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Prolific, award-winning poet’s new collection offers funny, complex, accessible verse

PITTSBURGH—Powered by a fierce, compassionate intelligence, Charles Harper Webb’s new collection Brain Camp explores a wide spectrum of emotions—from love to hate, tenderness to brutality, lyricism to street-speak—all from a perspective both universal yet distinctly Webb’s. His readers will discover metaphors of startling aptness and originality, a voice at once endearing and provocative, and wild imaginative leaps.

“Introspection after Fear Factor,” “My Son Dreams That a Shark Ate Me,” and “Post-Modernism Missed the Opry” are just a tantalizing sample of poem titles.

“This is a terrific collection,” said Terrance Hayes. “Webb remains a dynamo of high spirits, a poet whose steadfast exuberance suggests a kind of poetic ease. But anyone who has read Webb knows his enthralling poems are always shaped by an intelligence that is both disciplined and intrepid. The title Brain Camp, of course, implies as much. Imaginative, sly, and perceptive: these new poems show why Webb is one of our great wisecracking wise men.”

Webb is the author of more than a dozen poetry collections, including Reading the Water, Liver, Tulip Farms and Leper Colonies, Hot Popsicles, Amplified Dog, Shadow Ball: New and Selected Poems, and What Things Are Made Of. His poems have appeared in Best American Poetry, the Pushcart Prize, and Poets of the New Century.

The Philadelphia native has received the Morse Prize, Kate Tufts Discovery Award, Pollak Prize, and Saltman Prize, the Whiting Writer’s Award, and a Guggenheim fellowship, among other honors. He is professor of English at California State University, Long Beach, and teaches in the MFA in creative writing program there.

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