flights of fancy, Tim Hunt paints us a portrait of our surroundings and makes you want to celebrate life and write a poem yourself.

In these new poems Hunt continues to search for the genuine, and failing that, for what might suffice.

Tim Hunt's poetry publications include *Fault Lines* (Backwaters Press), the chapbooks *Redneck Yoga* (Finishing Line Press) and *Lake County Diamond* (Intertext Books), and poems in numerous journals, including *Epoch*, *Tar River Poetry*, *Quarterly West*, *Spillway*, *Rhino*, and *Spoon River Poetry Review*. He has received the Chester H. Jones Foundation's National Poetry Prize, been nominated for a Pushcart Prize, and has been a Finalist for the May Swenson Poetry Award, Frederick Morgan Poetry Prize, and Nicholas Roerich Poetry Prize.

Mr. Hunt is Professor of English at Illinois State University. His academic work includes *The Collected Poetry of Robinson Jeffers* (Stanford University Press) and *Kerouac's Crooked Road: The Development of a Fiction* (Southern Illinois University Press).



Blurbs for *Ticket Stubs & Liner Notes*:

If you grew up with the music of the 1950's and 1960's, *Ticket Stubs and Liner Notes* is for you. But even if you're a grandchild—or great grandchild—of the iconic Chuck Berry, whom Tim Hunt describes as "that master of ironic innocence and innuendo," then Hunt's rockin' collection is for you too. For the poems in this collection are not just about music; they create it as well as any words on a page ever could. Reading this mesmerizing book, we're ready to "kneel / and light the guitar" to listen to "shovel and coal, debt, the Company Store / and another day. The actual world." There's a world in these poems that never drag, are never out of sync so that we're no longer "alone in our darkened rooms." When "the pick is / a hummingbird's wing," "the moon hitches / its overalls and eases down into its chair / on some porch behind that hill, leaving / only the dark ridge and spray of stars." Read this book and you'll be sprayed with stars.

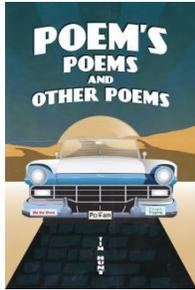
—Wendy Barker, author of *One Blackbird at a Time*

When I hear Van Morrison say he's going down the old mine with a transistor radio in "Brown-Eyed Girl," I always wonder if young folks are going to know what he's talking about. They would if they read this marvelous book. In the pleasure it offers and the knowledge it imparts, *Ticket Stubs & Liner Notes* provides more than a soundtrack to the dawn of the present day—it also supplies a vocabulary essential to our understanding.

—David Kirby, author of *Get Up, Please*

In writing about the Golden Age of Rock and Roll in *Ticket Stubs & Liner Notes*, Tim Hunt combines reverent allegiance with badass swagger. The guitar gods and gargoyles, heroes, heroines, hippies, and musical rascals that make up his pantheon find a shrewd acolyte in Hunt. In poem after poem, with a keen eye and perfect pitch, Hunt recreates an American soundtrack that turns our mythical exceptionalism on its head, while offering in its place, a vision that aligns with Whitman's freedom with Wolfman Jack's. It is the record of musical devotion that sought salvation, from civil unrest, unjust wars, criminal leaders, and rampant capitalism, not to mention our own mealy conformism. In this he joins the ranks of such poets as Dorianne Laux, Mark Halliday, David Kirby, and Michael Waters, bards of rock whose own songs explore, through the apotheosis of musical rebels, the longing of our demotic souls.

—David Rigsbee, author of *This Much I Can Tell You*



Blurbs for *Poem's Poems & Other Poems*:

The animating spirit of Hunt's new collection is Poem, a metapoetic persona whose quest for self-definition yields a series of—you guessed it—poems in which a folksy wisdom is pitted against literary fashion in gesturing toward a “beyond / beyond mere form.” Be's are bopped, rock is rolled, spurs are jingle-jangle-jingled as Poem cuts the rug of aesthetic idioms from the past century while the new century's selfies lay siege. Pay attention. – Joe Amato

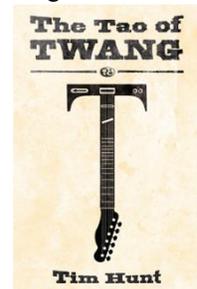
I have been a fan of Tim Hunt's writing since we were students at Cornell University. This new collection of poems, which stars a character named “Poem,” never fails to energize, challenge, and amuse the reader. I hope the book will be submitted for Pulitzer Prize consideration. It deserves an award. – James Bertolino

Tim Hunt's newest collection of poems is playful and irreverent, yet literate and contemplative. His persona—the poem as, well, Poem—is always somewhere that he doesn't quite belong, or is always asking the “wrong” questions, yet ultimately charms us with his love of both illusions and allusions. From a plea to include Slim Gaillard in the *Norton Anthology* to imagistic evocations of Ezra Pound, questions of canonicity and the literary past—especially the Beats—hover here and demand attention. Highly recommended. – Deborah R. Geis

Blurbs for *The Tao of Twang*:

With care and honesty Tim Hunt's *The Tao of Twang* covers a lot of territory, from raw youth to rolling total old. Bakersfield to Nashville; all the E string pit stops in between and Hunt even supplies some imaginary heavens of those perfect gigs. – Keith Abbott

At one point in *The Tao of Twang*, the reader is encouraged to “Make the poem / Of what isn't there.” Having navigated this fresh and fun-filled collection, however, I am struck by what *is* there: hunters sitting *zazen* in deer stands, stars that sing like violins, and bygone beer cans that still require a church key to unlock. I hear echoes of Richard Hugo in the hardscrabble heart that animates these poems and some of the places and people they celebrate, like the logger who stirs his cup of coffee with a calloused thumb. What I value most in Tim Hunt's poems, though, is their celebration of seemingly “routine paraphernalia,” the energy and ability to find lyric beauty in even the most fleeting phenomena: the vacuum / Tube, glowing / Against the bar's / Darkened wall . . .” – Brett Eugene Ralph

