



# SUSAN GRIMM

AUTHOR

OF

## LAKE ERIE BLUE

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## INTERVIEW

BY

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1. *Please describe the evolution of **Lake Erie Blue**. While writing these poems did you have a conscious or clear idea about how they would interrelate?*

The truth is that many of my poems seem to revolve around the same things—family, locale, love, disappointment. But two specific threads of *Lake Erie Blue*—the first section where poems are sometimes in the voices of my ancestors and the last, where I keep trying to grasp the slippery nature of Lake Erie’s influence and attraction, were sets of poems that were planned. I wanted in both cases to come at something numerous times, from different directions as if this accumulation of approaches could take me further than the linear.

2. *In your opening poem, “Green Wave,” in reference to writing about your ancestors you say that you are surprised “to give them sweat and shiver,” and you also write that “they have not asked” to be written about. Did you feel personally obligated to tell your ancestors’ stories? What surprised you most about giving voice to your extended family?*

I don’t feel obligated. In fact, I can see if someone were writing a poem about me I might feel peeved. I’m interested in my family partly because of the culmination—me—and partly because their stories and innuendoes have been buzzing around my ears for years.

3. *Were you concerned with keeping a distinction between fact and fiction concerning your ancestors’ lives in your poems, or did you have a kind of familial mythology to build upon?*

I completely agree. Every family has its own mythology—stories establishing strengths and virtues, jokes, associated objects. That’s where I began each poem, but I had no compunction about invention. After all, how could I know the intimate thoughts and acts of others? I called them back from the past and tried to inhabit their skin.

4. *Literature about family, past as well as future, is of course intensely personal. Was it a struggle to write about some of the very personal or troubled aspects of your family?*

Perhaps because my family doesn’t seem to have any terrible secrets, I felt pretty free. And because poetry is not autobiography, I never felt naked, even though I can see, reading through, how often my work is very revealing of my life. I rely heavily on the idea of the speaker as other to comfort me.