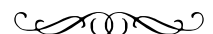


JEFF HARDIN

To a Hymn Book
for Storie

You have opened me
more than I have opened you.
Do you believe your songs,
or are you like some fields
which accept whatever comes
—junk-cars, waving alfalfa,
more than one pond, two geese
lost behind the others? I have to
admit your titles make me
weep—not even a note is needed—
for a space inside me needs
cleansing. When closed,
do you hear yourself, only
muffled? Do separate songs
compete? My child held you
when she was two, turned
your pages. Did her hands feel
more innocent than mine?
Is innocence a quality in the voice
easily heard? How many
hair strands have you kept?
I like to think of singing
as caressing, of testing the reach
or depth of what's inside.
With all you hold, care for,
such words and phrases,
these classic tones, tell me
how it is you keep quiet,
how you don't tear the roof off,
flutter past these hands that
hold you? Do I prevent you this?

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ABOUT JEFF HARDIN



Jeff Hardin teaches at Columbia State Community College in Columbia, Tennessee. His poems appear in recent and forthcoming issues of *Poem*, *Southern Review*, *Hudson Review*, *North American Review*, *Hotel Amerika*, *Poetry Northwest*, *Sugar House Review*, *Southwest Review*, and *Tar River Review*. He is the author of two chapbooks, *Deep in the Shallows* (GreenTower Press) and *The Slow Hill Out* (Pudding House). His first collection, *Fall Sanctuary*, received the 2004 Nicholas Roerich Prize from Story Line Press. His second, *Notes for a Praise Book*, is available from Jacar Press. His website is jeffhardin.weebly.com/.