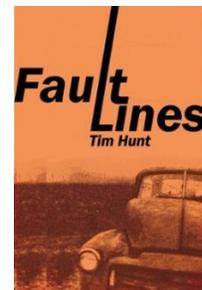


Indirectly, delightfully, his poems put the Holy Writ of academia's canon under the same lens as it puts the culture of his roots. . . . Hilarious, thought-provoking, deeply philosophical, sometimes almost transhuman, to use Jeffers word, in the mix of subject and form from two different/almost at-war cultures, and with the help of his fantastic ear, you will know the Tao of twang. You will know why redneck Western poets write the way we do. And you will newly ponder, again, our aesthetic assumptions. – Sharon Doubiago

Blurbs for *Fault Lines*:

Tim Hunt is a landscape artist, like his master, Robinson Jeffers. Unlike Jeffers, Hunt knows “the ache of so much space to fill with the human,” as he says in one of his best poems, “Stories.” He has learned a lot from Jeffers, a great poet of resonant inhuman spaces. But the humanity filling Hunt's poems is all his own. – Mark Jarman

Tim Hunt is a poet of the American West, of the coastal mountains and the desert valleys. He is also a poet of the landscape of language, where the reader is surprised by luminous detail, sharp-edged memory. The beauty of this world is made more intense by knowing of the fractures underneath the surface, of the land, of speech, of habit, and family connection, threatening to



jolt us into new perspectives, deeper recognitions. – Robert Morgan

In *Fault Lines* Tim Hunt charts the plate tectonics of family history and western landscape, revealing a kind of resilience displayed equally in both. In these beautiful poems, reminiscent of the best of Jeffers, Everson, and Snyder, Hunt's unerring ear and eye bring to life a west we hardly knew we missed. – Michael Davidson

The strength of Tim Hunt's nature poems drew me into this book. His observation of light, rocks, a hawk and a field mouse in "High Desert Summer," a California landscape, is so intense that he seems to long to become part of it:

This time I could stop,
walk into the brittle sage
and wait for the heat
to make me its own.

But I would still not be
calibrated to the rock's
dance, or the flinch into stillness
deeper than fear.

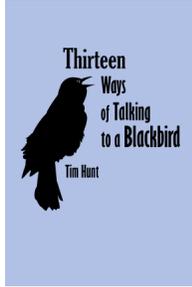
Then come the poems honoring and loving his family, whose history is made up of men and women "getting by," "learning to make do," acquiring "that tricky pride of the poor—the failing that is success." Here is a poet standing on the threshold of existence, acutely aware of the humans, both living and dead, existing in the rooms behind him, but wanting, "other times," the consolation of nature

...to wander away from the voices, down
the chipped cement steps to the different
shade of the black walnut, its emptier heat
of rock and thistle, the dirt redder than rust,
and be again alone in that way

His ambivalence is a strength and enrichment, not only for him, but for his fortunate readers. – Judith Hemschemeyer

In a four part harmony of conceptual blends and metaphoric resonances that grid and bridge the subterranean spasms, leavings, and losses of generational memory, Tim Hunt's elegiac speaker spellbinds a "wholeness of dislocations." The "trick," the voice discovers, is "to read what was" in what now exists in the long present of a lifetime, making language out of the silences and images out of the absences to recover invisibles that make the present make some sense. In a poem current with the unending wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the speaker writes of the 1967 March on Washington against the war in Vietnam: those marchers then believed that, by definition, a war would end. *Fault Lines* creates this subtle language of implication, humming a music of loss in the registers of blues, jazz, and rock n roll—an "algebra" of fret and string that voices paths through the faults. – Lucia Cordell Getsi

The most important thing that Tim Hunt knows about poetry was cooked into him in the foothills of California. "here, the light in summer is so absolute everything blooms dust." His great mentor, Robinson Jeffers, couldn't have said it any better. – Curtis White



Blurbs for *Thirteen Ways of Talking to a Blackbird*:

It of course isn't easy to write as elegantly as Williams or with an invention and lexical density the equivalent of Stevens, or with the deft political insight of Rich, but Tim Hunt does. Like the masters he pays homage to in this volume, Hunt offers, with a flawless ear and remarkable ingenuity, uncannily wrought worlds that are less revisions of American masterworks and more Hunt's own ingeniously observed and important meditations on what it is to be "actually here" in a puzzle of memory and culture and family whose pieces are increasingly lost. – Gabe Gudding

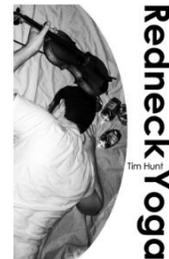
Sly, witty, ironic, and satirical as well as impassioned and earnest, these sixteen poems take on large issues as well as familiarly canonical American poems. Because of their practical knowledge (how to fix a barbed-wire fence, how to kill a chicken) and their firm grip on popular culture (gas stations using Boraxo on their sinks, the difference between "Shee-it" and "Shih-it"), these poems side with reality, against narcissism. Hunt pokes and prods at the poetic tradition, wrestling against the autocratic Ezra Pound, for instance, or investigating what can seem like glibness in Frost. Along the way he mixes it up with figures as diverse as Emily Dickinson and Jasper Johns, John Ashbery and Gregory Corso, Wallace Stevens and Hank Williams. What a good way to respond to monuments of the magnificence of this American singing school!
– David McAleavey

Tim Hunt is a poet of many voices. In *Thirteen Ways of Talking to a Blackbird*, he reinterprets, from his own, singular point of view, a group of famous poems we all know. His work is quirky and original—sometimes lyrical, sometimes with the informality of everyday speech but always intense, moving and joyous. This book is: "... a tip-toed prance across / The high wire as the crowd gapes / In wonder at the tricks. . . ." – Susan Terris

Blurbs for *Redneck Yoga*:

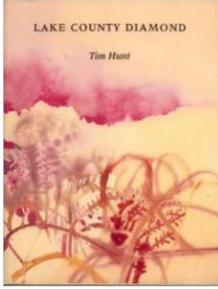
Tim Hunt's *Redneck Yoga* is a breath of fresh air and a joy to read. He tells his OWN story in his own special way, and you can't do better than that.

