

JASON GRAY

POET • CRITIC • EDITOR



Jason is the author of *Radiation King* (Lost Horse Press), winner of the Idaho Prize for Poetry, and *Photographing Eden*, winner of the 2008 Hollis Summers Prize (Ohio UP). He has also published two chapbooks, *How to Paint the Savior Dead* (Kent State UP, 2007) and *Adam & Eve Go to the Zoo* (Dream Horse Press, 2003). His poems have appeared in *Poetry*, *The American Poetry Review*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Image*, *Poetry Ireland Review*, and many other places. He has also reviewed poetry, nonfiction, and fiction for *The Southern Review*, *The Missouri Review*, *Shenandoah*, *The Journal*, and elsewhere. His poems have been anthologized and reprinted on Verse Daily. A former editor for the Association of Writers & Writing Programs, he now works as an editor for the Nicholas Institute for Environmental Policy Solutions, and lives in Durham, NC with his partner and their dog, Puck.

CONTACT

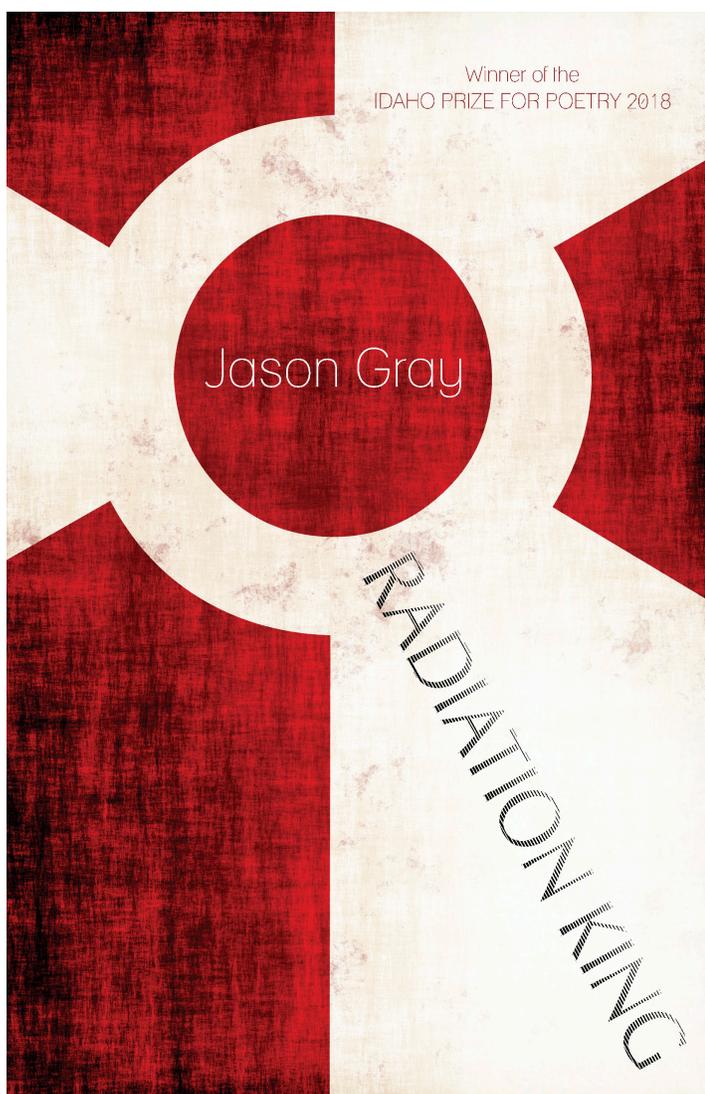
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RADIATION KING

Winner of the Idaho Prize for Poetry



Publisher: Lost Horse Press
Distributor: University of Washington Press
Format: Paperback (80 pp)
ISBN: 9780999199435
Price: \$18
Published: April 11, 2019

Ten years in the making, *Radiation King*, the second full-length collection by poet Jason Gray, takes us to the beginning and the possible futures of the atomic world we created at the start of the twentieth century. In a time when the Cold War has heated back up, his intense lyric poems engage a past filled with Civil Defense and radioactive quack cures and a future that could bring a radioactive wasteland or limitless energy. Gray's poems explore the world from the smallest atom of hydrogen to the giant Pillars of Creation in the Eagle Nebula and find that the only thing that will save us is love for one another.

“In his *Radiation King*, Jason Gray writes, ‘Atoms really are / Perfection: / tiny / movers, brilliant gods,’ but he might as well be describing the poems in this awe-inspiring collection. Each line, each word, is ‘tipped with fire.’ *Radiation King* speaks to darkness and light, to the past and the future, to myth and fact, to faith and science, to ruin and hope. When I say the poems are true, I do not mean they are factual, though there is certainly science and history at work here. I mean they are to be believed.”

