

Uneath

Poems by
Chad Davidson

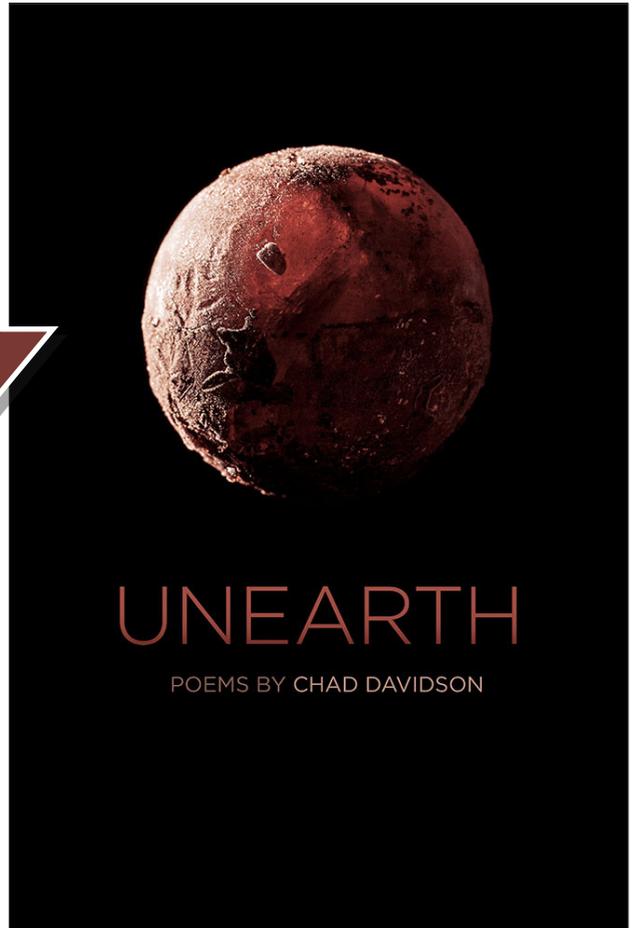
“‘I’d love a revelation,’ says Chad Davidson, and the poems in *Uneath* unroll illumination after illumination as he contemplates his mother’s death, Pluto, comets, family life, Italy, and the bombs going off all over the world. **Davidson is equally adept with a microscope and a telescope as he moves through the tenuous fabric of his days, taking his readers into the beauty and heartbreak of the twenty-first century.** A gorgeous book.”—Barbara Hamby, author of *Bird Odyssey*

Personal pain and globalized loss

“What if the end were as colorless as real / estate?” the speaker asks in *Uneath*. Poet Chad Davidson’s latest collection takes a hard look at our world as it collapses under numerous trials and tribulations. Fashioned mostly of elegiac poems, *Uneath* charts the way in which personal grief ripples out to meet and mirror larger systems of loss. The first section deals with local traumas and bereavements—the loss of pets, the disintegration of a friend’s marriage. These tragedies combine with more ominous, larger breakdowns in the second section until, in the final section, grief boils over into historical wickedness, institutionalized violence, and state-sanctioned wrath. Ultimately, “Even the mouth / of a volcano, from far away, / is beautiful.”

The poetry itself offers us vessels into which we can pour out our despair. To understand the failing earth, Davidson’s speaker cajoles us to see the pain at its roots. From the opening poem—a reluctant elegy for a mother—to the final eschatological survey, an ode to maddening violence and destruction on a global scale, this collection imagines a world in which private and public terrors feed on each other, ultimately growing to a fever pitch. An act of resistance, this collection gives voice to our deep-seated emotional pain and offers us constructive ways to deal with it.

Chad Davidson has published three previous books of poetry, including *From the Fire Hills* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2014), and two poetry textbooks: *Analyze Anything* and *Writing Poetry*. His work has previously appeared in *32 Poems*, *Kenyon Review*, *Gettysburg Review*, and *AGNI*, among others. He teaches at the University of West Georgia.



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UNEARTH

Grainy photos served as introduction
to the hostile atmosphere. All the forms
we had to sign, the rights we waived,

not as we wave goodbye, or are taken
under by the sea. There would be men,
they said, who handle the details:

the packing and ignition, crater
formed from touching down, shortness
of our breath in such surroundings.

To carry all that cargo, all that mess
of past and present failures, to haul
it where we did feels scarcely more

than fiction now. Yet how
unassuming, we thought, the vegetation,
its resemblance to the green we knew

back home, unearthly only in
its sudden presence. It felt unsafe
to stand. We could call the mission

a success, I guess, though surely that's perverse.
We got what we went there for
or, rather, gave it to the dirt,

then filled it back as if to fool ourselves.
I hear the stillness there has amplified,
even with the highway's roar

just outside the gates. Not sure
I could even find it on a map,
let alone in person. *In the flesh*, I'd say,

if not speaking of my mother's grave.

COMET

I'd love a revelation, something
for the ages: a comet or just Jesus
for an encore. Instead the trash truck
punishes a dumpster up the street,
and the mail, dressed in white again,
finds me here, at least my name,
at the start of another century.

Sometimes I look at my life
as if it were the Earth
seen from the moon, a flag
stuck there. Other times,
I'm the Earth just spinning
in a cloud of noxious luxury.

Truth is, when you go under,
and the doctors have you count,
you never reach the end. Truth is,
that vestigial tail of the comet
is just the comet burning up.

DAISY CUTTER

Romancer of the mania of jungle,
disseminator, clear-cut jab in the gut
of a tiny island dense in foliage
and communists. Or just a tryst
between a bomber and a bunker,
and one of them will get its heart
so badly broken. News flash: both do
solemnly swear to leave the other
empty, just a shell at the root of all
our injury. Let us refer to this
instrument by its skin and not
its powder and potential. Finches,
crows: they cry when a red-tailed scours
the sky, even mob and ankle-bite
till it demobs. But what can one do
with a bomb like you, inscrutable
as stone and just as polished?
Bullet-shaped Sphinx to the Egypt
of our worst intentions, you descend
on a parachute's held breath,
then shiver the timbers of whatever
state is under harsh examination.
Metal Martin Luther nailing to the door
of the front page news a little hole
crowded by charred palms, our palms
are open to you, up until the moment
we rush them to our ears and brace.