His affection and understanding of the hidden beauty of the American underground vernacular of the 1950s honors the voices of those long-gone denizens of the night whose scattin stretched the language and whose special energy changed America.



Just like Dante in his *Terza Rima* and Kerouac in his flights of fancy, Tim Hunt paints us a portrait of our surroundings and makes you want to celebrate life and write a poem yourself. – David Amram

How can something be so genuine and at the same time smack you upside the head with its sarcasm? If you mean what you say, can it still be facetious and sardonic? Tim Hunt's collection of poems tells it like it is with a pure American tongue. He balances the elegance of a true poet's pen with a sometimes playful, sometimes barbed commentary on our way of life. Poetry is alive and well in the U.S. thanks to Tim Hunt's imagery, Americana, and his acerbic wit. – Larry Joe Campbell



Blurbs for *Lake County Diamond*:

Just think of the line “When the dying was no longer slow enough.” The metaphysical shudder binds with an odd psychological perspective—in a domain Hunt makes powerfully his own. This is a poetry fit to name the world in all its crudeness, but also insistent on the strange twists of sensibility that keep a mind fully alive within the destructive repetitions of that crudeness. Without a theater of sensitivity Hunt puts feelings where it is hard to imagine even perceptions taking hold. – Charles Altieri

Tim Hunt’s poetry evokes the used up places we leave, the arduous and bitter journeyings we make, and something of what we find when weary. Loss, uprootedness, impermanence—Hunt finds beauty and passion, even familial roots, in the drift of our lives. These poems stand in the big wind— John Clellon Holmes

Tim Hunt writes so lovingly and exactingly of one part of Northern California that it comes to be the reader’s part of the world, too, both strange and familiar enough to seem, in his rendering of it, a possible home. – William Matthews

In Tim Hunt’s poems the land is a living history: of family, of mineral, of culture and the processes of dying, of broken machinery become new earth again. Like his master Jeffers, he sees a harsh world of stone and desert light, and sees the beauty in its crystal and erosions. “On the road” in America, he reverses and repeats the journey his homesteading ancestors made to the West, and discovers a new region of poems memorably crafted, vivid as a desert noon, and entirely his own. – Robert Morgan

Sharon Doubiago's Foreword to *The Tao of Twang*

Having won a major poetry prize Tim Hunt quit writing poetry for 20 years; instead he studied, taught and wrote as a scholar of American Literature (Jeffers, Kerouac).

Part of it (I came to realize as I puzzled over Robinson Jeffers, his practice and his critical dismissal) had to do with having been taught to think of the page as a surface on which one inscribed writing when what I wanted/needed to do was think on the page as a medium where enacted speech was stored for hearing.

With *The Tao of Twang* we know in a new way this central issue with the reigning poetics, the competing gospels. Hunt engages our conundrum on the highly intellectual level of the scholar poet, opening the consideration of his poetry as a major statement, or at least a major question.

What if Wallace Stevens imagined talking to a blackbird rather than looking at one, or if William Carlos Williams had pulled back from that red wheelbarrow to include the side yard with the chickens within the frame, or if the "you" in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" replied to "Let us go, then, you and I"?

Well, we would be back to our families, our home towns (in the rural ones, anyway), back to the ideologies, faiths, and aesthetics we came from but to which we now no longer (exactly) belong. The subject matter of these poems stems from a fidelity to "the living tradition" of his working/rural class/western background but his probing intellect on this subject uses the forms, constructs and aesthetics of academia, resulting in an ironic fidelity, root-deep. In his uses of the rich poetic clichés, the puns and profound mentality, mannerisms and aesthetics—the vanishing lingo of the rural west—the cultural caricatures become meaningful archetypes. "*In their poem/the words mustn't be cut away.*" "*In real stories/what happens is never/the point.*" Writing from an "I" you aren't, can't be, can't come from or tell of, to a "you" you'll never know, a you who is not real, not there, just little scriggly black and white lines: both cultures, it becomes comically clear, are of faith, ideology, belief. "*And in this photo that does not/exist the preacher is beyond the frame.*" Yes, that is the gospel truth, the twang of the Tao, but for Heaven's sake, who is the preacher? (Could the enforced taboo of the "I" be the disguised "I" of the ruling class?) Indirectly, delightfully, his poems put the Holy Writ of academia's canon under the same lens as it puts the culture of his roots.

In all its uses, the Tao is considered to have ineffable qualities that prevent it from being defined or expressed in words. However, the Tao can be known or experienced, and its principles, which can be discerned by observing Nature, can be followed or practiced or in some way entered into relationship with. (Wikipedia)

Hilarious, thought-provoking, deeply philosophical, sometimes almost transhuman, to use Jeffers word, in the mix of subject and form from two different/almost at-war cultures, and with the help of his fantastic ear, you will know the Tao of twang. You will know why redneck Western poets write the way we do. And you will newly ponder, again, our aesthetic assumptions.

REVIEWS OF FAULT LINES

The Pedestal, Issue 61 (December 2010)

Fault Lines

Tim Hunt

The Backwaters Press

ISBN: 9781935218166

Reviewer: Michael Adams

I admire a poet who declares his intentions up-front, as Tim Hunt does in *Fault Lines*, his first full-length collection of poetry. The book's opening poem, an invocation titled "Prescript (Poetry)," begins with "'How clear,' my friend asks, / 'is it okay to be?'" and proceeds in five succinct lines, reminiscent of William Carlos Williams, to tell us that he will be as clear as "*the yellow bus // standing a bit apart / from the others // ...gleaming through / a skin of morning ice. // That's how clear.*" (author's italics)

To possibly oversimplify, there are broadly two ways in which poets view language. One is to treat language, in the words of Lyn Hejinian in her book *The Language of Inquiry*, as "nothing but meanings, and meanings are nothing but a flow of contexts. Such contexts rarely coalesce into images, rarely come to terms." This is not Hunt's way. To him, words have heft, texture, and substance, and these qualities go a long way in dictating the final form of his poems.

