

CHERA HAMMONS

Fall Astronomy

Orion, the quiet hunter, pauses over the house
in shivering mornings before the sun has risen.
When I let the dogs out I see him, a shimmering outline,
while the wind, still holding the sage smell of the western summer,
tosses the torn flag that my neighbor never takes down in any weather,
rattles the dried heads of the sunflowers together,
and carries the heavy steps of the spotted pony
that crops the short and goldening pasture
as it searches for the last growth of the year.
The stars shine from their web of dark matter.

The dogs trot into the darkness. What they do there
is often a mystery. Somewhere in the yard, there is the sound of them
breathing in the pre-dawn cold, drinking from the bowl
that I will fill up once I can see well enough, snuffing at the grass.
They shake their tags in friendly clinks like small bells,
betraying bright trinkets that they don't know
will keep them from loss.



ABOUT CHERA HAMMONS

Chera Hammons is the author of *Amaranthine Hour* (Jacar Press 2012) and a member of the editorial board of *One*. Her work has also appeared in *Rattle*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Sugar House Review*, *Tupelo Quarterly*, and *Valparaiso Poetry Review*. She received an MFA in creative writing from Goddard College and teaches English at Clarendon College. She lives in Amarillo, Texas. Online at cherahammons.com.

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10 January 2016

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