

The most visually immediate element, in many poems, that Perez employs is the strike-through. In “*ginen ta(la)ya*,” rank, age, place of origin, and cause of death are struck through, leaving only the names of soldiers lost in combat. The reader sees the name first, but on the periphery there are grey text and struck words, the details that make each name significant, emphasizing the loss through the visual near-erasure. Guåhan’s relationship with the U.S. military threads throughout the poems as a series of losses — first landbase, then population, then culture and language. In contrast with the method of striking through text, Perez later uses direct quotes from Volume Ten of the Final Environmental Impact Statement on military buildup on Guåhan to give voice to the 10,000 comments submitted during the official ninety-day comment period. Each comment is prefaced with “DEIS Public Comment,” and some show support while others don’t. Whether or not the comments made any sort of impact on decisions, even with the great number submitted, is difficult to gauge, but Perez takes the commenting process one step further by including his own observations of the people making Facebook comments on the DEIS public comments he posted on that social media forum. “—Craig, Is this an experimental translation project?...—I copy and paste phrases, sentences, words, passages from the comments of the people/ —I post these comments on my Facebook status/ —Sometimes others comment on the comment” (45). The effect is both cyclical and cynical: is it really possible to stop something as big as a military buildup with 10,000 comments, let alone debates created on social media?

In 1963, Frantz Fanon noted that decolonization “...is a historical process: that is to say it cannot be understood, it cannot become intelligible nor clear to itself except in exact measure that we can discern movements which give it historical form and content.” (36) Fanon’s work, *The Wretched of the Earth*, is often considered the basis for contemporary decolonization efforts, but like many academic texts, it can be difficult to experience the decolonization process from such an intellectualized space. To begin to perceive the impact decolonization has on the individual psyche, one must seek out artists who can reveal, through images, metaphors, and deft renderings, the complexities of unraveling settler colonialism

and militarization to create a space of clarity and comprehension. Perez has created such a space for perceiving the impact of both the colonization of Guåhan, and the intimate intricacies of the decolonization process, through his collection *from unincorporated territory* [guma’].

Works Cited:

Morrison, Rusty. “Rusty Morrison with Craig Santos Perez.” *The Conversant*. Retrieved from <<http://theconversant.org/?p=5751>>, May 1, 2014. ☞

Publishing under the pen name **Rebecca Mabanglo-Mayor, Rebecca A. Saxton** received her MFA in Creative Writing from Pacific Lutheran University in 2012. Currently she is a faculty member of Northwest Indian College, where she teaches college composition and Native literatures. Her works have appeared in *{m}aganda magazine*, *Katipunan Literary Magazine*, *Conversations Across Borders*, *The Blind Chatelaine’s Keys* and *Haruah*. Her short story “Yellow is for Luck” appears in the anthology *Growing Up Filipino II: More Stories for Young Adults*, edited by Cecilia Brainard. Her poetry chapbook, *Pause Mid-Flight*, was released in 2010.

Sailing by Ravens

BY **Holly J. Hughes**

UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA PRESS,

P.O. Box, 756240, Fairbanks, AK 99775

WWW.ALASKA.EDU/UAPRESS/

ISBN: 978-1-60223-225-9

2014, PAPER, 100 PP., \$14.95

REVIEWED BY TIM MCNULTY

Sailing by Ravens, poet Holly J. Hughes’s first full collection, is a dazzling and accomplished cycle of poems and short prose pieces inspired, informed, and enlightened by the metaphor of navigation. Hughes is a seasoned sailor, fisher, and skilled observer of sea and sky. She spent most summers of her adult life on the waters of Alaska, the Inside Passage, and Salish Sea fishing, skippering a sailing schooner, and working as a ship’s naturalist. Her poems shimmer with authenticity.

Hughes also made good use of her time ashore. She coauthored *The Pen and the Bell, Mindful Writing in a Busy World* (Skinner House Press, 2012) and edited the award-winning anthology, *Beyond Forgetting: Poetry and Prose about Alzheimer’s Disease* (Kent State University Press, 2009). Among her earlier poetry chapbooks are

Boxing the Compass, which won the 2007 Floating Bridge Press Chapbook Award, *Ablution*, *Heart and Mind*, and *The Offering of the Fig*.

Although *Boxing* premiered some of the poems gathered here, *Sailing by Ravens* is a luminous realization. It is a deep extended metaphor of a lifetime's calling, a lyric record of a poet's quest for understanding, and a moving testament to a woman's navigational struggles with some difficult seas of her own.

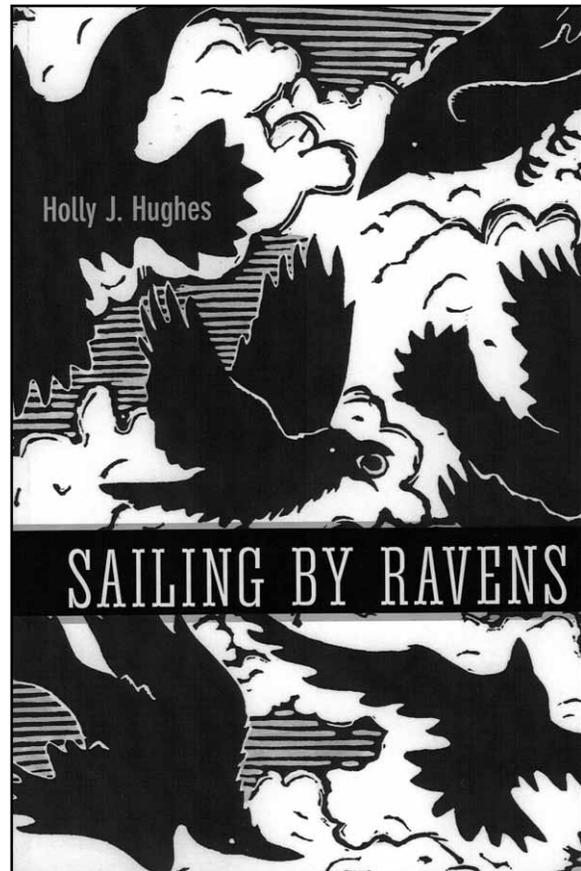
Loneliness, storms, desire. The hardships of a fishing life, a foundering first marriage, and shoals of unknowing underlie the horizon in these poems. But Hughes is nothing short of splendid at the helm. Her language is rich and evocative and her narrative course clear and true. She brings her struggles, joys, and persistent explorations of her place in the universe into fine-grained focus. Her careful readings of the history of navigation, and her mastery of centuries-old navigational tools and techniques, make this a rare collection in which the poet draws on solid, practical skills to deepen a reader's engagement.