I was more impressed with *Fault Lines* on the second reading than I was on the first, a good sign of a book's true worth and an indication of the poet's maturity and confidence. The book is sufficiently well-hewn that the craftsmanship is submerged in the work, integral and essential, as all true craft should be. Hunt is a mason whose material is words. In his work, words are as real and solid as stone, as fluid as water. His language is sensual and physical. Consider "Language": "It is not the letters / marching / the matted white / of the page // ...Rather, it is / the tongue's / motion, the hand / riding the waves." Or these lines from "We need to talk": "...The stone comes/ into the hand, the arm arcs, and we are talking/ on this surface of water...." The language isn't flashy; it doesn't need to be. Plain language serves Hunt's poems well.

Fault Lines is divided into four untitled sections. Many of the poems center on Hunt's home country of Lake County, California, but they also branch out to Nevada, Colorado, Oklahoma, and beyond. Most of the poems are short, one page or less (the longest is three pages), and the effect is much like walking through a gallery of photographs. Hunt is a poet of light and has a photographer's eye for the weight of shadow and absence. Listen to these lines from "Early Morning from a Hotel Window":

How care-
fully we are
tuned—
light and eye—
to these
vibrations
and demand
their tuning
even as our world
ceases
to be leaves and sky.

As I get older, I come to agree more and more with Christopher Merrill that poems in which gesture and voice provide the main charge are less interesting than those that address the questions that press upon us. This is not to say that Hunt's poems do not contain the occasional brilliant twist and gesture, only that he has the sense and perspective to never let art descend into artifice, sacrificing substance to surface and flash. For example, "When the dying was no longer slow enough,/ the face emptied and the mask hissed to itself..."

("Lake Country Elegy"). I don't know that I've ever read, in two short lines, such a powerful statement of a person disappearing into death, leaving behind only the dry husk of herself, still drawing breath.

Wendell Berry asks, regarding the poetry of William Carlos Williams, what is useful in his poetry? His answer applies equally well to Hunt: "...discovering where one is in relation to one's place...to its mystery and sanctity..." (*American Poetry Review*, Nov/Dec 2010). Like Berry, Hunt is an intimate of the natural world where he grew up, and of the varied places he has lived throughout his long life. But he is an intimate also of the people who were shaped by and, at the same time, who shaped those places, the people whose sheep "...have cropped / the headland so bare / the hills glow // in the late sun— / knuckles of a fist / gripping the water" ("California Coast (Sonoma County)"). Hunt's work is generous, humble, confident. The poet does not intrude on his work but allows it to live of its own accord. The work is personal, but we are directed not so much to the poet himself as to those people and places for whom and for which he writes. To my mind, the finest and most enduring poems in *Fault Lines* are Hunt's portraits/elegies, such as the exquisite "Above Fort Collins (Summer, 1972)" about an unnamed World War II veteran "So thin, he was like a whisper walking—" so that the girl who sometimes visited him

...thought he was alone. She didn't hear
the trees speaking to the wind, how they loved
the light, sometimes clear, sometimes tangled
in the dark clouds. She didn't hear
his hands as he looked across the range grass,
listening even to the ridges of rock.

Hunt transcends duality to show us that we are inextricably a part of the natural world. There is no humanity without nature and no nature without humanity; for nature, as concept, is a human creation.

In "Stories," Hunt presents a powerful portrait of family and class in his elegy to Irma Hunt Tarry:
As the cancerous thing grew in her mind
it took away the words
until she lived in her eyes...

Perhaps she found the black walnut tree, the one
in front of the house in the town by the lake.
There was money for candy then.
It was where her brother died, the one who read books...

This is a lot in only a few words. And later in the same poem:

...that tricky pride
of the poor—the failing that is success.
How for a time we believed that true worth
is to matter only to each other.
The rootless trailers, the shuffled
and reshuffled marriages came later
as we grew into our different failings.

Welcome to modern rural America and the flipside of the American dream. Hunt warns us here of the dangers of believing too much in ourselves and ourselves alone, as if we can find love and happiness without concern for economic and political contexts. The poem is a cautionary tale about poverty and alienation in modern America, one we ignore at our own peril. In portraits such as the one above, as well as those offered in "Plate Glass (Sebastopol, CA)" and "Victrola," I am reminded of the short stories of Raymond Carver, his hard-bitten, moving, and unsentimental portraits of working class life in the American west; and of the hardscabble poetry of Richard Hugo, his Montana of beauty, space, bitterness, and fractured dreams.

There are some failings in *Fault Lines*. I wish Hunt would stretch himself more, step outside the frame of the picture within which he so often places his poems. So many of the poems are framed by a window or a doorway. It feels as if the land he evokes so well is yearning at times to expand beyond the

picture-frame. I understand the value of constriction, the mood it evokes, the sense of there being nowhere to turn. I only wish that Hunt would occasionally let the land have its full expanse. It would be churlish to make too much of this. It's a minor criticism of what is ultimately an excellent work. *Fault Lines* is a book which I am happy to have on my shelf—next to the works of Hugo, Snyder, Jeffers, and Welch.

*

***Poemeleon: A Journal of Poetry*, V.1 (winter 2010/11)**

from Mason Broadwell, Three Reviews: Svalina, Galloway, and Hunt

***Fault Lines* by Tim Hunt**
(Omaha, NE: The Backwaters Press, 2009)
99 pages. Paperback: \$16.00

Do you remember the narrator in *The Big Lebowski*? Played by Sam Elliott, I think, with the cowboy hat and huge mustache and looking very out of place in the bowling alley where the Dude hangs out. But it works. That's **Tim Hunt's** first book, ***Fault Lines***. It is a soulful, insightful book of verses that relates stories from the past and present in reflective, surprising ways, always begging us to look beyond the poem into the truth it attempts to capture. "...this is not / a poem," he says in "Home Again."

