

Inventories by Paul T Hogan

Paul Hogan's poems, *Inventories*, travel through woman, mother, into the natural world, dissolve in spirit and then coalesce again into man, father, the fact of death. They are careful accounts, fearless inventions, always crashing "the crystal of what I knew/ against the cold stone of what I didn't." Hogan's poems do not seek to tell us how the world works; they want to "make it all inexplicable again." His attention to what can and cannot be touched in life keeps Hogan and the reader on the edge of a clear, high gorge where the only viable response is to jump.

—Sherry Robbins, author of *or, The Whale*

These poems achieve their presence in the unique, transcendent moment of the poem itself. They reward and delight and ask us to rejoice in words and language as Ted Berrigan would say, "there is a person inside almost all of the poems." The surface simplicity and plain speech are the result of true artfulness and sophistication. I continually rediscover honesty in his forceful, utterly clear and democratic voice. In that honesty, Hogan astonishingly opens us to the world and removes boundaries that keep separate different aspects of life. Giving us irrepressible, insightful ruminations, verbal collages and narratives that seem to be struggling to rise off the printed page as an elegy for the world in all its beauty and disturbing variety.

— Geoffrey Gatza, author of *House of Forgetting*

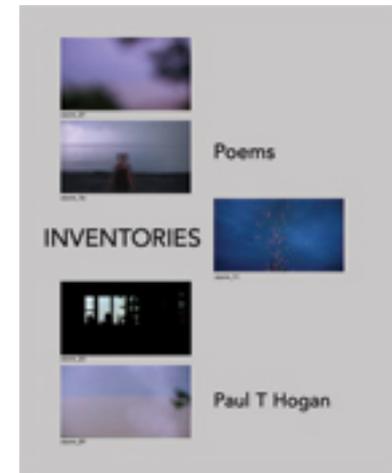
A forceful, unapologetic exploration of the masculinity of creative impulse. Hogan looks at nature, life, disparate moments, mysticism, and fatherhood not with rose-colored glasses but with the obsidian eyes of a realist unafraid to be caught submitting to his poetic instincts. *Inventories* is a work of great relevance, power, and importance.

—Gary Earl Ross, author of *The Scavenger's Daughter*

Paul T Hogan

Paul has Bachelor's and Master's degrees in English and Creative Writing from the University at Buffalo, where he held the David Gray Fellowship in Poetry and Letters under the internationally acclaimed late poet Robert Creeley. Upon completing all his coursework toward a PhD, he elected to relinquish the Fellowship and begin work in the non-profit sector.

He worked as director of special projects and development for the Just Buffalo Literary Center, including as director of the Writers-in-Education program. He served three years as host and producer of "Spoken Arts Radio" for the NPR affiliate



station WBFO-FM, and recently donated about 150 half-hour recorded interviews & readings from the program to the UB Poetry and Rare Books Room. For nearly six years, he voluntarily co-coordinated the “Writers Cramp Reading Series,” a bi-monthly platform for local writers held at the Central Park Bar and Grill in Buffalo.

He won the Academy of American Poets College Competition while at UB, and was selected for an Arts Council in Buffalo Individual Artist Fellowship. His work was included in *The Legend of Being Irish: An Anthology of Irish-American Writers* published by White Pine Press in 1990, and was the subject of a “Buffalo Focus” piece by BlazeVox Books in their online Late Spring 2009 journal, which featured new and previously published work (www.blazevox.org/focus.htm). His first collection, *Points of Departures*, was published by White Pine Press in November of 2008.

Since 2001, Paul has worked for the John R. Oishei Foundation, a broad-purpose charitable foundation making grants in western New York State, and in 2008, he was named vice president. He lives in Kenmore NY, a first-ring suburb of Buffalo, with his wife Barb, and two dogs, Nellie and Bo, and is blessed to have two perfect adult children, Matthew and Lianna.

Cynthia Hand

Cynthia Hand studied fine arts at SUNY/Albany and received her Master's in printmaking in 1979. Her work has been exhibited regionally in group and solo shows since 1982. For the past twelve years Hand has also been working as a metalsmith-jeweler using precious metals and stones.