Maggie Smith (Author of *Good Bones*)



Credit: Cynthia Marie Hoffman



LOST HORSE PRESS
is pleased to announce the winner of
THE IDAHO PRIZE FOR POETRY 2018

2018 WINNER
RADIATION KING
poems by Jason Gray

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Apocalyptic, cautionary, but ultimately redemptive, Jason Gray's poems force us to face up to years of natural and human degradation committed in the name of progress. "If only the metal / Would melt then maybe so would time," the poet writes, but of course the time doesn't bend to our wishes; rather, it inscribes our faces and minds with the truth of our deeds, especially those we'd wish to erase. Indeed, these taut poems praise the concreteness of the world—its physics and our physicality—with intelligence and music that are hard to find these days, when so much of contemporary verse seems beholden to overwrought conceptual designs or ready-made narratives. If you wonder what happened to the unassuming voice of the poet full of awe and doubt, or yearn for poems resembling, to paraphrase another poet, matches lit in the dark, then *Radiation King* should be at the top of your reading list. Jason Gray's work is the wave that "flashes its white / Smile / Right before it sweeps / You under." And this book, a small masterpiece of love and devotion to everything that makes the universe fantastic, is that apple that the poet wishes to see "rise into the tree."

—Piotr Florczyk, *Final Judge*

2018 FINALIST SHORT LIST

Don't Touch the Bones Julia Kolchinsky Dasbach

The Condition As a Quiet Room Heidi Poon

Of Water Dan Lechay

Pennsylvania Furnace Julie Swarstad Johnson

The Dreams of Weapons Melissa Ginsburg

LOST HORSE PRESS would like to thank the 2018 Final Judge, Piotr Florczyk, the First (Number One!) Reader Jackson Holbert, and everyone who submitted to the Idaho Prize for Poetry. Thank you!

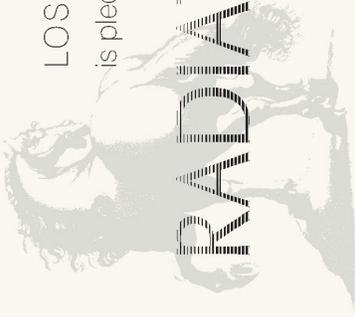
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poems | Jason Gray

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—Piotr Florczyk, Final Judge for the Idaho Prize for Poetry 2018



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MISSOURI REVIEW, *SHENANDOAH*, *THE JOURNAL*, and elsewhere. His poems have been anthologized and reprinted on *Verse Daily*. Besides writing, he spends time taking pictures of things.



OTHER BOOKS BY JASON GRAY

PHOTOGRAPHING EDEN

Winner of the 2008 Hollis Summers Prize

Publisher: Ohio University Press

Format: Cloth

ISBN: 9780821418352

Price: \$24.95

Format: Paperback

ISBN: 9780821418369

Price: \$14.95

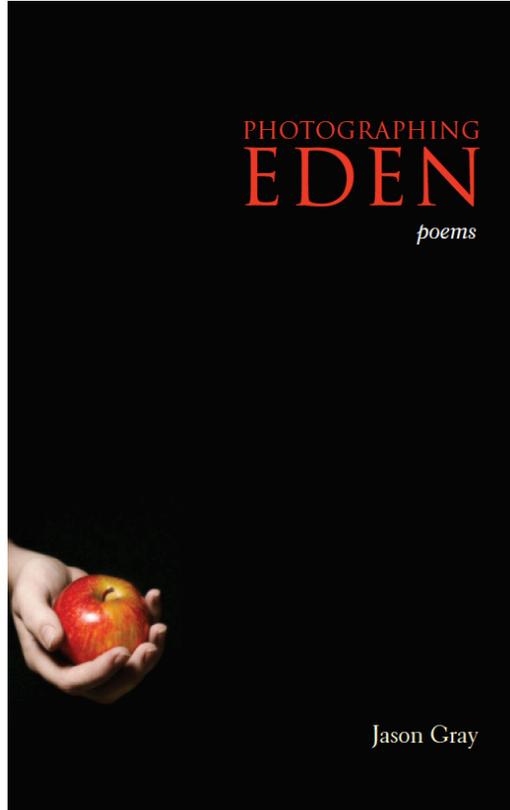
Format: ePub

ISBN: 9780821443019

Price: \$9.99

“Jason Gray’s gift is quiet but profound. He brings the same respectful eye to nature as to acts of art—an eye that adds its own light to the occasions. A book for delectation.”

