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# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## Matthew Graham: Three Poems

Matthew Graham · Sunday, June 4th, 2023

### Memorial Day, Michigan 2021

“Now these are memories only...  
Fragile mirrors easily broken...” — Ivor Gurney

*For Tom and Jan*

A local band plays Bob Seger and Mitch Ryder  
In a tent set up outside the American Legion.  
There's an American flag and a P.O.W. flag  
Displayed by the bar but no signs  
Of our former president.  
This is a Viet Nam crowd.  
The very old vets are mostly gone.  
The younger ones could care less.  
These are the guys who didn't go to college,  
Who were drafted right out of high school  
Or enlisted out of duty or pressure  
Or hard times.  
These are the guys whose fathers didn't have friends  
With connections,  
Family doctors with deferments.  
And beneath the wrinkles and silver ponytails  
Of these men spinning their stout wives  
Across the portable dance floor,  
You can still see the young faces with  
La Drang Valley, Dak To, Khe Sanh,  
Written all over them.  
What are we here to memorialize?  
The A and W across the road  
With the weaving neon and car hops  
Of an imagined time between wars?  
Or just this cool night when spring seems  
To have arrived a bit early  
And we are all still here  
With the music for a little while

And maybe I should say  
Nothing at all.

\*

## Fathers and Such

*For Larry and Gene*

Old men ourselves now, retired volunteers  
Shoveling mulch along the paths  
Of a nature preserve,  
We sometimes talk about our fathers.  
The misunderstandings and conflicts,  
The small hurts and slights that grow comical with time.  
The puzzling indifference of time.  
And sometimes we don't talk at all  
Because we know the shadows of fathers can reach  
As far as the shadows of these ancient trees  
We work among.  
Leaving us, for the most part,  
In the dark as always.

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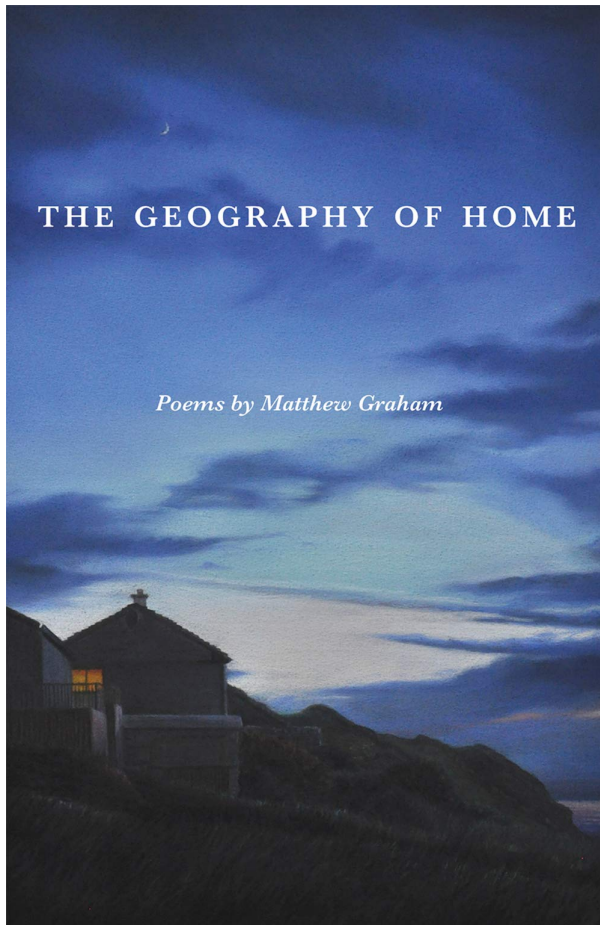
## Ending with a Variation on the Last Line John Ashbery Ever Wrote

My grandmother came from the holy land  
Of western New York State  
Where she spent summers on an uncle's orchard –  
A navy blue whisper  
Among the Empires, Cortlands and Ginger Golds  
Of the early 1920's —  
Before returning each year  
To the immigrant avenues, the slack jawed  
Smell of cabbage in the tenement hallways  
And the black snow, the imminent black snow  
Of Buffalo.  
She never lost her Canadian vowels,  
Her fear of street cars or love of dray horses,  
Even when I last saw her  
Singing hymns in a shared room  
Of a nursing home  
And accusing the staff of stealing her money,  
Her plastic rosary,  
Her favorite straw hat —  
The one with the sun flowers.  
No talk then of a husband or daughters,  
A life lived.

Just a weak rage against nothing, from nowhere.

*As if nothing was evil, exactly, or not.*

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*The Geography of Home* by Matthew Graham

### **Purchase *The Geography of Home* by Matthew Graham**

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