

Feeding the Fear of the Earth

To order, send a check for \$12.95 to:
Many Mountains Moving Press
ATTN: Feeding the Fear
English, Campus Box 109
University of Northern Colorado
Greeley, CO. 80639



POETRY: ISBN 1-886976-18-X

U.S. \$12.95 / CANADA \$14.75

“Reaching across time and space and cultures and genders, Patrick Lawler gathers characters as diverse as Christopher Smart, Ed McMahon, and Rosa Parks. Ecological and ethereal, political and historical, philosophical and physical, this astonishing book is a place where anyone who has walked the earth can rub up against anyone else. A place where the light of their sometimes painful, sometimes humorous encounters reveals our connectedness as earth unfolds around us. Lawler’s sensibility is woven of brilliance and tenderness.”

—Linda Tomol Pennisi, author of *Seamless*

“In Patrick Lawler’s brilliant *Feeding the Fear of the Earth*, the Earth itself is the poet’s playground. But in playing with cultures, geographies, myths, and histories, Lawler is deadly serious. This is a poetry of dazzling and disturbing invention that shows us what we didn’t know or didn’t want to know or had forgotten we knew about the world we inhabit. ‘Everything we once feared we must fear again,’ writes Lawler. ‘And everything we once loved we must love again.’”

—David Lloyd, author of *The Gospel According to Frank*

“Patrick Lawler is a madman. His poems remind me of the cosmic yet earthy hair-dust of profound, secret talk vibrating still in napkin folds at a café table once shared by Marcel Duchamp, Mahatma Gandhi, Madame Curie, Mickey Mantle, and Hélène Cixous. Lawler exhibits startling leaps of imagination that reveal the interconnectivity of all elements of the universe and knows that the true purpose of the poet is—as Gary Snyder has described—to ‘hold the most archaic values on earth.’ We visit the body of his remarkable poetry like stepping into our lives anew, with respect for the chalaza of an egg inhabiting the in-between of many journeys. Sit up straight, close your eyes, place your hands palms up at the juncture between the thighs and the hips, and peer into the pineal gland otherwise known as the third eye: Lawler’s extraordinary poetry is already there, intuitively known to us, vibrating like a foreign yet profoundly familiar dawn, arising from and dissolving back into a continuous generative source, what we might call love, or bliss, or—as Lawler himself describes—‘How birth sometimes looks like something else.’”

—George Kalamaras, author of *The Theory and Function of Mangoes*

BIO:

Patrick Lawler has published two earlier collections of poetry: *A Drowning Man is Never Tall Enough* (University of Georgia Press) and *reading a burning book* (Basfal Books). He has been awarded fellowships by the New York State Foundation for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Constance Saltonstall Foundation for the Arts. In addition to being an Associate Professor at SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry where he teaches Environmental Writing and Nature Literature, he teaches creative writing courses at Onondaga Community College. He is also part of the Creative Writing Program at LeMoyne College, where he teaches creative writing, playwriting, and writing for performance.

Visit www.mmminc.org
and click on the MMM Press link for
more info.

Whole Poems *by Patrick Lawler*

In Cambodia they have a thriving industry
in wheelchairs and artificial limbs.
Thousands of landmines are hidden
in pockets of earth
throughout the country—Claymores
and Chinese models.

In the '50s my father broke his back—
fell off a ladder while he was welding
at a chemical plant. For years
he had to wear a back brace and fight
a Workman's Compensation case
he barely won.

If you walk in Cambodia, you are in danger.
The antipersonnel detonating devices.
The trip mechanisms. The booby traps.
The Soldier's Manual of Common Tasks says:
"Install the Claymore facing the center
of mass of a kill zone." The fragments spray
and rip and cut. With patient malice,
the mines wait for years,
thinking all the time their meaning
is undermined until finally
they exuberantly burst. The Chinese model
is propelled upward out of the ground
and reaches a level about the height
of a child's face.

With his broken back, my father didn't work
for years while my mother saved
Green Stamps and we lived in a cellar.
Instead of a house, we lived in a stump.
A cave with a flat tar paper roof.
With tiny rectangular windows—too far
above our heads, too small to let in any light.
Green Stamps like moss
grew all over the tables.

The ex-soldiers and farmers and mothers
and school children drag the lower parts
of their bodies like sacks
along the roads to Phnom Penh.

My father's back brace looked like the rib cage
of a prehistoric reptile—like something
you'd find in a Spanish monastery
during the Inquisition.
I didn't want to look at it.

There are two messages here:
whatever stays in the earth is dangerous
and whatever stays in the earth will save us.
And, of course, there's something else.
In a lab in Massachusetts researchers
are growing human ears on the backs of mice.

Scientists grow the tissue by first creating
an ear-like scaffolding of porous,
biodegradable polyester fabric. Human
cartilage cells are placed throughout the form,
which is then implanted on the back of a
hairless mouse. I wonder

what would grow out of my father's back.

I've always been aware I had a certain destiny.
Right now, I'm supposed to be in Cambodia,
making artificial limbs. I'd make elaborate
prosthetic devices. I'd gather gears and grease
and grinding things—levers and wheels.
I'd work with tubing, haywire, parts of a red
bonnet. I'd make limbs from small engines
and balsam and wax. I'd make windmills.
I'd work with putty and glue, with tintype
and spokes, guitar strings, and plastic.

I'd gather kindling and gourds—
the insides of clocks, tassels, colored ribbon.
I'd whittle crutches into ships.
I'd gather things that sparked
when they rubbed together. I'd take out
the thin insides of pens for veins.

What I want is delicate machinery to carry
pain. What I want are carousels
for fingers, music boxes for hands.

I say: Rise. Get up. Please, walk now.

But my father digs his way down into
his house, and my mother dreams of birds,
collecting them in books. And me?

Whole legs grow out the backs of mice.
Whole poems rip out the back of my father.

from Feeding the Fear of the Earth