It is the only voice I have
trying to say
those moments and this one
and the miles give me no room to play.

Hunt's voice is considerably older and more mature than I am used to reading in a first book, which I would like to imagine betokens generations of wisdom passed down by word of mouth in the hills of northern California and finally transcribed by this, their prophet. I had to read these poems slowly: often they are heavier on atmosphere and tone than on detail, as in "The Web;" sometimes they are heavy on detail too, as in "Peet's," though they never lose that wonderful ruminating voice. For a younger generation looking for wildness and edge and whatever still survives of postmodern irony (let it go, ya'll), this book may not be very appealing. This book may not be for everyone, but it is for those who have a past and believe that past is worth remembering. It is for those with functional families that annoy them. It is for those with dysfunctional families they love like crazy. It is for those who have lived long lives of nights and days. It is for those who want to learn how to look back and not regret everything—only some things. It is for those with the kind of family stories that won't shut up. It is for those to whom landscape is an extension of the soul.

So we may be aiming at an older audience with this book. Hunt often speaks as if he is a grandfather recalling life before [insert currently-malfunctioning modern convenience]. He also often speaks about his grandfather—and his father, mother, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc. Family is an important element in these poems, to the point that many of Hunt's relatives are mentioned by name as he tells their stories. And place is important, too. I count 22 of the book's 56 poems that contain a town, state, or other map-able location in the title. Family and place. Those two ideas run through his book like the thread that forms the central image of the book's final poem "Postscript (Threads)," which begins:

Take a thread of cotton,
of creek or of blood,
it doesn't matter. We are
like children

threading a needle
to stitch carefully
through the very
tips of our fingers...

I like that, and I like those themes. But I have a hard time coming up with a list of colleagues my age who would be as thrilled as I am about a book that does not contain, for instance, an overt description of sex.

At the same time, Hunt establishes himself as a very contemporary poet, whatever the crap that means. (I think it has something to do with ego and asymmetrical haircuts.) “Peet’s” plays with time and the reliability of the narrator in a very reflexive way, producing an engaging meditation on relationships, loss, and the nature of poetry:

I don’t know who you are
as I write pretending I do.
But if you were you and we were sitting in Peet’s,
each detail would draw another.

Tim Hunt is a new voice, maybe, but he is an old voice. His is the voice I imagine the landscape would assume if it wished to tell us the history of the west (and the east and north and south)—a history of farmers, housewives, boys in overalls and little else, girls in hand-me-down gingham before it was a cliché, of hills and wheat and Model A Fords and mules. If the main components of landscape are people, places, and stories, then Tim Hunt is a landscape poet. And as Sam Elliott says simply in *The Big Lebowski*, “I like your style, Dude.”

*

Gently Read Literature: Essays & Criticism of Contemporary Poetry and Literary Fiction

The Heart of a Boy: James Reiss on Tim Hunt’s Fault Lines 1 May 2010

For nearly 30 years Tim Hunt has been toiling in the trenches at the base of Mount Parnassus, mainly as a scholar devoted to publishing Stanford-University-Press editions of Robinson Jeffers’s poetry. Hunt’s critical study, “Kerouac’s Crooked Road,” initially published in 1981, has just been reissued by Southern Illinois University Press in March 2010.

With a Ph.D., a wife, two kids and a history of holding down teaching jobs from coast to coast, Hunt is no spring chicken. The crooked roads he’s crossed now find him professing at Illinois State University in Normal. He appears to be as normal a guy as anybody you’ll find between Bangor and Sebastopol, but he’s actually a sexagenarian harboring the heart of a boy not much older than 16.

Nostalgia may be an old man’s excuse for no longer kicking up his heels on Saturday nights. For Hunt it is the sequence of timeless moments that hold him in hopeful thrall, like a moth over a flame. With bittersweet delight and yearning, in his debut volume, “Fault Lines,” poem after poem revisits his prodigious past. But unlike that madeleine-mad Frenchman who spent almost a third of his 51 years confined to a cork-lined room, Hunt’s search for lost time has taken him to his father’s stomping grounds, Lake County, tucked away like a mini-Shangri-la inland north of the Bay Area. Of course his poems also return to where he grew up in Sonoma County—to the vicinity of Calistoga and Healdsburg—before their vineyards became ultra-gentrified by the 1980s, along with those of Napa County, already renowned as a viticultural mecca. Nowadays, while Governor

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Schwarzenegger is lamenting how the Great Recession has devastated the Golden State, Hunt reminds us that “The swaybacked barn, / like the eucalyptus, / seems always / to have been here.” Never mind that eucalyptus trees are not indigenous to California but were first planted on the Coast during the 1850s by people from Australia, where they grew in abundance.

The point is, “the eucalyptus / seems” to have been eternally a part of the landscape’s mystique. Hunt’s poems, so systematically plainspoken that they seem to completely eschew literary operatics, are in fact dreamy as midsummer nights. Hunt suggests this in one of his best pieces, an italicized prologue (whose structure coincidentally resembles that of David Ignatow’s in his stellar seven-liner, “The Sky Is Blue”):

Prescript (Poetry)

for Leslie Wykoff

“How clear,” my friend asks,
“is it okay to be?”

Do you remember
waiting for the yellow bus

standing a bit apart
from the others

the muddied water
of the puddle

gleaming through
a skin of morning ice.

That’s how clear.

