

Nistanimera

Peter Hughes was born in Oxford in 1956, and now lives on the Norfolk coast with his wife Lynn, in a coastguard cottage which is creeping ever closer to the cliff edge. Music, painting and writing have all been important to him over the years and he has tried to keep active in all of them, while still earning a living by teaching. In 2007 he left teaching to concentrate on his writing and several projects are currently unfolding in small-press publications and webzines. The cover of this book features one of his paintings.

Also by Peter Hughes

The Interior Designer's Late Morning, Many Press 1983

Bar Magenta (with Simon Marsh), Many Press, 1986

Odes on St. Cecilia's Day, Poetical Histories, 1990

The Metro Poems, Many Press, 1992

Psyche in the Gargano, Equipage, 1995

Paul Klee's Diary, Equipage, 1995

Keith Tippett Plays Tonight, Maquette Press, 1999

Blueroads: Selected Poems, Salt Publishing, 2003

Sound Signals Advising of Presence, infernal methods, 2006

Minor Yours, Oystercatcher Press, 2006

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N i s t a n i m e r a

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Some of these poems appeared in *Active in Airtime*, *Fire*, *The Gig*, *Great Works*, *Shadow Train*, *Tears in the Fence*, *10th Muse* and *Tremblestone*. 'Oystercatcher', along with some other marine excursions, appeared in the chapbook *Sound Signals Advising of Presence* from infernal methods. 'Minor Yours' appeared as a chapbook from Oystercatcher Press.



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for Lynn

Six Klee Paintings

1920 Moonlit Night

the new formalism is always the former prison
the deepening rut worn out
by relentless pacing to & fro
another channel for the water
which already has every tune in its head
 you know where you are with a Hoover
 you can locate your marbles
& be firm with one Dr Scholl
dovetailed to the starting block
 although blue is still blue
 as in a 1920 moonlit night
the sealed beam can't exhale
who's treading the perimeter
the grey juice of walking vision
eyelid thickness
all else out of sight
 & mindless
fins cross
an inner sheen
of dark grass

1923 Child in a Landscape

whatever dug this valley
has probably finished its lunch
no need for some new tidal myth
the sea goes in & out don't we all
meanwhile the stream is playing
conkers with its rocks
& applauding voluminously
you & the landscape stand inside each (other
& our musty ragged separation stands
what it can & cans what it must

yes look at the moon) too

1924 Portrait of Madame P

I like to think of gravitons
they are better than tooth-fairies
you carted my rootball no distance at all
though you looked like a wheelbarrow
on its last legs
the window sticks still
the point is already everywhere
& the line is the discharge of tension
between a couple of points
then before you know it it's lunch again
& four points make a fork
people you never knew
admire the upside-down boat on your head
physicists prefer to talk of prongs

1926 The Menagerie Goes on Parade

I dreamt I made a go-cart with Hart Crane
we called it Blue – my was it faithful
it carried Joni Mitchell
Miles Davis the Reverend Blue Hummock
Hilda Baker polishing a big plank of fluorspar
(we passed chandeliers malnutrition & a brass band
at the back of the lead-mine – the underground
years pressfluffed in your shirt pocket)
Blue Mitchell on trumpet with Horace Silver
thumping the dunnoek
bobbing along on a staccato patter
of cats' eyes over the crest of the hill
into the final Prussian blue miles
& this darkening blue into which you drive
is the night inside you can't overtake

1928 A Page from the City's Records

the dark & steadfast star
stamped on your forehead
rustles town with windy
black-hole rumours
the sewage outlet religious
icon political badge
the full-stop at the end
of missing sentences
the blackball
ten billion dollars a week
a lot of arms
a lot of empty mouths
the O in the core
of all aesthetics
before you speak the day's out

1936

black
the queen of colours

only just before the end
did the distances
compress our chests
& flower within us as nettles

we were peopled
by great silences

hard to resist the inside of your wrist
even in this little crowd of human beings
backdrops cardboard rocks & red wine

delicate flicks big wet licks spilt stickiness
emulsion under the nails & between finger-tips
we knocked up Oz in a couple of hours

after months of battening down hatches
keeping shutters closed
checking locks

the whole caboodle gets blown away
then slides down a rainbow
into this space between streets

next thing I know
you're smiling down from the top turret
unfurling your flag over the emerald city

I wiped some of your green off my arm
but all your other colours
have seeped in deep & gone bronze