

Poems as political protest

April is National Poetry Month, and throughout the Pacific Northwest there are poets aplenty to celebrate, as well as small presses that valiantly dedicate themselves to the publication of poetry.

One of the first to establish a presence in our corner of the country was Copper Canyon Press, which arrived in Port Townsend in 1974.

Perhaps there's a bit of poetic synchrony in this — Copper Canyon co-founder Sam Hamill passed away last week — at just the time of year when the air

seems to be most abuzz with poetry.

Hamill made a lasting impact on the vitality of poetic expression, not just regionally but worldwide. As editor at Copper Canyon for more than three decades, he published scores of poets and supported the translation of poetry from other languages and traditions. As a poet himself, he saw his own work translated into more than a dozen languages.

And his global reach didn't stop there. Fifteen years ago, in response to

"Nasty Women Poets"
Edited by
Grace Bauer & Julie Kane
Lost Horse Press
376 pp
\$24

the U.S. invasion of Iraq, he helped to launch the Poets Against War movement. More than 13,000 poets from around the world submitted poems of protest.

Now another Northwest poetry publishing house is continuing that tradition of wielding poetry as a tool of resistance. Lost Horse Press in Sandpoint, Idaho, recently published "Nasty Women Poets: An Unapologetic Anthology of Subversive Verse."

Editors Grace Bauer and Julie Kane explain in their introduction that the inspiration for this collection and its title was sparked when then-presidential candidate Donald Trump dismissed his opponent, Hillary Clinton, as "such a nasty woman" during one of their televised debates.

"You may have taken it personally," Kane and Bauer write, "or maybe you thought of your friends, mothers, daughters, wives, partners, sisters. Even if you were not a Hillary fan, you may have felt like a line had been crossed ... The phrase stuck in our heads (as well as our craws)."

So these two women collaborated with Lost Horse Press and issued a

call "for all nasty women poets to come to the aid of their country." Out of the hundreds of poems they received, they winnowed their selections down to a still-hefty batch of more than 200 pieces.

Organized into different categories, "Nasty Women Poets" features poems that honor foremothers and poems that talk about being raised as a female. One section, titled "Roar," features poetry about women who flaunt their bad attitudes. There are pieces that focus on self-image and poems that talk about talking back.

In her submission, "I Want to Mantle My Daughters' Bodies," Portland poet Devon Balwit seeks to prove to her daughters that "they

are world makers, atom smashers, pleasure seekers, pleasure takers, / claimants of every right due thinking-kind."

And finally, there are poems gathered around the topic of social justice and political protest.

The call for this anthology went out the day after Donald Trump was elected America's 45th president. These poems — withering in their criticisms and defiant in claim-staking — are a red-hot response.

The Bookmonger is Barbara Lloyd McMichael, who writes this weekly column focusing on the books, authors and publishers of the Pacific Northwest. Contact her at bkmonger@nwlink.com.



NEAL MAINE PHOTO

Great blue herons are year-round residents of the Columbia-Pacific region, commonly spotted near the shores of open water or in wetlands.

Wild Side

GREAT BLUE HERON

By **LYNETTE RAE McADAMS**
 FOR COAST WEEKEND

As fitting an emblem for our coastline as the Chinook salmon or the Dungeness crab, the great blue heron can be found throughout the Columbia-Pacific, lending its aura of gracefulness and dignity to the shores of nearly every waterway in the region. The largest and most distinguished heron in North America, it is easily recognized for its size and striking physical characteristics.

Standing over 4.5 feet tall on long, spindly legs, *Ardea herodias* appears slate gray, with a violet-blue tinge to its body feathers and a darker, deep blue hue on its flight feathers and wingtips. A softer, more dusty tone accentuates the bird's signa-

ture s-curve neck, which it can elongate in defense or to attract a mate. Just above the eyes, solid bands of black feathers streak backward, culminating in a dark, wispy plume that extends behind the head. Always leading the way, its brilliant orange-yellow bill tapers to a dagger-like point.

Famous for its enduring patience, the great blue heron is a stealthy hunter who doesn't mind a long wait when it comes to a favorite meal. Known to wade for hours in tidelands and marshes, waiting for the perfect prey, it exhibits a masterful stillness right up until the moment of the kill, when it plunges its neck into the water with quick, incredible force, skewering an unsuspecting victim.

Though partial to an all-fish diet, this bird is an



COURTESY DENISE FAIRWEATHER
 A painting of a great blue heron

opportunistic eater, and will also strike at frogs, salamanders, snakes, rodents, insects and even other birds and nestlings. Cases of heron gluttony, where a bird is found dead from suffocation, its oversized prey still stuck in its throat, are not uncommon.

Highly adapted to be an expert fisher, it walks on legs that can carry it into deep water, and uses its long-toed feet like snowshoes to keep from sinking into mud or silt. Specialized eyes bulge

out in triangular fashion, making it so the bird can see directly underneath its own chin and bill without ever moving its head. Additional photoreceptors enhance its vision, allowing it to hunt day or night, bound only by the rhythm of the tide.

Though solitary hunters, herons band together for the mating season, colonizing in large groups of 100 birds or more to form a "heronry." Males and females pair up monogamously for one season only, sharing equally in the construction of a nest, the incubation of eggs and the feeding and raising of their young. As is true for most creatures, the first year of life is quite precarious, with only a 50 percent chance of survival. Great blue herons lucky enough to pass this milestone can enjoy an average lifespan in the wild of 15 years.

There are five subspecies of great blue heron, including our local species, *Ardea herodias fannini*, which generally ranges from southeast Alaska to coastal Washington. In Florida, there is a subspecies that is entirely white. **CW**