It’s not as though Hunt aspires to sound like the Chicago blues legend, Muddy Waters. But neither is he, at least in “Prescript,” committed to pellucid photographic realism, the kind associated with certain West Coast visual artists who started painting gas stations and freeways a few decades ago. Still, it’s interesting to see that nearly half the poems’ titles in his first section, which mainly happens to focus on his beloved home state California, abound with epigraphs in parentheses, such as “California Coast (Sonoma County),” “High Desert Valley (Summer, The White Mountains, California)” and “Leavings (Cattle Ranch, High Desert, Eastern California)”. Far from muddying up his canvases, Hunt takes pains to indicate their setting, to tie them to, say, some local epicenter of the San Andreas Fault—the final word of which comprises part of the resonant, self-deprecatory pun in his book’s title. If Hunt sometimes resembles a latter-day, early-1960s saint of deep imagism like Robert Bly, he takes his cue from James Wright, who undercut—or overlaid—a Rilkean epiphany with the matter-of-fact, homespun title, “Lying in a Hammock at William Duffy’s Farm in Pine Island, Minnesota.”

I wouldn’t go out on a limb and call Hunt’s poems derivative; that branch would break! As I see it, this book has allegiances, unavoidable and certainly not problematic when they enhance the work, rather than overwhelming it. Book-cover blurbers as distinct as Michael Davidson and Mark Jarman have pointed to Jeffers, Willam (Brother Antoninus) Everson and Gary Snyder, all of whom lurk somewhere behind “Fault Lines.” I’d like to add John Steinbeck to that list. The author of “The Grapes of Wrath” could be the Harold-Bloom Freudian papa of Hunt’s “Fleeing a Dust Storm: 1936 (Cimarron County, Oklahoma).” Then, too, Elizabeth Bishop’s ghost appears to float over the first lines of “Fishing”:

I cannot speak directly of
the wonderful mouth without words. . .

Despite Hunt's intent to describe words in this self-reflexive poem that uses "fishing" as a metaphor, I was willy-nilly drawn to Bishop's description of her "tremendous" fish's lower lip "—if you could call it a lip—" and mouth burdened with "five big hooks." Similarly, the final lines of "Masks (Berkeley, California),"

There are reasons to hurry, reasons
to believe it matters where we are going

appear to pledge allegiance to Mark Strand's last lines in "Keeping Things Whole":

We all have reasons
for moving.
I move
to keep things whole.

In *Gently Read Literature* I've already mentioned how the so-called Plain Style has dominated a great deal of mainstream contemporary American poetry; Tony Hoagland may be the most prominent current proponent of what William Stafford once referred to as "Talking along in our not quite prose way." I won't belabor my point again, except to say that Hunt's toned-down grassroots verses, sparsely sprinkled with figures of speech, at times offer up zingers. In a poem that celebrates a festival honoring Jeffers and Everson, for instance, Hunt totes out more than an iota of sarcasm when he describes the fabled city of Carmel, California—where Clint Eastwood once served as mayor—as "a gauntlet of boutiques." Hunt's elegy for a wounded World War Two vet, "Above Fort Collins (Summer, 1972)," begins, "So thin, he was like a whisper walking" and goes on to depict gunfire in Normandy on D-Day: "the sound after the bullets tore him / was like looking through binoculars from the wrong end." (Move over, *Private Ryan*, this ain't no Steven Spielberg flick!) One of my personal faves, "Home Again," goes way beyond nostalgia in its poignant and, for me, Andrew Wyeth-like opening stanza:

How saggy those springs must have been
if even then I slept rolled to the wall and twisted
as if uphill in the too-thin blanket
in that room with the worn wallpaper,
the bare bulb, the twirls of the cheap metal bed—
a visiting child's restless sleep.

Or else, among several self-reflexive poems, Hunt takes a bracing coffee break from his long-lined, hardly longwinded, local landscapes and portraits:

Language

It is not the letters
marching
the matted white
of the page
in starched
black uniforms
as they try
to blend
the blatty

consonants
and reedy vowels
into more
than sound.

Rather, it is
the tongue's
motion, the hand
riding the waves
as they spill
up the beach,
then lace out
into the sand
leaving behind
the broken
bits of shell
that mark the tide.

For me this poem's first stanza is a hard act to follow, and the second, in its conventional beach imagery, disappoints, though I cotton to "lace out." Obviously, I vote for Hunt when his imagery is offbeat and his diction offers up tidbits like "blatty."

I'll have to confess that I found the book's second section, except for the masterly "Home Again," the weakest of the four. I counted no fewer than a dozen uses of the word "old" littering the 12 poems in section two. Hunt's preoccupation with "old gums" (page 38), "old bumpers" (39), an "old woman" (40), an "old man's mouth" (42), "old wood" (43), "old names" (44), "old people" (45), "old words" (46) and so forth is something that I, no neophyte myself, understand. An obsession with oldness is central to Hunt, having grown up in the 1950s, needing to quote lyrics from that splendid 1917 golden oldie, "Darktown Strutters Ball," which, thanks to Les Paul and Mary Ford, was still popular in the middle of the twentieth century; to this day it still echoes in my mind all too often.

At least the word "old" is inconspicuous in the book's other three sections, even if Hunt has an inordinate fondness for the logistical and chronological terms, "here" and "now." He likes the adjective "tiny." He sometimes ends interrogative sentences assertively with periods instead of question marks. He frequently prefers the genitive over the possessive case, which makes for wordiness and many "of's." Plus, he loves to use variations of the verb "weave" like a leitmotif, as in "weaving / this page into ours" (61), "the world we'd woven" (62), "the simple weave of things" (66), "my feet / weaving left over right" (67) and "two black men all but naked / weave in and out" (80)—as well as ending his book with the lines, "weaving / an unraveling cloth / of touch" (99). It's a relief to come upon the line, "A story is a kind of knitting" (73) in a lovely poem about Hunt's daughter Jessica's play stove when she was a child—right across the page from a doozy about another war veteran, Verdon "Spur" Spurlock, whose very name is like a bell.