Heather McHugh (MacArthur Genius Award Winner)



HOW TO PAINT THE SAVIOR DEAD

Winner of the Wick Chapbook Award

Publisher: Kent State University Press

Format: Paperback

ISBN: 9780873389082

Price: \$7.00

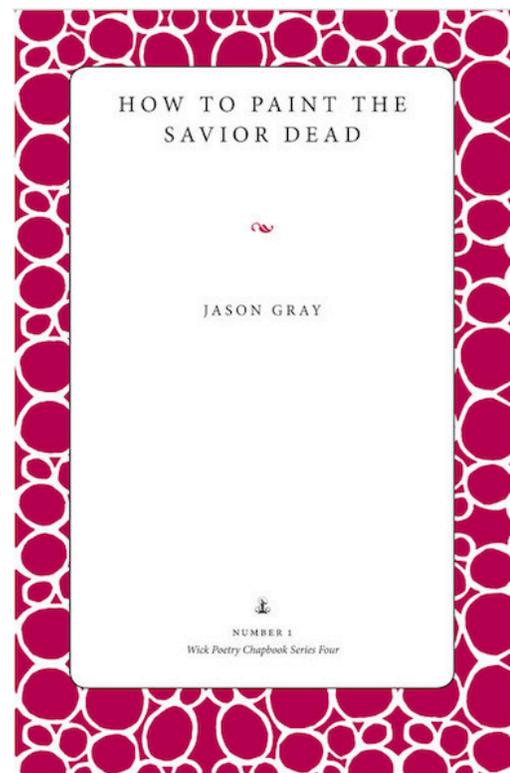
Format: ePub

ISBN: 9781612777849

Price: \$5.99

“Gray is not afraid of hard work, hard thought, and big vision just because the subject of his fascination has been both exalted and besmirched by tradition, both enriched and impoverished by the hands of our predecessors. Gray throws himself into the mix of muses, amore, and immortality with more—much more—than common wit, passion, and intelligence.”

Andrew Hudgins (Finalist for the Pulitzer Prize)



Q&A

Why Radiation King?

The Radiation King was this imaginary figure in my head, a mythical figure that people in a distant future would say caused the nuclear war that had devastated the planet. Part-tyrannical leader, part-mad scientist, I imagined a future us telling stories about this person, conflating several factors into one person who could be blamed for the situation we found ourselves in. And though no poem ever was written about the figure, I was always taken with the idea of writing poems from the future—warnings to the present about potential disasters.

What drew you to write poems about nuclear physics and radiation?

I grew up in the '80s at the tail-end of the Cold War, when the threat of nuclear war seemed to be high, but also with a dad who worked at nuclear power plants, and so I was surrounded by the dichotomy of nuclear energy as both a terrible thing and a very beneficial thing, and that superposition of those two opposing ideas has always haunted me. It was time to write about it.

Why make films for the poems?

A few of the poems, “Project Faultless” and the sequence “Letters to the Fire” seemed very cinematic to me—the latter especially since it’s a narrative sequence. There is a wealth of great imagery available in this area, and combining that with my own love of photography and videography and music, I wanted to combine all those artistic endeavors into one project. It was also another great way to share my poems with the wider world.

SELECT REVIEWS & COMMENTARY

About *Photographing Eden*:

“Gray’s strongest poems possess a quietly fierce intelligence controlled by elegantly wrought lines. Much of Gray’s work may remind us of Donald Justice’s or Richard Wilbur’s best poems. Which is to say that many of Gray’s poems exemplify such a facility of style that they seem to have simply, divinely fallen from the sky.”

Alexander Long, *The Journal*

“(Gray’s) verse is the evident product of a disciplined mind, and it is even, more frequently than one might expect, beautiful.”

J.B. Werlin, *Pleiades*

SELECT MEDIA APPEARANCES

Interviewed on Beyond the Breakwater Radio Show (Madison, Wisconsin)
<https://www.mixcloud.com/beyondthebreakwater/jason-gray-21215/>

Interviewed on Writer’s Talk (Columbus, Ohio)
<http://www.ohiochannel.org/video/writers-talk-jason-gray>

Working@Duke Facebook feature
<https://www.facebook.com/workingatduke/posts/10157141416792664>

MULTIMEDIA

POETRY FILMS

Jason has made short films to accompany the poems “Project Faultless” and “Letters to the Fire” from the new book, *Radiation King*.

They can be viewed on his Vimeo or YouTube pages.

<https://vimeo.com/user11284197>

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC9MjTQS3aS8daCuJxtS5cqA>

AUDIO/VIDEO RECORDINGS

Hear Jason read “The Rabbit God in Its Repose”

<https://soundcloud.com/jasongraypoems/rabbit-god>

Watch Jason read a series of poems from *Radiation King* with his dog, Puck.

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL97_0fle9Y4QBD9scx8I0TIVKTNTKbmvT

Jason’s reading at The Stain of Poetry Reading Series (Brooklyn, NY)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CS_SZj9YuNU&feature=youtu.be