



## Dogs and Disturbance

**William Edmund Evans**

**Molly the Rottweiler, Contributor**

**Mojo the wheel dog, Contributor**

**Maddie the lead dog, Compiler**

William Edmund Evans (Jun 15, 2014)

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*Surprisingly resonant poetry with skillful use of language reveals how animal companions teach us about life and death.*

Heartfelt verses written for a beloved pet have no doubt graced the journal pages of many a would-be poet. With *Dogs and Disturbance*, William Edmund Evans elevates this type of poem to a new level, offering pieces that share his personal experiences with his dogs and family in language that resonates with soulfulness.

Standout poems like “Notes on Leaving,” “Going on Ninety,” “Made it, Bubba,” and the lengthy narrative piece “Does She Have a Name?” are crafted with beautiful lines that convey Evans’s deeply felt affections for his dogs, Mojo, Maddie, and Molly. The poet does so, however, without relying on cliché or pathos, as when he writes, “If surviving the sunrise / can’t rouse you to stand / nor hear when you’re called / to the deck to the sun / where you’ve lain / paced and targeted / dogs on parade / time is upon us.” The poems are not so much about dogs as they are about the way our animal companions teach us about living and dying.

Threads of great personal tragedy are also evident here. “Coming Back to Stonybrae” and “March 3, 2012” speak of the loss of a boy named Ryan, presumably the poet’s son. Lines like “Time // has stolen grief from you / though even at a distance / his eyes are laughing, open wide” lend weight and depth to the collection, and also serve to connect the lives of all beings—and the loss of those lives. There is comfort in this interweaving of human and canine life, and any reader working through grief could find solace here.

Also included are a handful of poems inspired by visual art, music, and other writers, which nicely round out the collection and demonstrate the poet’s range of interests. In a piece titled “Josef Albeers,” about the abstract painter and theorist, Evans writes, “one / weeks long course / practicing tempera tones / what would have taken // years to be so deft / seeing past mere vibrancy / notes as complex in their chording.” The volume is rife with line breaks such as these that allow the language to resonate without the burden of rhyme scheme or strict form.

In this volume, the image of a line-drawn wave is included in many of the poems, seemingly to denote a lengthier pause than a traditional stanza break might offer. Though interesting, the wave often detracts from the impact of the language. One can imagine Evans experimenting further with his poetry to achieve a similar but less distracting effect, perhaps by straying from his generally brief, left margin-oriented stanzas to try his hand at poems that use white space in different ways.

*Dogs and Disturbance* offers a genuine collection of poetry that surprises in its range. Recommended for dog lovers and poetry lovers alike.

MARGARET FEDDER (August 20, 2014)

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