

Monster: Distortion, Abstraction, and Originality in Contemporary American Poetry argues that memorable and resonant poetry often distorts form, image, concept, and notions of truth and metaphor. Discussing how changes in electronic communication and artificial notions of landscape have impacted form and content in poetry, *Monster* redefines the idea of what is memorable and original through a broad range of poets including John Ashbery, Anne Carson, Thomas Sayers Ellis, Forrest Gander, Peter Gizzi, Jorie Graham, Robert Hass, Brenda Hillman, Laura Kasischke, W. S. Merwin, Srikanth Reddy, Donald Revell, Mary Ruefle, David St. John, Arthur Sze, and James Tate.

“This important work of literary and cultural criticism probes the essential issues of poetry today. For example, distortion in poetry may now be necessary to its truth-function, a broken language for a broken world. Are we so distracted by the buzz of electronic media that lyric silence, along with nature, has receded into the past? Is anything real or, as it often seems, a virtual creation? Quoting Alfred Jarry, ‘I call *Monster* all original and inexhaustible beauty,’ Irwin reminds us that monstrosity is inherent in the new. Every great work of art, from Picasso’s *Guernica* to W.C. Williams’ plainspoken objectivism, emerges as a monster. As the author writes in his wonderful essay, ‘The Emergency of Poetry’: ‘Poetry is born of crisis or will seek it, often beginning *in medias res*—the middle where the danger is.’ It is then a question if art can heal or does the cultural wound lie open. My response to reading this book was immediate. It made me want to write something.”

Paul Hoover, Editor, *Postmodern American Poetry: A Norton Anthology*

“In these essays Mark Irwin moves among poems like an ecstatic bee in pollen season. No one more zealous at placing both particulars and compositions under the strong light of a concept, whether *distortion*, *transition*, *abstraction*, or *time*.”

Calvin Bedient, Author, *He Do the Police in Different Voices: The Waste Land and Its Protagonist*

Mark Irwin received his PhD in English/comparative literature from Case Western Reserve University and his MFA in poetry from the University of Iowa Writers’ Workshop. He is the author of nine collections of poetry, including *American Urn: New & Selected Poems (1987–2014)*. He has also translated two volumes of poetry. Recognition for his work includes The Nation/Discovery Award, two Colorado Book Awards, four Pushcart Prizes, the James Wright Poetry Award, and fellowships from the Fulbright, Lilly, NEA, and Wurlitzer Foundations. He is Associate Professor in the PhD in Creative Writing & Literature Program at the University of Southern California and lives in Los Angeles and Colorado.

ISBN 978-1-4331-3405-0



9 781433 134050

WWW.PETERLANG.COM

21 • Irwin • MONSTER

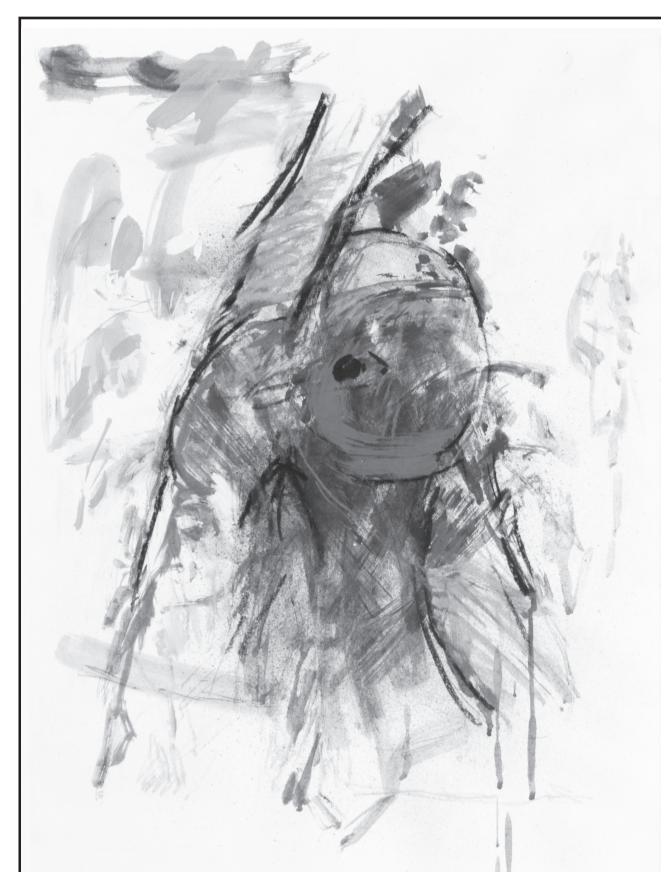
PETER LANG

Studies in Modern Poetry • 21

Monster

Distortion, Abstraction,
and Originality
in Contemporary
American Poetry

Mark Irwin



PETER LANG PUBLISHING