



Last Pawn Shop in New Jersey

Poems

JAMES HOCH

“Hoch’s work looks within the interiority of our everyday lives with objective, unvarnished detail that always arrives at emotional resonance.”—A. Van Jordan

“Hoch has got a handle on the pathos and brutality of living things and landscapes, but he renders this brutality with startling tenderness. His voice is fresh and fierce.”

—Camille T. Dungy

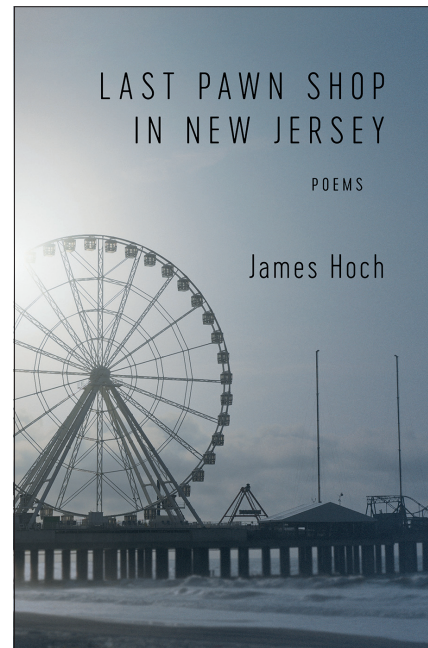
With *Last Pawn Shop in New Jersey*, James Hoch gives readers a heart-lugged romp and a work of resistance, conversing with the interstices of public and personal histories and identities in the context of ecological deterioration. Drawing on emotional experiences prompted by his brother’s going to war in Afghanistan, the death of his mother from ovarian cancer, and the raising of his sons, Hoch investigates the difficulty of loving and of making beauty in times of crisis when faced with knowledge of its limitations and necessity. Lyrical and meditative, intense and intimate, his poems evoke landscapes with views of the New York water supply system, industrialization along the Hudson River, and the geology of the Palouse in the Pacific Northwest.

A bare-knuckled argument for the sublime in the context of war and environmental degradation, *Last Pawn Shop in New Jersey* asserts the redemptive power of art as survival.

JAMES HOCH is the author of *Miscreants* and *A Parade of Hands*. His poems have appeared in *Best American Poetry*, *Kenyon Review*, *Poetry Daily*, *Tin House*, and many other publications. Originally from New Jersey, he resides in the Hudson Valley and is professor of creative writing at Ramapo College and guest faculty at Sarah Lawrence College.

Forgive me, my mother has died.
I am trying to understand, so my son
understands why his father’s saying
nothing in the car, the yard, at the table.
My mother has died. Do you know?
It’s like standing in a field,
then it’s like the field being gone.
No one notices in the clumsy fog.
Do you see there is no distance?
She is not a thing. There are no figures
for this grief, the air tastes of ground.
Have you ever lost all context?
The other day, walking across the room,
my son looked at me like he was
eyeing a sick planet, then put his arms
around his weeping father,
as if holding a planet might heal it.

—from “Dedication”



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Poetry



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