

Praise for *Far From Sudden*

“Goodman’s poems are marvelously realized into crisp and compressed lyrics not easily forgotten. I hated to leave a world where a heart resides in a blue aquarium, and black holes and other mysteries of the universe “sip from themselves.” *Far From Sudden* frequently surprises, even as we are seduced by sights and sounds of the ordinary animated with astonishing and eloquent force.”

– Aimee Nezhukumatathil

“These poems are heart-haunted. Cardiac telemetry is the central metaphor for his poetic quest that captures the dance between desire and death, and the eroticism (“I like it / when our wildest parts are glistening”) is made more urgent because of the awareness of mortality (“Hears headlights always on”). Between gravity and trajectory, Goodman’s poems are crushingly immediate—as compelling as cave drawings, as awe-inspiring and elegant as star maps.”

– Patrick Lawler

“Memory and mortality are disquieting muses in Brent Goodman’s *Far From Sudden*. The first assaults the mind with the knowledge “every life / must move one sullen photograph at a time;” the other dispirits the body with the existential truth: “I am this quiet / passenger in my own vehicle.” But from the poetry of pain and solitude come recovery, gratitude and the blissful state of surrender. Goodman weaves light into darkness gloriously, like prayer into marrow.”

– Rigoberto González

FAR FROM SUDDEN

poems

Brent Goodman



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For Kelvin

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<i>32 Pages</i>	“Flurries”
<i>Adirondack Review</i>	“Then”
<i>Buddhist Poetry Review</i>	“Orange”
<i>Cimarron Review</i>	“All This Fun Nothing” “Some God’s Finger” “Sunroom”
<i>Diagram</i>	“Poem for Four Hands”
<i>Diode</i>	“Days Within Days” “Easter” “Hearses Are The New Black” “Jonathon Edwards Channeling Albert Einstein To The Wrong Family During An Unaired Taping of Crossing Over” “Satellites” “Shmuel’s Calculations Are 11 Minutes Off” “This Morning I Woke with A New Twin” “What Happens Next” “What To Do With My Body”
<i>DMQ Review</i>	“A Focus”
<i>Express Milwaukee</i>	“I Used To Think I Was Only One Person”
<i>La Fovea</i>	“A Dream You Don’t Remember Remembers You”

<i>Flyway</i>	“Gravity”
<i>Gulf Coast</i>	“Madison, New Year’s 1999” (as “Precision”)
<i>Perihelion</i>	“Glass Painting with Sun” “Security Mirrors”
<i>Slant</i>	“Don’t Remind Me”
<i>Softblow</i>	“The Sky Behind Us”
<i>Qarrtsiluni</i>	“I Should Mention Love” “One Nation Under Me” “The Ground Left Me”
<i>Verse Wisconsin</i>	“Enso”
<i>Weave Magazine</i>	“Rhineland” “There Is A Lot of Loneliness in Dutch Poetry”
<i>Zone 3</i>	“Skywalk”

“Everyone Wonders” was first published in the anthology *Collective Brightness: LGBTIQ Poets on Faith, Religion & Spirituality* (2011 Sibling Rivalry Press). “One Nation Under Me” also appeared in the anthology *Love Rise Up* (2012 Benu Press). Earlier versions of some poems in the first section originally appeared in two out-of-print chapbooks, *Trees Are the Slowest Rivers* (1998 Sarasota Poetry Theatre) and *Wrong Horoscope* (1999 Thorngate Road).

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Ensō

In
the
pines,
the

wind
rehearses
its
verses.

You,
there
too,
where

shadows
grow.

i :: gravity

Between living and dreaming
there is a third thing.

Guess it.

– Antonio Machado

Memory is the Distance Between Two Points

Is this impersonation of a fond memory
impressing my future nostalgia?

I spend each moment creating the man
I used to be. The person in line behind me

will just have to wait to stand where
I'm standing. Two feet, four directions.

Climb into your vehicle of choice
and grab the wheel like a clock. See

the only fixed point along the horizon which
doesn't appear to be funneling toward us?

That's exactly where we're headed.

Don't Remind Me

It's 2 a.m. and the hippie bluegrass neighbors
laugh in circles one floor down. Outside
across the lamp-lit street, a thrift store figure mumbles by
coaxing his empty carriage down the buckled sidewalk.
Another overslept morning late to work
ghostwriting awkward international apologies,
idling away my lunches in the lot next door before
the dry cleaner's typeset windows, crisp dress shirts ascending
the jerking conveyor. That was the decade I suddenly quit
over someone else's salary. That was the age
I dried up like a downed branch. Don't remind me how
everything eventually resembles something else
looking backwards later. I've lived with you longer now
than others I've loved have lived entire lives. Forever
this lost father shuffling his empty child door by door past
our old rented balcony. He keeps circling the block
as if searching for the beginning. Each time
I stand in my window looking down
he is there or he is not.

Madison, New Year's 1999

Freezing rain. Shivering past
the tagged bus stop, walking home,
my knees two broken dinner plates,
stomach a tumble of stones, tonight
each house memorizes the inner shape
of its heart. Every tree understands
the blood's difficult passage from this world
to the next. Trees are the slowest rivers.
And living on an isthmus is like living inside
the narrow throat of an hourglass,
my compass points bipolar, all directions
channeled through this narrow passage
between two bodies of water. I'm trying
to keep my lines straight. I could say
another millennia passes, or the moon settles
deeper into its blue socket. What I should say
is when I get home, there are lights on
in two upstairs windows. In one,
a figure. In the other, a shadow moves
disconnected across the wall. I'm trying
to understand this as I cross the icy street,
I'm trying not to lose my key inside the lock
though for days it hasn't turned.

Security Mirrors

Standing in line at the D.M.V. I am no longer in love
with memory. Expire, renew. Printouts of the missing
fade and curl into themselves, pinned to the walls
like maps of distant cities. What about the lost
who never come back, faces empty as unsigned letters?
There must be hours of us somewhere spiraling
heavy dark reels – drunk, resigned, furtive –
every withdrawal of our lives recorded, each
misremembered story hanging like a stranger’s cologne
in the back of a taxi. Expire, renew – every life
must move one sullen photograph at a time
until we’re ready to pour our sight into the peripheral
vision machine. Until we’re ready to reveal
the maps of rivers hidden behind our eyes.
I’ve always stepped forward when told.
Leaning in, the held breath in my chest
hangs like two intricately folded wings.

Skywalk

Sometimes there is no one, or ghost trees
reflected there like half-erased words.

Sometimes a part of you rises through glass
and air. Sometimes the path you wear

into the earth is an empty pen's blank furrow,
though tonight, a vaulted bright bridge once again

illuminates your journey. Almost home, the skywalk
grows distant in your rear view. Is this about

getting somewhere? At every idle intersection
the dashboard compass trembles inside its watery globe.

Flurries

You rise from a white
dream only to discover

all your windows gone
fiercely blank,

so many canvases
waiting for a world.

There is a quiet
which is the pause

between breaths.
You want to learn

the hundred names
for this – your hand,

warm against frosted glass,
clears a small space

a distant horse
could run through.