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Mothering Persephone

*Your children are not your children ... They come through you
but not from you, and though they are with you yet
they belong not to you.*

—Kahlil Gibran

She has said nothing, and neither
will she eat, save for seeds, which she takes
at the speed of contempt. The strength
of wills surrounding her could stop
a season. Still, she would be planted,
her clothes rustling like hardening leaves
as winds cross around her, through
threads of her tested garments. Blowing
comes from everywhere but from her.
I have planted her to save her. Covered her
lightly veined feet in black dirt, pushed
red mulch up to mid-shin and bricked
around her in careful rows, as though
in clever decoration. Others wish
her transplanted, moved beneath
me and this world, but I made plain
I will kill everything she sees, everything
nourished by me through her to stop that:
that much at least has nothing to do
with her, and everything to do with how
my seasons will be ordered.

A Flash, A Step Closer

Days flow like pain
through a cragged body:
slow over and back, retreat,
advance; sometimes a flash
when I take a step
like lightning. Then just rumbling
pain again. Why live
for this? No sustenance
anyone needs anymore from me.
Live for television? I call my children names
given to soap opera stars, ask after
problems they've never had. For the dog?
I hold back his food at times, just to be sure
it's me who feeds him. I call the first son,
magician to his dead father, and ask what for.
"How can I say what for?" he says. "I'll conjure
good reasons," he says, "and call you back
next week. Or in any case, soon."
Flash. That rumbling. And I disconnect
again. Again.

At First

“At first it was just to see what I saw written down.
I don’t know where the pen came from. Didn’t even look
for paper, I don’t think. Watching out the window
in the room off the hall. Just crap in there. Nobody
bothered me and I could think. And drink in peace.
It was almost always dark already when I got in there.
Moon was up or coming into sight. For a long time
I sat and watched but then I started standing, leaning
against the window frame, sometimes pressed my forehead
on the glass. It helped the way it was cool. I would think
how it was hard and smooth, but wouldn’t take much
to crack. But then I’d find myself watching again,
the moon as it came in from the left, just a brightness at first.
Then it would move across – or maybe the house moved,
I remember about that, or everything was moving. I could feel it
in my chest most nights, in my stomach. I thought how
it was like the tide, pulling and pushing me. Maybe at first
I just imagined it. But after a while, no. I wanted to write it down
to see. I wanted to look at the moon at same time as the writing, no
looking away, write and watch both. When I did it at first
it helped. I would write how the moon pushed me, or pulled.
I wrote it on the wall, starting at the frame right
at the level of my eyes and I would look at the moon and look
at my hand, writing. I never remember finding a pen.
One was just there. *“Tuesday it’s half and some clouds”*
“Saturday it’s pulling hard it’s clear” I could never get the dates at first,

and then it didn't matter. I'd go back and look at the writing but I could never feel what I'd seen. I could see it but couldn't feel the way I must have when I wrote on the wall. Then I thought you'd have to be right there, standing exactly there at exactly that time if you wanted to feel. That's when I knew it was about the writing where at first it had been about the watching so I thought. So then I didn't need to write and watch both at the same time. And I didn't need to feel what I was writing. Line after line on the wall I'd write what I thought the moon was doing at each exact minute I remembered to write. Line after line. Like doing a drawing maybe. The window still mattered and I still looked out. And I know the moon must still have pulled and pushed on me. But then what mattered was that someone coming in to see about my drinking would have to think that I must feel whatever I was writing, whatever I was doing; think it must be real, or true, or both. That's all I think I wanted at the end."

What Would Be Wild in the Telling

— for Midge Sumner, at 102

'O the songs we hide, singing only to ourselves!'

Theodore Roethke

If I were to speak her life it would be with a backdrop of starlings, tenacious, common, each one loyal to one other among thousands, pivoting and rolling intuitively through chaotic waves of flight. I would speak from a wild field of dogwood and orchid, sunflowers, knotweed, spring beauty and hawthorn – brilliant, untamed, delicate in one view; tenuous, gripped to hard soil in another. It would be on a day that thick patches of clouds broke fast across a blue sky, spinning out dances of light and deep shadows, disrupting the flow of recital with moments of silence feeling like hours. I would weave her regrets with all her devotions, cast off inflections of sorrow or praise, bear witness to that which was wild, that which looked to be tame. I'd not end the story with death. I'd not tie the tale solely to her like an albatross hung round her neck, but also invoke her sisters in spirit, circling the field, passionate, affirming, joining with her and those she still shepherds, laughing with her. And then we will fall gently silent, for moments feeling like years.