Early in her book, Hughes offers a glimpse of her childhood self, a girl who has "climbed out of the frame" of a family photo, out her bedroom window, and into the welcoming limbs of a pine. Gripping a limb with one hand, shielding her eyes with the other ("she read this in *Treasure Island*"), she gazes past the ever-present corn rows of the Midwest and dreams herself in a crow's nest in a ship far at sea.

The poet comes by her passion honestly. Her grandfather sailed the coast and inlets of China, and left behind shards of an oceangoing life: a journal, photos, the broken plaster finger of the Buddha. "How to make this story whole?" she asks, then moving unerringly to the universal, "What a generation doesn't pass along, hidden ballast the next will carry."

Such epiphanies rise from these poems like beacons. They not only provide insight into the poet's personal quest, they illuminate our own.

In pieces such as "So Many Superstitions to Defy" and "Heading for Town," Hughes reflects tenderly on the enthusiasm of her early days fishing and her marriage of seven years, "In this moment, we believe love will carry us across any sea," she writes. Others, like "What She Can't Say" and "Steer for the Light," reveal a



more candid look at the hard edges and objective dangers of a fishing life. Both views are held in a kind of tidal balance and mutual respect. Judgments withheld, the poems ride out the weather of each moment no matter how severely it blows.

In the second section, "West" (the book's four sections are titled for the cardinal directions), Hughes evokes the 16th and 17th-century navigators, cartographers, and monks who fixed the techniques of mapping and celestial navigation. In several poems, she clearly and cleanly describes the contributions of her metaphorical forebears, like John Harrison who fixed longitudinal navigation by developing an accurate chronometer.

Sailing north and south by stars
position easily fixed, but sailing west

distance measured only in time.
The problem this: a fix will only work

if longitude is known.
Now thanks to Harrison,

sweep of second hand marks
minutes, never mind tide set.

...

Earth parsed neatly into lines
running north-south, time

trapped in fishnet space,
heavens pinned down,

fixed, at last.

—From “Painting of John Harrison”

I’ve always been partial to poems that convey useful information gracefully. Having relied utterly on traditional technologies, Hughes accomplishes this with gratitude and ease.

Actual and metaphorical seas merge most strongly in the book’s third section, “South,” where Hughes examines love and loss. Here the poet blends physical, emotional, and spiritual worlds seamlessly into a stunning suite of poems and revelations that startle. “In the dark, we make our way,” she writes in “Navigating the Body,” “mapping and remapping the continents each night.” And in “Terra Incognita,” she reflects, “We were children really. We didn’t know what else to do.” But, “Already our lives were unbraiding; already you’d struck out for that far shore.”

Safe harbors and welcoming shores are transitory in these poems, however. A life at sea has brought the realization that existence is continual navigation, triangulating a position or a relationship in reference to moving points and shifting stars.

We triangulate to advance our course,
a third point of reference, imagine
a second light might illumine

a stalled out-heart...

...

Go ahead, you think,
follow desire’s seductive wink,
what can it hurt?

Then watch, one more time,
see how the blinding sweep
erases all that came before.

—From “Triangulate”

Technically, Hughes sails easily across a breadth of poetic forms, from pitch-perfect prose poems in the early sections through sonnet, ghazal, and *rima dissolutas* forms, to haiku-like couplets in “And the Universe Curved,”

We are sailing. We are heading for the stars.
We are always just north of where we /
think we are.

But it is in the honed lines of the sestina “Reckoning, Again” that form and content meld to crystalize bits of wisdom, gleaned like pearls from unmapped shallows.

In fact, give up the chart.
Listen: faint *tick tick* of the heart.
Follow it, wrest the world
back; let it at last find
you, make your way home
in the soft vessel of skin...

It’s a rare pleasure to come upon a book so well crafted, so unified in theme, so honest and true to a poet’s heart. *Sailing by Ravens* is a remarkable voyage. Book passage as soon as you can. ☞

Tim McNulty is a poet, essayist, and nature writer. His most recent poetry collection, *Ascendance*, was published by Pleasure Boat Studio in 2013, www.pleasureboatstudio.com. McNulty’s poems, essays, criticism, and articles on nature and conservation have appeared in numerous publications, and his natural history writings have been translated into German, Chinese, and Japanese. He has received the Washington State Book Award and National Outdoor Book Award, among other honors. He lives with his wife in the foothills of the Olympic Mountains.

Credits

P. 14: The poem “Called” by Marion Kimes was published on the *Censorship* broadside, printed for the Alternative to Loud Boats Arts Festival, 1988.

P. 14: The poem “The Unruly Heart” by Marion Kimes was published by Now It’s Up To You (Tom Parson’s press) as Poetry Postcard No. 2, 1984.

P. 75: The poem “Filly” by Ann Teplick was a finalist in the 2013 *Crab Creek Review* poetry contest, and was first published in *Crab Creek Review 2014*, Vol. 1.