



All of You on the Good Earth

Poetry by

Ernest Hilbert

All of You on the Good Earth guides the reader through chambers occupied by visionary gravediggers and spaced-out movie stars, frenzied dropouts, sullen pirates, and unrelenting stalkers, noble war correspondents and cornered dictators, unlucky drunks and supercilious scientists, impatient goddesses and sad sea monsters, self-indulgent denizens of Plutonian strip-clubs and earnest haunters of ancient ruins, the infamous Rakewell in TriBeCa and sea nymph Kalypso in a beach house at the Jersey shore, characters wandering an America demoralized by economic decline. These poems contain fasts and feasts, laments and love songs, histories, fantasies, and elegies, the amusing and heartbreaking debris of life on this world, all the while recalling Seneca's dictum, *non est ad astra mollis e terris via* ("the road from the earth to the stars is not easy").

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Biographical note:

Ernest Hilbert is the author of *Sixty Sonnets* (2009). His spoken word album *Elegies & Laments*, a "soundtrack" to *Sixty Sonnets* recorded with rock band and orchestra, was issued by Pub Can Records in 2012. He supplies libretti and song texts for contemporary composers Stella Sung, Daniel Felsenfeld, and Christopher LaRosa. He also writes scripts and appears in short films for the post-punk conceptual band Mercury Radio Theater. His poems have appeared in the *Swallow Anthology of New American Poets* (2009), *Two Weeks: A Digital Anthology of Contemporary Poetry* (2011), and two Penguin anthologies, *Poetry: A Pocket Anthology* and *Literature: A Pocket Anthology* (2011). He hosts the popular blog www.everseradio.com and works as an antiquarian book dealer in Philadelphia, where he lives with his wife, an archaeologist.

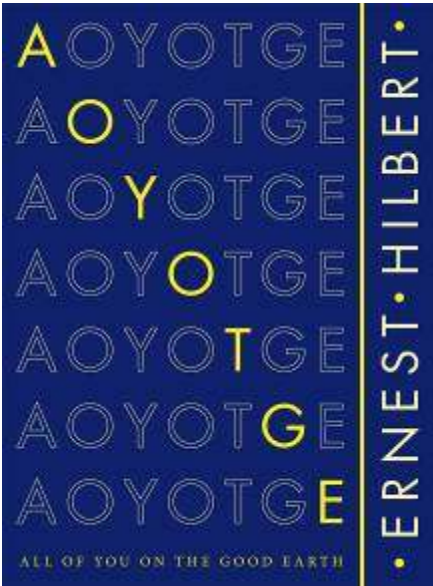
Praise for *All of You on the Good Earth*:

"Hilbert is one of our best rhymers since Robert Frost, and his poems have been compared by superb poets to those of John Berryman and Robert Lowell. We haven't had a poetry like his—both seriously tough-minded and wryly self-chiding—to enjoy and mull over for a long time."

—Alice Quinn



More Praise for *All of You on the Good Earth*:



“Genes clarify the genius and the freak / And prove we descend from a feral band,’ Ernest Hilbert writes in ‘Outsider Art,’ and there is no mistaking the ‘feral’ appetite and intensity of these poems, or the bitter depths of experience they sometimes explore. What makes *All of You on the Good Earth* such a rare collection, however, is the way Hilbert unites that raw energy with elegant and original language, creating a style that sounds like no one else’s.”

—Adam Kirsch, author of *The Modern Element: Essays on Contemporary Poetry*

“These sixty new sonnets find Ernest Hilbert, ‘an earnest / Pilgrim of some kind,’ charging up to the ruins of a shared and personal past as well into the ether of his own (mostly) earthbound head. Part shaman, part showman, he reaches his hand in, winks, and with a flourish, produces one little marvel after another. Like Lowell before him, Hilbert has found in the sonnet a form of confinement that excites and accommodates a liberality of temperaments, rhetorics, bad thoughts and big ideas, but where Lowell favored blank verse, Hilbert surprises with rhymes he unwinds with preternatural finesse. His material ranges from the all too familiar to visionary moments in which our

debauchery brings us to ‘fall apart like ancient stars’ or to witness a vaseful of stargazer lilies ‘unfastening like a vast nebula’ with a ‘long pour of poisonous gas.’ Retrospective, forward-looking, tonic and toxic, *All of You on the Good Earth* is a wonder of a book, and Hilbert’s best yet.”

—Timothy Donnelly, author of *The Cloud Corporation*, winner of the Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award

“Levavi Oculos”

St. Peter’s Churchyard, Philadelphia

My parched heart slithers in its soaked bone chest,
Gorges on embers and crackles to ash.
Winter twigs are splayed like petrified veins,
Skeletal fingers to cradle a bare nest.
All sources of concern—debts, deaths, markets’ crash—
Flit like late, fast leaves across these cold lanes,
Beneath a sky scribbled oily with cloud.
Allow me, for now, to fail and pursue
As I must—small, awkward force, aimed at dust.
Naval captains, native chiefs, whether proud
Or poor, now form a vast weight under my shoes.
Overhead, a flagrant scuttle and rush:
Such extravagant, vagrant vitality,
Branches rebound; squirrels spring from tree to tree.

