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Edge and Fold by Paul Hoover

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REVIEWS

PAUL HOOVER

Edge and Fold (Apogee Press, 2006)

Unsure of boundaries, creases or inhabitable spaces, poet Paul Hoover takes to define the limitations of perspective through a series of refusals and defiances. In *Edge and Fold*, Hoover proposes to imagine the finitude of lines and edges on the outskirts of our perception, only to unhurriedly unravel this assumption through the course of the collection. This realization is at and of a center. Hoover constructs his loci of alienation not on the margins, but through a careful circling around and entrance into the open landscapes in which we contemplate, communicate, and homestead.

In the first of two sections that divide the collection, "Edge and Fold," Hoover relies on the structure of form to certify his statements of uncertainty. Through unrhymed couplets Hoover discovers various points of language and idea both folding into the other. Consistent through much of this first section, subordinate second lines of each couplet demonstrate the dislocation of understanding in favor of reverie or careful deferment, as in "XV":

at the center of an eye
 where the god is hidden

by the brightness it projects
 we have not the strength

to divide ourselves by one
 because it can't speak

the field is now a world
 aimed at attention

The field here serves to refuse boundary against our possibilities for reference and comparison, typical of many such idea-scapes that infuse Hoover's verse. This refusal to exceed the boundary of syllabic or spatial modesty is essential to Hoover's project. Through terse examination of the divine, language and "fields" of attention, we refuse the possibility that the predatory Infinite and Unknown circle us like vultures. In the midst of Hoover's small line we may be sure of definable answers even as we despair the determination of time or mortality. We have a place to stop and rest in the midst of enjambment. Despite the continuation of a string of unknowing spanning forty-eight pages, Hoover comforts us with pastoral knowledge through form that illuminates with the same concentrated power as haiku.

As in "XV," temporary division of the whole and release into absence is made possible with the pushing-away of catalogues, litany or narrative tangents. Where Whitman reclaimed the celebratory with loping free verse traversing the body, Hoover announces the habitable without traverse or lope. He enters contemplation through everyday minutiae and its correlate. In this way, then, our cognitive responses in a world inhabited by "infinite perspectives / of a book on architecture", or where "Christina Aguilera and Andy Warhol / grace a page together" compliment the expanse of light's shape or the violations of dream (both particular moments of deference to cosmic grandeur folded inside the slow traverse of a body across land throughout "Edge and Flow").

The contract between object and its cognitive correlate takes hold by the end. In the final section, "The Reading", Hoover examines objects of rebirth or growth. Wings, spines and fruit trees are added to the list of delightful, fragmentary matter of the corporeal world. Here, the realm of the tangible calms the mind. We are settled "to carry awareness / around all day", but we discover that it carries us.

Reviewed by Trina Burke