Sure, this book has its excesses and oversights, but most of them are as endearing as they're annoying. I found nothing between the orange paperback covers of "Fault Lines" to be truly off-putting. Hunt's poems are minus the pretensions that poetry readers and audience members at readings time and again have come to expect, for example, the putting on of airs when a poet plasters his verse with polysyllables, arcane allusions to Wittgenstein and descriptions of exotic nooks in Guangzhou, which the poet visited on a MacArthur genius grant. In fact, Hunt hardly advertises how ingenious he is. His aim has not been to wow us with what he's learned at Cornell studying for his doctorate under Such-and-such or So-and-so. He's read enough Jeffers to know that America has settled in the mould of its vulgarity, including the vanity of poets bent on impressing us with their greatness. Maybe Hunt wouldn't go so far as to say, like Jeffers, that he'd sooner "kill a man than a

hawk”—and thank goodness for that! Thank whatever gods may be for Hunt’s love for homo sapiens. His TLC has given us portraits of twentieth-century men and women, pioneer types we’ve already relegated to the Stone Age, now that we can ogle reality shows and “American Idol” on TV.

Although you’re undoubtedly not the grieving Italian daughter named La Figlia che Piange, Hunt may teach you, as one multilingual modern poet never did, to “Weave, weave the sunlight in your hair.”

**

James (“Giacetto”) Reiss, who wrote a long poem that begins, “Nel mezzo del cammin di nostra vita / Mi ritrovai per una selva oscura,” was born in 1265 in Florence, Italy. www.jamesreiss.com/

* * *

Reviews of *Lake County Diamond* (Intertext, 1986)

from a review of four chapbooks by Glenn Sheldon in *Ice River*, Fall 1988, 4.3:

[A] blurb on Tim Hunt’s books states, “These poems stand in the big wind.” *Lake County Diamond* is perhaps the most elegant chapbook I have ever come across. Intertext deserves applause for their care of small poetic product like this, as well as the larger books they produce. Hunt, as a poet, is stunning:

Why the Land Is Red (Lake County, California)

The old miners say
the cinnabar is why
the land is red,
but the ore is long smelted,
the retorts scrapped.

Now all that’s left
are the bleached shacks
and the rust
of old bumpers.

The land must eat.

Hunt mines his small part of Northern California for the images of a living record of man’s struggle with the land and vice-versa. This is sincere, precious poetry!

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from a review of three Intertext titles by Steven C. Levi in *Small Press Review*, August 1987 (N.175):

Solidly rooted in the land, Hunt’s work is as much a thanksgiving as it is a poetic description of his family’s history. Superbly blending a love of the land with the lessons of mortality, *Lake County Diamond* is an elegant mix of the sublime with the mundane...Hunt is adept at using the land and natural phenomena to illustrate a human reality...

If there is any one word which describes Hunt’s work, that word is “crystalline.” The vision is pure and undistorted and, like Hunt’s poetry, comes from the earth.

from Kathleen Kirk's **Wait! I Have a Blog?!**

Musings on what we read and why Friday, November 5, 2010



Fault Lines & Risk Taking

Day 270 of the "What are you reading, and why?" project, and I told you a while back that I was reading *Fault Lines*, by Tim Hunt ([Backwaters Press](#)). Yesterday I mentioned him again in the context of the literary journal *Fourth River*, and I have also enjoyed his poems over the years in such journals as *RHINO* and *Spoon River Poetry Review*. Today and tomorrow I'll share with you an interview about *Fault Lines*, with some discussion (tomorrow) of his books *Redneck Yoga* and *White Levis*.

To *hear* an interview with Ron Block of the Writers' Roundtable at [WGLS](#), click [here](#). To read the first part of my email interview with Tim, look below:

Tim, I love the title of your book, *Fault Lines*, and identify with its earthquake connotations, as we live here in central Illinois on the New Madrid fault, and my brother lives in Santa Cruz, California, very near a fault line there (and previously in a house *on* the fault line, designed to resist a major earthquake, as it did). Your poems go back and forth between central Illinois and California. Can you explain the title *Fault Lines*, in terms of the geography, geology, and central metaphor of this book?

I grew up in several small towns north of San Francisco, and the lore of the 1906 earthquake was part of my heritage, as was an occasional quake. So the figure is partly literal, a matter of geography and geology, but it's also partly figural. We shape our reality by setting things aside. We can't inhabit everything at once. We filter things out; we operate in terms of structures that are necessarily partial. From time to time that wholeness we've so carefully constructed and has come to be reality fractures. In a geological sense, the ground is never fully stable or permanent; neither is the psychological (or the social, if that's more what it is) "ground." Sometimes we remember or bump against what we haven't included. It's like a child who falls and breaks an arm. Sometimes the arm heals stronger, sometimes not, but we each time the ground shifts, the terrain is not quite the same.

I love the light in this book, its variations. I love how you set up that there are kinds of light in "The Language of Light," a poem for your son, who sees these differences. How does he like this poem? And can you tell us more about the importance of light in your poetry?

John is both a visual artist and a writer, and his comment quoted in the poem evokes both his eye and ear. That of course is really the poem. I think he likes the piece well enough. At least he's been very good natured about my co-opting his line. We lived on a ranch in the White Mountain Desert of eastern California for several years. In the high desert country, light is a part of the landscape, not simply a backdrop. It's part of the landscape's language. That's true everywhere, but that became clearer to me at Deep Springs, and John's comment helped me realize that. It's a matter of listening. We live much of our life indoors and in constructed environments. Those environments are rich and meaningful, but it's also important to step outside, to step aside. Light, it seems, can help us do that.

"The Language of Light" for me connects to *Prescript (Poetry)* at the very beginning of the book, where it sits like an epigraph for the whole contents. So, two questions:

1) Is there an actual name for that kind of pre-poem?

Not that I'm aware of. The poems in *Fault Lines* (as with many first collections) were written at different times from varied perspectives. That was a poem I wanted to use, but it wasn't fitting elsewhere in the book. Then I hit on placing it as a kind of preliminary or introductory piece, which is when I added "Prescript" to the title.

2) Is this prescript poem your *ars poetica*, or statement about the nature of poetry?

