

High Tide
By Ed Meek
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review byCarolynn Kingyens

Ed Meek's latest collection of poems, *High Tide*, is an exquisite reckoning with one's self; between one's past and present, a sort of home coming without a home. There's a beautiful vulnerability along with a palpable sadness in *High Tide* that speaks directly to the human condition. For example, in the poem, "Talking to Yourself," Meek writes:

*You can't get up, can't look away, you're
uncomfortable in your own skin, like a dog
in a drought –
if you could move, you'd get a drink or take a bath. Your
throat so dry you can't swallow. You can't swallow it all
anymore, the strangers who occupy your house – your wife
and children – as distant as the relatives who raised you.
You knew them all once, long ago, in another country you
called home.*

Continuing with the same theme in "Gypsy Moth," Meek compares the quiet desperation of the moth to our own distress:

*Now they're stressed like the rest of us,
susceptible to fungus and disease.*

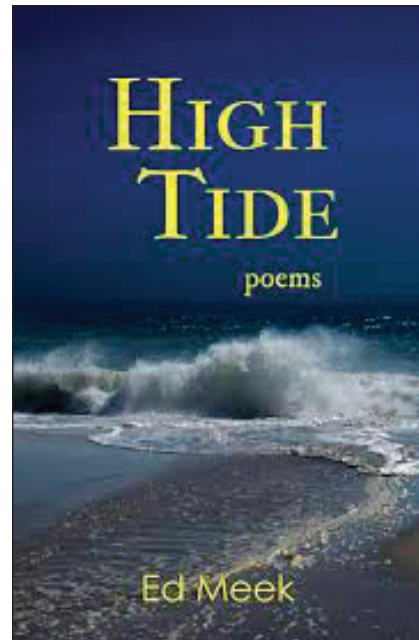
*thwacking into window screens
desperately searching like the rest of us
for the light.*

There are political poems, too, that lend thoughtful perspective to the state of American politics. In the poem, "Encomium for the God of Nothingness," Meek reminds us:

*This is where we are – on the verge.
Just over the edge – chaos.*

But in the poem, "Make America Great Again," he examines the disconnect between Trump's notorious motto, and the reasons why some Americans take offense to it, offering a reminder how problematic earlier times in American history authentically were:

*Let's take America back
to the straitjacket
of the 1950s –*



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*when women knew
their place
and cops let
domestic abuse
slide, divorcees
were outcast
and the church
lied for priests
who brought altar boys
to their knees.*

... The good old days

*when no women
or Jews were allowed,
Blacks were happier
with their own kind
and America could do
no wrong.*

Some poems connect to each other faultlessly such as with “The Poetry Motel” and “In the Poetry Motel.” With these two poems, in particular, there is a slight dread reminiscent of the David Lynch film, Mulholland Drive:

*You drew the drapes and sure enough – a view of the mountains –
hazy blue in the distance, peaks lost in white mist. You
had been here before you felt suddenly, as the first rays of
sunlight cut through the haze.*

And “In the Poetry Motel,” the plot thickens:

*You hear in the back of your ear a faint strain
of music – something so familiar. It seems to be
coming from the back of the room. Then you
notice another door.*

You try the key and it opens. A radio on the desk is playing the music you heard. In the corner in the shadows someone sits. She beckons

with a crooked finger, come closer. She has something to tell you. You bend down to listen. She is old and frail. She whispers in a foreign tongue. It could be Latin or Greek. You seem to know some of the words. When she waves you off you return to the desk in your room. You try to make sense of it.

Throughout Meek’s book, there are nautical undertones, little reminders that high tide is coming in – fast. It’s when we call it a day at the beach, and begin to pack up all the gear – those old patchwork blankets, rainbow-colored umbrellas, and black scuff coolers with lids that don’t seem to ever want to close.

In the poem, “High Tide,” a young Meek relishes his limited time with his young parents on the beach, before his brother and sisters are born, calling them “those uninvited guests,” who “crashed the party.” He

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writes:

*Before we left we'd weave along
the shore, heads down
in search of shells.
I walked between them –
one on each hand. The three of us
happy as clams at high tide.*

In his poem, "Drifting Home," he resides in a dream state – you know the voice of the clock/ is an echo in a vacuum/ and what's lost hangs like a broken door. Meek continues:

*But it is your mother the ocean
who drifts in waves in your sleep
and years pass by in a dream. The Sioux
called this the shadow world.*

In his poem, "Praise for Ponytailed Girls Who Run," Meek becomes the acute observer:

*And the hair, lovely,
surely not dead
but vibrant with life and light
as it sways and bobs
like a rope swing in the wind
above the water.*

I read Ed Meek's High Tide the same day I'd received it. I wasn't planning to read his latest collection in one sitting, but once I began, I could not put it down. Curled up with his book and a soft, gray blanket, my blonde, beagle-lab mix resting at my side, I could've easily been on a New England beach instead of on my bed in Brooklyn. Time and place didn't matter as I read each poem slowly, savoring one delicious line after the next.

****Carolynn Kingyens' debut book of poetry, *Before the Big Bang Makes a Sound* (Kelsay Books), can be ordered through Amazon, Barnes & Noble, Greenlight, Book Culture, and Berl's Brooklyn Poetry Shop. In addition to poetry, Carolynn writes narrative essays, book reviews, micro/flash fiction, and short stories. She resides in New York with her husband and children