I mistrust the notion that poems say something, and I especially mistrust the notion that they are complicated codes for saying something simple. My sense is that poems are often ways we attend to things that matter but that don't fully resolve or allow themselves to be reduced to statements that we can file away under various tabs. If poems were statements, *Spark Notes* paraphrases would not only suffice, they'd be better than the poems. To the extent that that piece reflects this sense of things it could, I guess, be seen as a kind of *ars poetica*, but a partial one. My hope, though, is that the piece might function more as an *ars readica*.

To be clear about the connection I see here, *Prescript (Poetry)* includes a memory, precise and clear, of light on a puddle of water, and is about the sensibility of someone who would indeed notice and remember such a thing. In "The Language of Light," the small boy speaks of light in a precise way, and one senses he must grow up to be a poet or artist because that's the way he sees.

Right. The world is fuller, richer than our understandings of it, which necessarily are entangled with the ways our awareness is filtered through our cognitive adaptations. When we see something intensely, clearly, we sense both our connections to this fuller reality and our inability to completely comprehend it. Our consciousness is both heightened and we are taken beyond consciousness. Poems can do and be many things. One thing they can do is enact a kind of witness to things that outstrip our ability to express and contain.

You and I have a similar aesthetic sense, I think, in that we believe simplicity of language can express complexity of thought, ambivalence in feeling, and mystery or paradox in meaning. Is that correct?

Yes. Complexity of perception, not complexity of expression.

There are several family stories in *Fault Lines*, and some elegies. Two questions here: are you ever hesitant to expose too much about a family member, and how do you handle privacy issues like this? My second question is a version of one that editor Michael Latza asked me, in *Willow Review*. How do you avoid sentimentality in family poems?

Family is another word for history and region. The poems in *Fault Lines* that draw on family material are, by and large, less about psychological foibles or eccentricities than they are attempts to explore how we relate to region and time through the lens of family. Urban life opens certain kinds of awareness, but rural and small town life open others. As the urban and digital domains become more and more the only worlds we know, I think there's some value in attending, also, to this other terrain. The sense of space, of time, of connection, isolation are different in the hills than they are at the El stop or the megamall. Seeing the fire burn the mountain is different than sound bites and video clips on the evening news. Knowing how people can struggle with their interconnected histories is different than the exhilaration and emptiness of feeling as if one has no history. Family is one way to access that, engage that. As to "sentimentality": that's a matter of perspective. Some people seem to think that feeling and responsiveness are "sentimentality." If the emotional dimension of a poem is an escape rather than an engagement, that's a problem. But

poems aren't simply thought acrostics. I stopped worrying a long time ago about being sentimental. If my relationship to the world is sentimental, the poems will be, as well, and they'll suffer for it. But that's a risk one has to run.

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Saturday, November 6, 2010

Redneck Yoga

Day 271...and here is the rest of the Tim Hunt interview. He is the author of several books, including scholarly works on Jack Kerouac and Robinson Jeffers, but the three discussed here are his own books/chapbooks of poetry, *Fault Lines*, *Redneck Yoga* (just now coming out from Finishing Line Press), *White Levis*, and *'Til Twangdom Come*. This will be of special interest to poets figuring out how to put a book together.

You can hear "Redneck Yoga" [here](#) at the WGLT Poetry Radio page! Read on and you'll find another poem at the end of the interview.

Is *Fault Lines* a book you set out to write? Or did you find yourself writing poems that linked up with each other and wove themes? Or something else? How did it come together as a book?

I stopped writing for many years, partly because the logic of what poems were supposed to be (at least as I'd learned that from my schooling) left me little sense of there being anyone on the other side of the page. To make poems seemed wasteful and empty. After a time I came to see that this was in part because I'd let myself be talked into believing that poems are things that we make—writing on the surface of a page. I realized that poetry could also be, instead, acts of speaking stored in writing—that poetry could be (in spite of the page and writing) an attempt to speak to and with other people. That's one factor that's shaped *Fault Lines*. Another was a sense that the past dies if we don't express it, and if we lose the past (or rather some sense of connecting to a past) the present becomes terribly thin. The past is one aspect of how we orient ourselves to be fully in the present and to find our ways forward. The poem "When the Back Steps Seemed Very High" touches on this. The things we remember and find through the process of remembering are the proverbial mixed blessing, but a mixed blessing beats no blessing any day.

Can you compare and contrast it a bit with the book just now coming out, *Redneck Yoga*, in terms of process and content? And *White Levis*?

The chapbook *White Levis* mixes a handful of pieces that refused to braid into *Fault Lines* with newer poems that extend the direction of the fourth section. The chapbook *Redneck Yoga* is more of a veer—poems where I let my lippy inner redneck off the leash and he went off chasing squirrels and rabbits. The new book-length ms., *'Til Twangdom Come*, sort of splits the difference between *Fault Lines* and *Redneck Yoga*. It's out knocking on doors looking for a home. A main difference between *Fault Lines* and these newer projects is that I'm writing more quickly. I guess that's partly a matter of trusting the process more. It's probably, also, partly a matter of being able to focus more on the poetry, having shut the door on some other things in my life. It also seems as if I'm more apt now to see things as possible multi-poem sets. The sequence "The Further Adventures of Poem" in *Twangdom*, is an instance of this. When we're first writing, especially if we draw in part on personal material, it can seem like material is precious and that it can run out—only so much ore in the mine, that sort of thing. It takes a while to learn, and to trust, that each poem can call up the next one. Poems aren't like fossil fuel; they're a renewable energy like solar and wind.

I love “Train Window.” Can I quote it in full in my blog?!

Absolutely.

Train Window

From the train, the clothes
lines and empty fields
are a motion, far away—
as if in black and white.

Then, through the rain spattered glass
someone is riding alongside, a bicycle—
a second motion falling slowly back,
and we are here, now.

The rain gives these gifts,
unwrapping the red
and yellow branches
to open the passing ravine,

where a pickup
noseless like a rusted skull
gleams in the skin of water.

And now I'm off on the train to Chicago, to do the release reading at The Book Cellar for *Fifth Wednesday*. Wonder what I'll see out the window!